

THE BOY'S BOOK OF THE SEA



ERIC WOOD

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**BY
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“Shells fell upon her like hailstones, sweeping her decks, crashing into her sides.... She was on fire”

NAVAL WARFARE—OLD AND NEW

Trafalgar and Modern Fights in the North Sea

NOT the least remarkable of the changes which have taken place during the last hundred years—it is less than that, really—are those which have come to pass in the sphere of warfare; and the accounts of the battles here given show how different naval fighting is to-day from what it was in Nelson's time. Then wooden ships, now steel leviathans; then guns that fired about 800 yards, now giant weapons that hit the mark ten miles off; then close fighting, boarding, hand-to-hand conflicts, now long-range fighting, with seldom, if ever, a chance to board. Then shots that did what would be considered little damage beside that wrought by the high-explosive shells which penetrate thick armour-plate, and which, well-placed, can send a ship to the bottom. Then none of those speeding death-tubes, the torpedoes, which work such dreadful havoc with a floating citadel; then casualties in a whole battle no more than those suffered by a single ship nowadays. And so one could go on, touching on wireless telegraphy, fire-control—that ingenious system which does man's work of sighting the guns—aircraft and submarines, which constitute so serious a factor in present-day warfare. But the story of Trafalgar, that well-fought battle against a noble foe who is now a gallant ally, and those of the North Sea, 1914 and 1915, will show the revolutions in modern naval warfare.

Nelson had determined to meet and beat Villeneuve, in command of the allied French and Spanish fleet, which left Cadiz at the end of September, 1805. The French admiral did not know how near Nelson was. To-day the means of communication are vastly different, and battleships are able to discover the proximity of their foes much more easily than in those other days. It is one of the great changes in naval warfare. So it was that the allied fleets were dogged until Nelson decided it was time to strike.

On the 21st the rival fleets met. The English fleet was in order of battle—two lines, with an advanced squadron of eight fast-sailing two-deckers. Nelson, in the *Victory*, led one column, Collingwood, in the *Royal Sovereign*, the other.

About half-past eight Villeneuve ordered his fleet to draw up in such array and position that, if necessary, they could make for Cadiz; but the manœuvre was badly executed, and the fleet assumed a crescent-shaped formation, into which the English columns were sailing.

Nelson was longing for the fight; so were his men. But, although the officers on board the *Victory* were eager for the fight, they would have been content to forgo the honour of opening the fight in favour of some other ship, fearing lest Nelson should be killed.

Nelson was asked: "Could not the *Temeraire* take the foremost place of the column?"

Nelson replied:

"Oh, yes, let her go—if she can!"

Captain Hardy hailed the *Temeraire* to give her instructions; but, meanwhile, Nelson was moving about the decks giving orders that made the *Victory* leap forward and hold her place in the vanguard.

“There!” he said to Hardy, as he came back. “Let the *Temeraires* open the ball, if they can—which they most assuredly can’t! I think there’s nothing more to be done now, is there, till we open fire? Oh, yes, stay a minute, though. I suppose I must give the fleet something as a final fillip. Let me see. How would this do: ‘Nelson expects that every man will do his duty?’”

Hardy suggested that “England expects” would be an improvement. Nelson agreed. The order was given; and the message was soon fluttering in the breeze.

What shouts of enthusiasm greeted the signal in Trafalgar’s Bay! Every man took it as a message to himself, and forthwith vowed to do what was expected of him.

“Now,” said Nelson. “I can do no more. We must trust to the great Disposer of events and the justice of our cause. I thank God for this opportunity of doing my duty!”

For all his apparent good spirits the Admiral had a foreboding of impending ill, and when Captain Blackwood left him to take up his place on the *Euryalus*, the Admiral gripped him by the hand and said:

“God bless you, Blackwood! I shall never see you again.”

The battle was opened by the French ship *Fougueux*, which fired upon the *Royal Sovereign*.

“Engage the enemy more closely,” was now Nelson’s signal, and the English closed in upon the foe. Collingwood broke through the enemy’s line astern the *Santa Anna*. He reserved his fire until he was almost at the muzzles of their guns, then, with a roar, his port broadside was hurled at the *Santa Anna*, and four hundred men fell killed and wounded, and fourteen of the Spaniard’s guns were put out of action.

The starboard guns spoke to the *Fougueux* at the same time. Owing to the dense smoke and the greater distance, the damage done was not so great.

“By Jove, Rotherham!” cried Collingwood to his flag-captain. “What would Nelson give to be here?”

“And,” says James in his Naval History, “by a singular coincidence Lord Nelson, the moment he saw his friend in his enviable position, exclaimed: ‘See how that noble fellow Collingwood carries his ship into action.’”

Collingwood now pressed still closer on the *Santa Anna*, and a smart battle began between the two great ships, till four other ships bore down upon the *Royal Sovereign*, so that she was very soon the centre of a ring of fire. So close were the ships, and so continuous was the fire, that often cannon-balls met in mid-air, though more frequently they fell on board and did much damage. Badly aimed shots often passed over the *Royal Sovereign*, and found their mark on the decks of French or Spanish vessels. Presently the four new-comers veered off when they noticed that other British ships were bearing down upon them.

With a roar the British *Belleisle* sent a broadside into the *Santa Anna* as she passed; and then Collingwood was alone with his foe. For over an hour the duel raged, and the *Royal Sovereign*, although she carried a dozen guns fewer than the *Santa Anna*, suffered less. Battered, mastless, with hundreds of men lying in pools of blood, the *Santa Anna* still fought on, refusing for a long time to strike her colours. At last, however, there was nothing for it but to give in, and the Spanish flag fluttered down the mast.

When the battle began the foe opened fire at the *Victory*, which they knew was Nelson's flagship. The English Admiral had made sure that he should not be lost sight of, for he had hoisted several flags lest one should be carried away. The *Victory's* maintopgallant sail was shot away, and broadsides were hurled at her, but still she kept on.

Nelson wished to encounter Villeneuve, and, despite a raking fire poured in upon him by the *Santissima Trinidad*, he kept on his way, taking the *Victory* into the thick of the fight. He refused to have the hammocks slung higher lest they should interrupt his view, although they would have afforded shelter from the enemy's fire. Men dropped all about the ship, shots ploughed up the deck or bored their way through the sides, yet the gallant *Victory* held on her way for the *Bucentaure*, which Nelson knew carried Admiral Villeneuve.

Eight ships, however, surrounded her, and made it impossible for the *Victory* to be brought alongside. These, belching forth their heavy fire at her, smashed her wheel, hurled her mizzenmast overboard, shattered her sails. The wind had dropped, too; the *Victory* was almost at a standstill, and it was impossible to bring a gun into action.

Pacing his quarter-deck Nelson waited for his time to come. While doing so, a shot passed between him and Hardy, bruising the latter's foot, and tearing the buckle from his shoe. Both stopped in their promenade, looking anxiously at each other.

"This is too warm work to last long, Hardy," said Nelson.

"The enemy are closing up their line, sir," said Hardy. "See! We can't get through without running one of them aboard!"

"I can't help that," said Nelson, "and I don't see that it matters much which we tackle first. Take your choice. Go on board which you please."

Villeneuve on the *Bucentaure* was therefore given a treble-shotted, close-range broadside, which disabled four hundred men and put twenty guns out of action, and left the ship almost defenceless.

Then, porting his helm, Nelson bore down on the *Redoubtable* and the *Neptune*. The latter veered off, but the former could not escape the *Victory*, which she therefore received with a broadside. Then, fearing that a boarding party would enter her, the lower deck ports were shut. Meanwhile the *Temeraire* had fastened on to the *Redoubtable* on the other side, and the most momentous episode in that great day's work took place. In it we can see the difference between the naval fighting of a century ago and that of to-day, the latter being fought at long range, with no attempt at boarding.

The *Victory's* guns were depressed so that they should not do damage to the *Temeraire*, and broadside after broadside was poured into the *Redoubtable*, which made a brave show. The two ships were almost rubbing sides (now we fight at eight-mile range or more!), and men stood by the British guns with buckets of water in their hands, which, immediately the guns were fired, they emptied into the hole made in the *Redoubtable's* side lest she should catch fire, and so the prize be lost.

In the *Redoubtable's* top riflemen were posted, and throughout the fight picked off man after man—a practice which Nelson himself abhorred. It was from one of these snipers that the great Admiral received his death-wound.

While pacing the poop deck, Nelson suddenly swung round and pitched forward on his face. A ball had entered in at the left shoulder, and passed through his backbone.

Hardy, turning, saw three men lifting him up.

“They have done for me at last, Hardy,” Nelson said feebly.

“Oh, I hope not!” cried Hardy.

“Yes,” was the reply; “my backbone is shot through!”

The bearers carried him down the ladders to the lower deck. On the way, despite his awful agony, Nelson had thoughts for nothing but the battle; he ordered that new tiller ropes should be rigged to replace those which had been shot away at the moment the *Victory* had crashed into the *Redoubtable*. Then, that they might not recognise him, he covered his face and stars with his handkerchief.

They carried him into the cockpit. We will leave him, and return to the conflict.

The men in the *Redoubtable*'s top still kept up their galling fire, as also did the guns of the second deck, and in less than fifteen minutes after Nelson had been shot down, no fewer than fifty of the *Victory*'s officers and men had met a like fate.

Then the French determined to board. As it was impossible to do this by the bulwarks, they lowered their main yard and turned it into a bridge, over which they scrambled on to the deck of the *Victory*.

“Repel boarders!”

It was a cry like that of a wild beast, and it brought the lion's whelps from the lower decks. They hurled themselves at the venturesome Frenchmen. With pistol and pike, cutlass and axe, the English fought with the ferocity that had made them so dreaded in the past; when other weapons failed they fought with bare fists, hurling the trespassers overboard.

It cost the *Victory* thirty men to repel that attack. But it cost the *Redoubtable* more; and very soon not a Frenchman was left alive on the decks of Nelson's ship.

As we have said, while the *Victory* was engaging the *Redoubtable* on one side, the *Temeraire* was tackling her on the other, the three ships hugging each other with muzzles touching muzzles. Soon after the attempt to board the *Victory*, the *Temeraire* lashed her bowsprit to the gangway of the *Redoubtable* so that she could not escape. Then she poured in a raking fire until the Frenchman was compelled to surrender, though not before she had twice been on fire, and more than five hundred of her crew had been killed or wounded.

Some of the *Temeraire* men then turned to deal with the *Fougueux*, which had attacked her during the fight with the *Redoubtable*.

Captain Hardy was too busy with the *Redoubtable* to do much; but Lieutenant Kennedy quickly set a party to man the starboard batteries. With these they opened fire at about one hundred yards, and crash! the *Fougueux*'s masts fell, her wheel was smashed, her rigging shattered, and she was so crippled that she ran foul of the *Temeraire*, whose crew lashed their foe to them, and Kennedy, with a couple of middies and fewer than thirty seamen and marines, rushed aboard her.

Five hundred Frenchmen were still fresh for battle on the *Fougueux*, but the Britishers did not hesitate. With a bound they were on the enemy's deck, and, slashing and hacking at the crowd that came up against them, drove them back and still back. Dozens were killed and others leapt overboard to escape the whirlwind that had fallen upon them. The remainder scuttled away below, the English clapped the hatches on them, and the ship was won.



“Kennedy, with a couple of middies and fewer than thirty men, rushed aboard”

Meanwhile the *Victory* had been pouring a heavy fire into the *Santissima Trinidad* on one side and the *Redoubtable* on the other. Through and through the former was raked, her deck swept clear of men, until the Spaniards dived overboard and swam off to the *Victory*, whose crew helped them aboard.

The *Belleisle*, which had hurled her broadside into the *Santa Anna* early in the conflict, had been pounced upon by about half a dozen ships of the enemy, which poured in a deadly fire, battering her sides, tearing her rigging to pieces, and twisting her mizzen-mast over the aft guns, putting them out of action. Sixty men also had been sent to their account, but the rest fought on with British courage.

The *Achille* bore down upon her and attacked her aft, the *Aigle*, assisted by the *Neptune*, fell on her starboard, aiming at her remaining masts and bringing them down.

“Crippled, but unconquered,” masts gone by the board, nearly all the guns useless, men mostly killed or wounded, the *Belleisle*'s few remaining men stood to their three or four guns and hurled defiance at the foe. Pounding away for all they were worth, not a man flinched—except at the thought that the flag had been shot away. They fastened a Union Jack to a pikehead, waved it defiantly, yelled out a cheer of determination, and fought on again, keeping their ship in action throughout the battle, refusing to strike the pikehead flag.

The English *Neptune* assailed the *Bucentaure*, and brought her main- and mizzen-masts down; then the *Leviathan* came up, and at a range of about thirty yards gave the French flagship a full

broadside which smashed the stern to splinters. The *Conqueror* completed the work thus begun, and brought down the flag.

A marine officer and five men put off from the *Conqueror* to take possession. Villeneuve and two chief officers at once gave their swords to the officer, who, thinking that the honour of accepting them belonged to his captain, refused the weapons, put the Frenchmen in his boat, pocketed the key of the magazine, left two sentries to guard the cabin doors, and then pulled away to rejoin his ship. For some time the little boat searched for the *Conqueror*, which had gone in quest of other foes. Eventually, however, the boat was picked up by the *Mars*, whose acting commander, Lieutenant Hennah, accepted the surrendered swords, and ordered Villeneuve and his two captains below.

The *Leviathan* next tackled the Spanish *San Augustino*, which opened fire on her at a hundred yards. The *Leviathan* replied with fine effect, bringing down the Spaniard's mizzen-mast and flag. Then she lashed herself to her foe. Clearing the way for boarders by a galling fire, the English captain sent across his boarding party. A hand-to-hand fight took place, and the Spaniards were steadily but surely forced over the side or below, and at last the ship was won.

The French *Intrépide*, seeing the plight of her ally, now bore down on the *Leviathan*, raking her with fire as she came, and getting her boarders ready for attack. They did not board, for the *Africa* pitted herself against the *Intrépide*, and smaller though she was got the best of it, and the Frenchmen were compelled to strike their flag.

Meanwhile the *Prince* and the *Swiftsure* were engaged with the *Achille*, into which many English ships had sent stinging shots, bringing her masts to the deck, and making the ship a blazing mass. Unable to quench the flames, the crew began cutting the masts, intending to heave them overboard.

The *Prince*, however, gave her a broadside which did the cutting, and sent the wreckage down into the waists. The whole ship immediately took fire. The *Prince* and the *Swiftsure*, ceasing fire, sent their boats to save the Frenchmen. It was a noble but dangerous act, for the heat discharged the *Achille's* guns, and many of the would-be rescuers perished as a result. Blazing hulk though she was, the *Achille* kept her colours flying bravely, her sole surviving senior officer, a midshipman, refusing to strike. The flames reached her magazine, and with colours flying she blew up, carrying all her remaining men heavenwards.

Meantime, Nelson lay dying in the cockpit of the *Victory* in agony, yet rejoicing that he was victorious. The rank and file were kept ignorant of his condition, though the Admiral himself knew that the end was near, and urged the surgeons to give their attention to others. "He was in great pain, and expressed much anxiety for the event of the action, which now began to declare itself. As often as a ship struck the crew of the *Victory* hurrahed, and at every hurrah a visible expression of joy gleamed in the eyes and marked the countenance of the dying hero."

Every now and then Nelson asked for Hardy. "Will no one bring Hardy to me?" he cried; and when at last Hardy came, the two friends shook hands in silence.

"Well, Hardy, how goes the day with us?" asked Nelson presently.

“Very well, my lord. We have got twelve or fourteen of the enemies’ ships, but five of their van have tacked, and show an intention of bearing down on the *Victory*. I have therefore called two or three of our fresh ships round us, and have no doubt of giving them a drubbing.”

“I hope none of *our* ships have struck, Hardy?”

“No, my lord; there is no fear of that.”

“Well, I am a dead man, Hardy, but I am glad of what you say. Oh, whip them now you’ve got them; whip them as they’ve never been whipped before!”

Hardy then left him for a time, returning somewhat later to report that some fourteen ships had been taken.

“That’s well,” cried Nelson, “though I bargained for twenty. Anchor, Hardy, anchor.”

Hardy suggested that Admiral Collingwood might now take over the direction of affairs.

“Not while I live, Hardy!” said Nelson. “Do *you* anchor.”

“Shall we make the signal, sir?”

“Yes,” answered Nelson. “For if I live, I’ll anchor.”

For a little while Hardy looked down at his admiral.

“Kiss me, Hardy,” said Nelson; and Hardy kissed him. “Don’t have my poor carcass hove overboard,” whispered Nelson, as Hardy leant over him. “Get what’s left of me sent to England, if you can manage it. Kiss me, Hardy.”

Hardy kissed him again.

“Who is that?” asked the hero.

“It is I—Hardy.”

“Good-bye. God bless you, Hardy. Thank God, I’ve done my duty.”

Then Hardy left him—for ever.

Nelson was turned on to his right side, muttered the words that he would soon be gone. Then, after a little silence, he sighed and struggled to speak, but all he could say was:

“Thank God, I have done my duty!”

Then Nelson died; and England was the poorer by her greatest sea captain.

Hardy took the news to Collingwood, who assumed command, and refused to carry out Nelson’s instructions to anchor, because the fact that a gale was blowing up would make it unsafe to do so.

The battle was now over; the allied fleets had been defeated, eighteen of their ships were captured, and with these Collingwood stood out to sea. The enemy, however, recaptured four of the prizes, one escaped to Cadiz, some went down with all hands, others were stranded, and one was so unseaworthy that it was scuttled; and only four were taken into Gibraltar.

Now for a different picture!

It was the early hours of August 28, 1914. Under cover of the darkness and the fog, the first and third flotillas of our destroyers, commanded by Commodore R. Y. Tyrwhitt, under orders from the Admiralty, had crept towards Heligoland Bight, preceded by submarines E6, E7, E8, and followed by the first battle cruiser squadron and the first light cruiser squadron.

The submarines, submerged to the base of their conning-towers, swept into the Bight, and when the grey fingers of the dawn crept across the sky the Germans behind the fortress saw what they imagined was a British submarine in difficulties, with sister ships alongside, and two cruisers, *Lurcher* and *Drake*, in attendance, intent only on giving her assistance until help could reach them.

It was nothing more than a trap, into which the Germans fell.

A torpedo boat destroyer swung out of the harbour, making full steam ahead for the apparently helpless submarines, who kept their hazardous positions until they saw that the Germans had come far away from the island fortress. Then, one after the other, they sank, and simultaneously the cruisers swung about and raced madly away from the German torpedo craft.

Search though they did, the Germans found no trace of the submarines; all they could see were light cruisers tearing away from them at full speed. These cruisers had acted as an additional decoy, and other destroyers slipped out, bent on making short work of the Britishers who had dared to flaunt themselves within sight of Heligoland. Then, in the distance, appeared the funnels of other British cruisers and destroyers; and it would seem that the Germans realised that they had fallen into a trap, and endeavoured to escape, for Commodore Tyrwhitt's dispatch says: "The *Arethusa* and the third flotilla were engaged with numerous destroyers and torpedo boats which were making for Heligoland; course thus altered to port to cut them off." This was from 7.20 to 7.57 A.M., when two German cruisers appeared on the scene and were engaged.

It was a gallant fight. The jolly Jack Tars of Britain had been waiting these many days for a smack at the foe, who had not dared to come out and meet them until it seemed they were in overwhelming force; and now, when the opportunity had come, they entered into the fight with a zest worthy of the Navy that rules the seas. They watched their shots; the gunlayers worked methodically, as though at target practice; and when a shot went home, men cheered lustily and rubbed their hands with glee.

And the Germans began to think they had a handful of work before them, despite numbers.

They had a bigger handful soon! Here and there, with startling suddenness, periscopes dotted the water, to be followed by the grey shells of submarines, which, getting the range for their torpedoes, as quickly disappeared, and became a menace to the German ships. It began to dawn upon the foe that they were being trapped.

"Full speed ahead!" had come the command when the Germans were sighted, and on went the destroyers in the van. "We just went for them," said one of the sailors afterwards; "and when we got within range we let them have it hot!"

Hot it was, when at last they did come to grips. But before that happened other things were to take place. The cruiser *Arethusa*, leader of the third destroyer flotilla—a new ship, by the way, only out of dock these forty-eight hours, of 30,000 horsepower, with a 2-inch belt of armour, and

4-inch and 6-inch guns—sped on towards the Germans, who, owing to the morning mist, could not see how many foes they were to meet, and fondly dreamed they were in the majority.

The German cruisers, like the destroyers, were successfully decoyed out to sea, and then the real fighting began.

The *Arethusa* tackled some of the destroyers and two cruisers, one a four-funnelled vessel. A few range-finding shots, then the aim was obtained, and a shell put the German's bow gun out of action. The *Fearless* and the *Arethusa* were now in "Full action," and, together with the destroyers of the flotilla, were quickly engaged in a stern piece of work.

The saucy *Arethusa* didn't budge when the second cruiser (two funnels) came at her, but simply fired away for all she was worth. For over half an hour she fought the Germans at a range of 3,000 yards. What would Nelson have thought of this long-distance fighting? And "it was a fight in semi-darkness, when it was only just possible," wrote one of her crew, "to make out the opposing grey shadow. Hammer, hammer, hammer, it was, until the eyes ached and smarted and the breath whistled through lips parched with the acrid fumes of picric acid."

It was a gallant fight. Those deadly 6-inch guns of hers did their proper work, and battered at the Germans; while, on the other hand, the Germans battered away at her; apparently misliking her entertainment, the four-funnelled German turned her attention to the *Fearless*, which kept her men as busy as bees for a time. About ten minutes, and the *Arethusa* planted a 6-inch shell on the forebridge of the German, and sent her scurrying away to Heligoland. But the *Arethusa* had not escaped injury in the stern fight, and once or twice, but for the gallant assistance of the *Fearless* and the destroyers, she seemed likely to be even more severely damaged, if not destroyed. As it was, a shell entered her engine-room, all her guns but one were put out of action, a fire broke out opposite No. 2 port gun, and was promptly handled by Chief Petty Officer Wrench.

Presently the *Arethusa* drew off for a while, like a gladiator getting his wind, ready to come back again.

And while the *Arethusa*'s crew were working like niggers putting things to rights, the *Fearless* standing by to help, the British destroyers were engaged in swift, destructive, rushing-about conflicts, now with opposing destroyers, now with German cruisers. Two of the British "wasps" tackled a couple of cruisers, for instance. Getting in between their larger foes, they placed the latter in such a quandary that they did not know what to do. To fire meant risking hitting each other, and, seizing the hazardous opportunity, the destroyers worked their will upon their opponents; and then, when it was not possible to do more, sped off into the haze. The *Liberty* and *Laertes* did good work during these early hours of the fighting. They opposed themselves to several German craft, roared out their thunderous welcome "to the North Sea," and, with well-aimed shots, sent one boat out of the fighting line with a hole clean through her hull, wrenched off the funnel of another, smashed up the after gun of yet a third, and blew the platform itself to pieces.

Aye, 'twas a glorious scrum! Yet not without its nasty knocks for the Britishers. Standing on his bridge, working his ship, Lieutenant-Commander Nigel Barttelot heard the crash of a shell as it struck his mast; and before he could move the whole structure had fallen with a crash upon the bridge, killing him and a signaller instantly.

The *Laertes*, too, received her punishment. Her forward gun was damaged, and its crew either killed or wounded, while the midship funnel was ripped from top to bottom, and a shell sang its horrific way into the dynamo-room, while another made havoc of her cabin.

Presently the *Arethusa*, her wreckage cleared away, her guns—some of them—working again, steamed into the battle area, and, undaunted as ever, took on another couple of German cruisers. “It looked as if she was in for a warm time,” said one of the crew; “but the fortunate arrival of our battle squadron relieved the situation.”

The first light cruiser squadron came first, and engaged the Germans.

There is much meaning in that “fortunate arrival.” It had been planned and carried out to a nicety. Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty and the two cruiser squadrons had been waiting, as arranged—waiting for the time to come when he should go to the aid of the torpedo flotillas. While waiting the squadrons were attacked by German submarines, which were not successful in wounding any of the ships. A German seaplane, scouting over the North Sea, espied the squadrons, and sped back to Heligoland with the news. They brought out reinforcements, which made the flotillas signal to the vice-admiral for help. This was before noon.

The first light cruiser squadron came first, and swept the Germans with a tornado of fire. Then, when the *Fearless* and the first flotilla were returning, while the light cruiser squadron engaged the enemy, the battle cruiser squadron came up: the *Lion*, the *Princess Royal*, the *New Zealand*, and the *Invincible*, armed, the first two, with 13.5 guns, and the others with 12-inch. The work that the *Arethusa* and her smaller fry had commenced was now carried to a finish. The German cruisers *Mainz* and *Köln* shook to the impact of the rain of shells poured upon them; great holes were torn in their sides, flames spurted out, and roared their angry way about the ships. The *Mainz*, more badly wounded, was in a sinking condition before the arrival of the battle cruisers, and now, tortured by the horrific projectiles, began to sink rapidly by the head. With a *siss! siss!* as the flames met water, and a roar as the boilers exploded, the good ship *Mainz*, after a plucky fight, went to her last anchorage, followed later by the *Köln*.

Destroyers which had been battering at the unfortunate Germans now ceased their fire, and sped towards them on errands of mercy, seeking to save their foes. A large number of the crew of over 350 of the *Mainz* still lived, and the destroyers’ crews were horrified to see that German officers were shooting at their own men as the ship began to sink rapidly by the head. The *Lurcher* (Commodore Roger J. B. Keyes) rescued 220 of her crew.

British sailors helping to rescue the crew told later that the scene on deck was terrible. Steelwork had been twisted and bent as hairpins bend; the deck was a shambles—grim testimony to the deadly character of the British fire.

While the destroyers were still fighting, after the sinking of the *Mainz* and *Köln*, a third German cruiser, the *Ariadne*, appeared on the scene, and, after the destroyers had tackled her unsuccessfully, the battle cruisers, turning from their earlier victims, spoke to her in the language of death. Shells fell all about her, battering her sides, gouging great holes in her, wrecking her so completely that within a short time she was going down to keep the *Mainz* and *Köln* company. Later it was reported that yet a fourth cruiser had been set on fire.

We must now go back to the destroyer action, which was no less sharp than the other. The small craft sped here and there, firing their 4-inch guns as rapidly as possible, and inflicting damage on

one another. Out of the chaos of the fighting there shone the bright light of foes who would show mercy. The German destroyer V187 was so badly mauled that there was no hope for her or her crew, and the British destroyer *Goshawk* ordered the others to cease fire while she lowered her boats and sought to rescue the Germans, who, however, heeding not the humane mission of their foes, opened fire on the *Goshawk* at a range of about 200 yards. The German official reports eulogised this as “a glorious fight,” but the British tars saw in it something other than “glorious.” Forced to fight even when they would save, they opened fire in reply; and in double quick time the V187 was silenced, and began to settle down, her men being flung or leaping into the shell-whipped seas. British boats now endeavoured to save the lives of the men who had fired at them when they would have done so before, and several boats managed to pick up survivors.

But, as if the blatant callousness of V187 were not enough, a German cruiser came swinging up, and opened a deadly fire upon the destroyers—the boats whose errand was a merciful one. The destroyers, picking up what boats they could, made away at full speed; but some boats, containing Britishers and Germans, were left behind. At that moment, Lieut.-Commodore Leir, of submarine E4, appeared on the scene, and engaged the cruiser, which altered her course before he could get the range. Down went E4 for safety’s sake.

The two boats of the *Defender*, left thus, were in a precarious situation, shells flying all about them and their ship far away. Then, to their amazement, there appeared on the surface the periscope of a submarine; then, presently, the conning-tower. It was E4 again. This time she hailed the boats, and, though she was a plain mark for the cruiser’s fire, she remained on the surface, bent on saving whom she could. She could not embark them all, but took a lieutenant and nine men of the *Defender*. There were also two of the officers and eight men of V187, unwounded, and eighteen wounded men, and, unable to take them on board, Leir left an officer and six unwounded men to navigate the British boats to Heligoland, taking steps to see that they were provided with water, biscuits, and a compass. It was the British sailor all over!

Thus it was that the Battle of the Bight was fought—and won—by the tars of Old Britain. They had hankered long after the outcoming of the Germans, who sulked in their harbours, and had had to be lured out. Boldly had the Germans issued forth when the odds had seemed all on their side, when they saw before them but a few small vessels; and, to their credit be it said, they fought well when the truth came to them. It was the first engagement in the war worthy of the name of a naval battle, and the British reaped the honours, though, when the tally was taken, they had not escaped scot free. There were battered ships amongst those that put into port later. The *Liberty* had fourteen great holes in her port bow, her bridge was smashed, her searchlight gone, her wireless installation vanished, and nothing but a stump remained of her mast. The *Laertes*, hit four times, had had to be taken in tow for a while, and the *Arethusa*, who had started the fight in good style, had, as we have seen, received much beating about. The *Fearless* also had honourable wounds, receiving no fewer than nineteen hits, though none of them in a vital part.

Beginning in the early morning, with the sea-mist shrouding the sea, the battle had continued for six or seven hours; and then the Germans, knowing themselves outmatched, drew off, dropping mines as they went, while the British squadrons, finding there was nothing more to be done when the Germans had scurried to the shelter of their harbour, also drew away, without a ship lost, and with but comparatively few men *hors de combat*. During the return journey some of the British cruisers were attacked by submarines but escaped damage. The saucy *Arethusa*, wounded pretty badly, steamed away at about six knots until 7 o’clock, and then, finding it impossible to proceed

farther, drew her fire in all boilers except two and called for assistance. Up came the *Hogue*, at 9.30, and took her in tow, while the *Amethyst* took in tow the *Laurel*, which had also suffered a fair amount of damage.

Thus, with the blood surging through their veins as they thought of the victory won, and longing for the day to come when they might once more meet their foes, the British tars steamed to port. Five months later there was another action on a large scale.

What would the hero of Trafalgar have said if anyone had suggested to him the possibility of a running battle in which the opponents should never be nearer than eight miles? He would probably not have regarded it as a fight! In those good old times the guns could not carry much more than a thousand yards, and the end very often came by boarders, and the capture of the ship in a hand-to-hand fight. Nowadays sea fights are at long range; and yet another account of a battle in the North Sea (January 24, 1915) shows how greatly methods of warfare have changed. It is difficult to imagine the story of such a fight, as will be understood when the classes of ships engaged are considered: mighty battle cruisers, such as the *Lion*, whose guns can fire 10 miles, hurling a broadside of 10,000 lbs. twice in every minute; light cruisers, speedy destroyers, and submarines; while over all hovered the long grey shapes of airships and the darting forms of seaplanes dropping bombs. And all the time the battling ships are tearing through the seas at top speed, belching forth terrible high-explosive shells.

The battle of January 24 was the outcome of a German attempt to raid the east coast of England, as had been done before—Yarmouth first, then the Hartlepoons, Scarborough, and Whitby. In the case of the last three towns a large number of defenceless women and children had been murdered by the German fire, and the War Lord proclaimed it a mighty victory for his navy. Issuing forth again, in the hope of achieving something as noble, the German admiral brought with him four battle cruisers, six light cruisers, and two flotillas of torpedo craft and submarines. When about thirty miles off the English coast they were sighted by a light cruiser, which engaged them and signalled to Admiral Beatty's squadron the news of the coming of the foe. Instantly the British vessels, which had been cleared for action for over an hour (it was now 7.30 A.M.), closed up and prepared to chase the raiders, then 14 miles away. Admiral Beatty's force, thus once more destined to play its part in the drama of war, consisted of the battle cruiser squadron—*Lion* (flagship), *Tiger*, *Princess Royal*, *Indomitable*, *New Zealand*, and several light cruisers and torpedo craft. The battle cruisers were Britain's most formidable fighting ships, outcome of what proved to be a far-sighted policy, namely, that of big guns; the first three carried twenty-four 13.5-in. guns, and the last two sixteen 12-in. guns, against which the German *Derfflinger* (a new ship) had eight 12-in. guns, the *Moltke* and *Seydlitz* twenty 11-in., and the *Blücher* twelve 8-in. guns. It will be seen, therefore, that the British ships had the superiority in weight and range.

As soon as the news was brought to the admiral he gave instructions for the destroyers to chase the enemy and report his movements, while the squadron steered south-east, "with a view to securing the lee position, and to cut off the enemy, if possible."

The Germans, immediately they realised that they had been seen, and that they were about to be met by a large force, turned tail and ran away. It must not be thought that this was a sign of cowardice; far from it, for in all probability the German manœuvre was deliberate, and in keeping with the policy that had arranged the larger number of heavier guns in the stern of the ships, so that, in the event of a running fight, such as this was destined to be, the fleeing ships

would not be at a disadvantage. The British ships have the majority of their guns fixed to fire ahead. One great disadvantage attaching to pursuers lies in the fact that the ships fleeing before them may drop mines, into which the chasing ships might run.

Working at a speed of from 28 to 29 knots an hour, the British squadron raced after the Germans, gradually overhauling them, and at 20,000 yards opened fire upon the foe, keeping at it until, at 18,000 yards' range, the shots began to tell, and the fire was returned by the Germans. The fight had begun in real earnest. The German destroyers made a plucky attack, in the hope of torpedoing the British ships, but the "M" division of British destroyers raced ahead of the cruisers and engaged the Germans and drove them off. The German destroyers belched forth great clouds of smoke, which screened the cruisers from their pursuers.

The British *Lion*, of course, led the way. Steering clear of the German submarines, which were to the starboard, she pounded after the great cruisers, and her great shells began to fall in a shower upon the *Blücher*, which, being the slowest ship, was at the tail of the German line. Not only the *Lion*, but practically every British ship poured in smashing salvos. They fell upon her thick as hailstones, sweeping her decks, crashing into her sides, smashing upon her guns and wrenching them from their turrets, disabling whole gun crews. Funnels were sent toppling over, masts fell; a shell pitched in the very heart of the ship, where a large number of men were gathered, and killed them all. Her armoured sides were riddled through and through; she was on fire; but she still kept up her replies with the guns left her, and her men cheered as they fought, although they knew they were fighting a losing battle. Instructions had been given that the flag was not to be struck, and that she was to go down with it flying. Within half an hour of the opening of the battle 300 or 400 men were killed or wounded. She was an unforgettable sight. She turned to port, to give her men a chance to put out the fire, but after awhile swung back and made after the other ships.

Without waiting to see the result of their attack on the *Blücher*, the British big ships pounded on their way after the other vessels. A devastating cyclone of shells fell upon the *Derfflinger*, which caught fire forward and had many guns put out of action, while the *Seydlitz* or the *Moltke* steamed on like a sheet of flame. The roar of the guns, the crash of the explosions, the thunder of the great engines of war as they romped through the seas, the flashes of fire as shells left the maws of the terrific weapons—all went to make up a scene of horror, of impressiveness. It was a battle between rival giants at giants' distance, while simultaneously another battle was raging between the smaller cruisers and torpedo craft. There is no doubt that one reason why the Germans chose a running fight was that they hoped to be able to lure their pursuers into the minefield round about Heligoland. But, after chasing them for about a hundred miles, Admiral Beatty, realising that it was hopeless to catch them before they reached the field, turned back from the great cruisers and set his attention upon the smaller ships, seeking to turn them off, drive them down upon the British cruisers which were in hot pursuit. He did great damage amongst them, despite the difficulty of the work, there being so many ships engaged. Though many of them were very seriously mauled, they succeeded in getting to the minefield—with guns dismounted and hulls battered.

About 11 o'clock the *Lion* had her speed reduced very considerably, owing to a chance shot that had caught her in the bows and damaged her feed-tank, putting her port engines out of action. Admiral Beatty therefore changed his flag to a destroyer, and, later, to the *Princess Royal*, which then took the foremost place in the fight. The *Lion*, whose starboard engine also got out of working order later, and had only one engine working, was shielded by the *Tiger*, which pluckily

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