# DREADNOUGHTS OF THE DOGGER

Title: Dreadnoughts of the Dogger
A Story of the War on the North Sea

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Release Date: January 13, 2016 [eBook #50914]

Language: English

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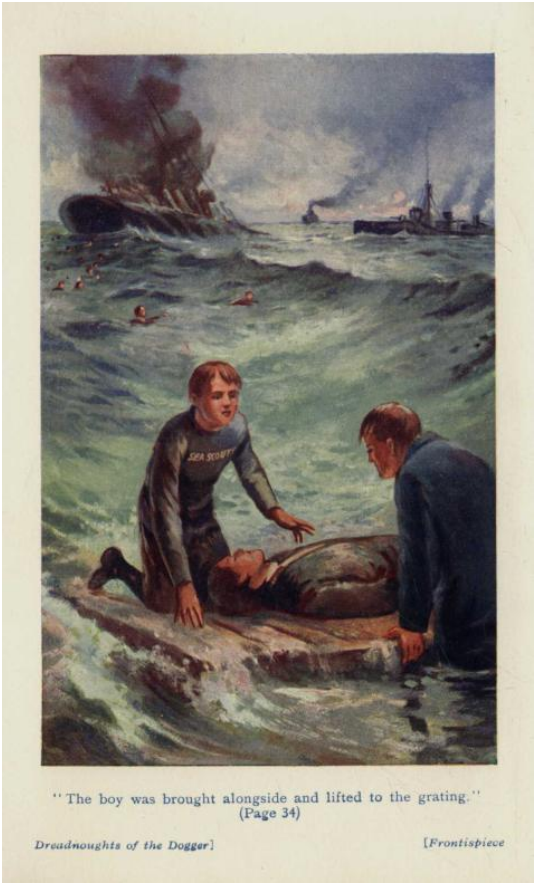
## *A Story of the War on the*



"The boy was brought alongside and lifted to the grating."
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*Dreadnoughts of the Dogger* [*Frontispiece*

*"The boy was brought alongside and lifted to the grating" (Page 34)*

# *North Sea*

BY

**ROBERT LEIGHTON**

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WARD, LOCK & CO., LIMITED
LONDON AND MELBOURNE
1916

*Made and printed in Great Britain by*
WARD, LOCK & Co., LIMITED, LONDON.

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# DREADNOUGHTS OF THE DOGGER.

## CHAPTER I.

### WHAT'S BRED IN THE BONE.

The Scoutmaster paused in his work of opening a tin of condensed milk on the top of a packing-case. Glancing upwards to the shoulder of the cliff, he caught sight of a figure partly concealed beyond a dark clump of gorse and bramble. He could see the shining brass tube of a telescope beneath a naval cap. The telescope was levelled at the slate-grey shape of a light cruiser riding at anchor

in Haddisport Roads, abreast of the camp.

"Your brother's out early, Redisham," said the Scoutmaster, turning again to the milk tin. "I hope he'll come down to us. I expect he can tell us a lot about that cruiser out there. He looks well in his cadet's uniform!"

Mark Redisham was bending over the fire, frying eggs and bacon. Some of his companions were in the tent, dressing after their morning swim, while others of the patrol were variously occupied in preparing the camp breakfast.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "Lucky chap, isn't he? I envy him being in the navy. And he's more than a cadet now, Mr. Bilverstone. He's a full-fledged midshipman—or soon will be, when he steps aboard his ship."

One of the Sea Scouts near to him, a tall, loose-limbed youth with a budding moustache, stood watching the lithe young fellow in naval uniform, now approaching with his telescope under his arm.

"Lucky?" he repeated with a sneer. "I don't see where the luck comes in. I don't envy him."

"Indeed!" said Mark. "You don't envy a chap who is going to be an officer in the British Navy? Why? Oh, but I was forgetting——"

Most of the Sea Scouts in the Lion Patrol were in the habit of overlooking the fact that Max Hilliger was not British. He had been amongst them so long, first as a playfellow, then as a Scout, that they had almost come to think of him as a native of Haddisport. In reality, he was a German, his father, Heinrich Hilliger, being German Vice-Consul in the port, as well as a wealthy fish merchant, doing a big business with Germany.

"Why?" Max repeated, shrugging his shoulders. "It isn't good enough. You fellows are always boasting about your British Navy, as if it were the only fleet on the seas. You seem to forget that Germany has a navy as good, if not better." He laughed derisively. "You'll discover your mistake if Germany and England come to grips. Your boasted navy'll be licked into a cocked hat. Half your cruisers are only fit to be scrapped. Those that are not obsolete couldn't hold their own against the Kaiser's High Sea Fleet."

Here a diversion was caused by the arrival of Midshipman Rodney Redisham, who shook hands with Mr. Bilverstone, and nodded recognition to such of the patrol as he remembered.

"You've grown, Catchpole," he said to one, "and you, too, Quester. Hullo, Max, you here? You've changed since we met last."

"Max has just been arguing that the Kaiser's Fleet is better than ours," remarked the Scout master.

"Germany has some jolly good fighting ships," acknowledged the midshipman; "but I believe our guns have a longer range, and, of course, we've got more ships."

Max Hilliger seemed disposed to dispute the point, but at that moment there came to the sharp ears of the Scouts a peculiar buzzing sound from beyond the houses on the cliff. All eyes were turned expectantly skyward in the one direction. Presently an aeroplane appeared above the trees, and, sinking rapidly, skimmed the level ground of the denes, and alighted like a great bird on a patch of grass within fifty yards of the camp.

At a word from Mr. Bilverstone, two of the Scouts ran forward; but they had hardly reached the machine before the pilot had leapt to his feet.

"Don't handle anything, boys," he said, pushing his goggles up over his forehead. "She's all right. But I see there's a crowd of people on the cliff. They'll be coming down to nose around. Keep guard here, while I step along to your camp and get some warmth into me."

Rodney Redisham strode forward to meet him, and, seeing the two gold stripes on his sleeve, greeted him with a very formal naval salute.

"Why, it's Lieutenant Aldiss!" he cried. "Where have you come from, sir?"

"Dover," returned the officer. "And what are you doing here? Why aren't you in your ship? Any news?"

"News?" Redisham repeated. "Do you mean about the ultimatum to Germany?"

"Yes, of course. Is it to be war?"

"I don't know. It looks precious like it. But we haven't heard yet."

"It's beastly cold up there this morning," said the lieutenant, indicating the sky. "Have these Scouts got any hot coffee? Ah, I see one of them is fetching some. That's nice."

"But won't you come up to my home and have a proper breakfast, sir?" Rodney invited. "It's that red house with the tower, on the cliff."

Lieutenant Aldiss shook his head.

"Thank you, but I'm due at Buremouth at eight o'clock," he explained, and, taking the steaming cup which Max Hilliger had brought to him, he added: "So you're appointed to the *Atreus*, out there, are you?"

Rodney looked across at the grey-painted cruiser.

"Yes," he answered proudly, "I am to join to-day."

In the meantime a crowd was gathering around the aeroplane, eager to see it start on its renewed flight. A police-constable was approaching hurriedly down the slope of the cliff, no doubt with the intention of keeping off the curious crowd. As he came near to the camp, Rodney Redisham called out to him:

"Any news, Challis?"

"News, sir," responded Constable Challis, producing a journal from the front of his tunic, "I should just think so. Look here!" He opened the newspaper. "England has declared war," he announced.

Lieutenant Aldiss gave a quick glance at the prominently printed lines, handed his empty cup to Hilliger, and, swinging round, made a bee-line for his aeroplane, accompanied by Rodney Redisham, who helped him to start.

"Yes," continued Constable Challis, excitedly, "it's war—war against Germany—war to the knife. We're going to be put to the test. It'll be tough while it lasts. But you can take it from me, we shall win. We shall sweep the Germans off the face of the seas, and make an end of 'em!"

"Not a bit of it!" cried Max Hilliger exultantly. "It will be the other way about. Ha, ha! England's done for now! She's doomed. Every cockboat in her rotten fleet will be sent to the bottom. D'you hear? She's doomed! She'll be smashed—smashed like that!"

He dashed the empty cup in fury to the ground. There was a hearty burst of laughter, for the cup fell upon the soft sand and was not even cracked. Enraged at the failure of his illustration, and the laughter which seemed to mock him, Max snatched his Sea Scout's cap from his head and deliberately flung it full into the face of Mark Redisham.

Mark caught it with a quickly uplifted hand, and politely offered it back to him.

"Don't make a silly ass of yourself," he smiled, "even if you have become our enemy."

But instead of taking it, Hilliger turned away, strode sullenly to his bicycle, mounted it, and rode off in the direction of the town and the harbour.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE PERIL OF THE SILVER PIT.

"Ah, this is just what I like!" declared Mark Redisham from his elevated perch on the trawler's windward bulwark. "It's heaps better than being ashore in camp!"

Darby Catchpole, seated beside him, clapped his feet together in delight.

"It's lovely," he agreed; "I wouldn't have missed it for anything."

They were far out on the blue waters of the North Sea, steaming towards the fishing grounds of the Dogger Bank in the trawler *What's Wanted*, an entirely new craft, owned by Catchpole's father and now making her first working trip.

"It's a pity none of the other chaps are with us," regretted Redisham.

"You needn't be sorry Max Hilliger isn't here," Darby responded. "He

turned ridiculously crusty yesterday morning when the constable spoke about our beating the Germans. I suppose it was natural, since he's a German himself. Of course, he couldn't have stopped in the troop, even if he'd wanted to, being one of the enemy. But he might have had the grace to pay his debts. Mr. Bilverstone will never get the three shillings he owed him."

"Why? Max hasn't left the town, has he?"

"Yes, he has. He went off by the afternoon tide in that Dutch ketch that has been lying in the Roads so long. I suppose we've seen the last of him."

Redisham glanced round the wide stretch of sea, as if in search of the ketch, but there was no sign of her.

Darby jumped down from his perch, and Mark followed him aft, past the wheel-house, to find the skipper giving instructions for the trawl to be put out. They were now near the fishing grounds of the Silver Pit, a favourite spot for longshore soles and turbot.

When the trawling gear was out, the skipper and his two guests went below for breakfast in the tiny compartment which did service as a cabin. In taking his seat at the narrow flap table, Mark Redisham had to make room for himself by removing a gun. He examined the weapon, and, recognising it, looked across at Darby Catchpole.

"Why on earth have you brought your fowling-piece with you?" he asked in surprise. "Do you expect that you may need to defend yourself against the enemy?"

Darby laughed.

"No," he explained. "I told you once that I'm helping to complete the collection of East Coast birds for the Haddisport Museum. They don't possess a specimen of the common or North Sea tern. I thought perhaps I might get one."

He took his fowling-piece on deck with him. There were many sea birds—gannets, mews, and fulmars—flying about, but the graceful sea swallow was absent, and he transferred his interest to the work of hauling in the trawl.

The first take was disappointing; the second more fortunate. Time after time the gear was brought in, and gradually a considerable number of fish accumulated.

Redisham had brought with him a pair of marine glasses, of which he was especially proud. They were particularly powerful, and he was constantly testing them by trying to read the names on distant ships. At about nine o'clock he was idly searching the horizon, when his attention was arrested by a strange sail to the far north-east.

"Darby!" he cried. "There's that Dutch ketch! Have a look at her."

Darby took up the skipper's telescope from the top of the skylight and adjusted the focus.

"Yes," he agreed, after a while. "It's the same, no doubt. I know her by her weatherboard. But what's she up to? She's bang in the track of the steamer bearing down on her! Hullo! The steamer's stopped! Wait a bit. The Dutchman's putting out a boat."

The two Scouts watched what was going on across the sea—the rowing boat pulling alongside the steamship and returning to the ketch, having apparently disposed of some of its passengers.

Why should this transfer of passengers be made in the open sea? And had Max Hilliger anything to do with it?

Mark made out the steamer to be a vessel of about 2,000 tons. She had two cream-coloured funnels, and was furnished with many lifeboats and deckhouses, like a liner. He tried to read her name, but it was hidden by the anchor chain. It satisfied him, however, that she was flying the Red Ensign, and he took no further notice of her as she continued on her course south by west.

Shortly afterwards he was startled by the report of Darby's fowling-piece.

"Got him!" cried Catchpole. "It's a tern."

Darby was a good shot, and he had brought down the bird, which had fluttered into the sea hardly a score of yards from the trawler's starboard side.

The skipper made no demur when asked to reverse the engines. The boat was lowered, and Darby secured his prize. But his disappointment was great when he discovered that the bird was not a tern, or a web-footed sea bird of any species, but an ordinary domestic pigeon. He was on the point of casting it back into the sea when Redisham checked him.

"Wait!" cried Mark. "Which way was it flying?"

Darby looked at him in perplexity.

"What's your idea?" he questioned. "It was flying from north-east to south-west."

"Just what I guessed," returned Mark, with a significant nod. "It was going towards Haddisport from the Dutch ketch. It's one of Max Hilliger's pigeons. Let's have a look at it."

They examined the dead bird, and sure enough they discovered a strip of thin paper bandaged round one of the legs. The writing upon it was in minute shorthand.

"It's German!" declared Mark. "We must give it up to some naval officer to translate. I'll keep it in my pocket-book, shall I—till we get home?"

"Perhaps it came off the steamer, and not the ketch," suggested Darby.

They turned to look for the steamship, and saw her steaming southward, across their own wake. Although she was many miles away, it was possible now to distinguish her name, for the sunlight was upon her. They spelled out the words *Minna von Barnhelm.*

"Why, she's a German!" cried Mark, "and now she's flying the German naval ensign! Hullo! That's queer! There's something gone wrong with her. She's sprung a leak, surely! She's jettisoning her cargo. Have a squint at her!"

A large, dark object, like a cask or packing case, fell with a light splash into the sea under the steamer's counter. It seemed to have dropped from an inclined plank put out under her taffrail. She was going slowly while this was being done, but presently she put on steam and moved off, gathering speed, and was soon a mere speck in the far south.

The *What's Wanted* now altered her course to the westward, steered by Mark Redisham, for the two Sea Scouts were allowed to take each a spell at the wheel.

During every moment they were learning something new. What Darby enjoyed as much as anything was to work the winch which hauled in the loaded trawl; but always when the gear was brought inboard there was the excitement of emptying the pocket of the net and seeing what varieties of fish and strange marine creatures had been dredged up.

Darby was at the winch one moment, while Mark was pricking off the trawler's course on the chart, when the mate at the stern shouted excitedly:

"Belay there! Stop the winch, sir! Hold hard. We've fetched up a bit of wreck!"

Mark Redisham ran aft and looked over the side. The trawl beam was against the quarter bulwark, and a curious big, oval object, which at first glance looked like the back of a huge fish, was jammed between the beam and the vessel's side.

Mark leant over, and looked at the thing more closely; then he leapt back, trembling from head to foot.

"Steady all!" he cried hoarsely. "Don't move that winch, Darby! For the life of you, keep it still! Leave it, and come here—quick!"

Darby, the skipper, the mate, the engineer, the whole crew went up to him, staring at the thing which had so filled him with alarm. He alone seemed to know what it was.

"Stand back!" he cried. "Don't touch it! Don't go near it! It's a mine—a contact mine! If it's moved only an inch there'll be an explosion. See those spikes on the top of it? They're the detonators. One of them's resting on the rail! If it breaks—it's glass—if it breaks, we're all done for!"

The skipper, pocketing his pipe, looked through screwed-up eyes into the boy's face.

"Any c'nection with this yer war, Mester Redisham?" he coolly inquired.

"It has every connection with it," Mark answered calmly.

He went cautiously nearer to examine the exact position of the mine. It

was balanced on its own circumference, held against the side by the trawl board; but every slightest movement of the ship threatened to explode it.

"We can't cut it away," he decided. He turned to the mate. "Dick," he ordered, "launch the boat very carefully and let us all quit."

Fortunately the boat was at the farther end, hanging outward from the davits. Mark advised the skipper exactly what to do. He pointed out that by passing a warp round the trawl gear and hauling upon it from seaward the mine might be released and slip back into the sea. This was the only chance, and in case it should fail, every one was to get into the boat.

He was himself the last to leave the ship. They took the longest rope, and, rowing round, contrived at great risk to lash an end of it to the lower extremity of the trawl beam. Four men were at the oars. Paying out the rope over the stern as they rowed away, they hauled upon it until it became fairly taut.

"Steady!" commanded the skipper. "Back 'er a bit—belay—row starboard!"

He manoeuvred the boat until the pull of the rope was at the proper angle, then the tension was slowly tightened. The trawl beam swayed very slightly at first; but suddenly there was a heavy jerk, the mine moved, but it was not dislodged. Mark Redisham saw one of the detonators bending.

"Look out!" he shouted.

Instantly the air and sea together were torn by a terrific crash, which must have been heard a score of miles away. In that instant Mark saw the whole fabric of the trawler burst open. The boat heaved under him, and he was flung forward, stunned and unconscious.

## CHAPTER III.

### WATCHERS OF THE SEA.

The sound of that explosion carried its warning far over the fishing grounds of the Silver Pit. It reached tramps and colliers plying their ceaseless traffic along the coast. Nearer at hand it alarmed the crew of the trawler *Mignonette*, who saw the column of smoke and wreckage shot skyward as from the crater of a volcano, and who, regardless of their own danger from floating mines, hastened to the spot to pick up the dazed survivors huddled together in the open boat. It reached the officers and men on a patrol of destroyers speeding northward within sight of the English shores. On the cruiser *Atreus* it was distinctly heard, coming like

a challenge across the waves.

"Oho!" exclaimed the astonished commander, arresting his pacing of the quarter-deck. "Gunfire, eh? Hostilities are opening even earlier than we expected!"

He stood by the binnacle, listening for a second "boom."

"Seemed to me almost more like the explosion of a contact mine than a gun, sir," ventured the signal lieutenant, halting beside him.

"A mine?" protested the commander. "No, no, impossible! We have laid no mines. It is not in our programme to lay mines; and certainly not on the high seas. The enemy cannot have laid any, either—not over here; not so promptly, hardly thirty hours after the declaration of war. It cannot have been a mine. And yet there was only one detonation. If it had been a naval gun, it would have been answered. However, we shall soon know. We must go and see. Send out the signal to change course eight points to starboard."

It chanced that Rodney Redisham was midshipman of the watch, and that it fell to him to help in transmitting this signal.

With the precision of a battalion of soldiers at drill, the flotilla of destroyers and their guide ship wheeled first into line abreast formation and then into line ahead. The *Atreus*, which before had been leading, now held the rear station, following in the wake of the destroyers; and it was in this order that they appeared an hour later when sighted by Mark Redisham and Darby Catchpole from the deck of the *Mignonette*.

Mark was unhurt, excepting for a few bruises about the shins. Darby had a scar across his fore-head, and the skipper's head was badly cut; the mate's right arm was fractured, and all others of the crew had tested Mark's skill in first-aid. But they had escaped with their lives, even though the *What's Wanted* had disappeared.

"The blamed Germans!" complained the skipper, nursing his bandaged head. "And it was her maiden trip! The mean cowards to come sneakin' over here a-sowin' of their mines on the open sea for harmless fishin' craft to run foul of! 'T'aren't accordin' to any fightin' rules as ever I've heard on. 'T'aren't fightin' at all, nor honest warfare, look at it how you will!"

As the destroyers drew nearer, Mark Redisham grew more and more apprehensive lest they should run into the unsuspected danger of the mine-field, and he wanted to warn them of their peril. He urged the engineer to put on more steam and get close up, so that they might see their signals.

Already he had hoisted a flag signifying "I want to speak to you," and Darby was busy fashioning a pair of semaphore flags.

When the flotilla was near enough, Darby went to the steam whistle and opened the valve, giving a long, shrill blast to attract attention; following it with

short and long blasts in the Morse code to form the message:

"You are running into danger. Steamer flying German ensign has been laying mines. Trawler sunk. Survivors on board me."

At the same time, Mark, taking the two flags, climbed upon the wheelhouse, and, standing firmly, began to wave them, signalling very rapidly.

For a long time there was no response; but unknown to him, the leading destroyer had flashed its wireless message back to the cruiser. Presently the whole line came to a stop, and Mark saw that the semaphore on the *Atreus* was at work, questioning him. He answered, telling the whole story of the German mine-layer, and the loss of the *What's Wanted*.

Even while he was speaking, the motor-pinnace of the cruiser was launched, and the message came to him:

> "If you, the Sea Scout, who are signalling, are one of the survivors, come aboard us immediately. Let your shipmates be taken into Haddisport."

Mark was not altogether surprised when he saw that the midshipman in charge of the pinnace was his own brother Rodney. They shook hands as he stepped into the stern sheets, but preserved a discreet silence before the men.

Saluting the quarter-deck as they boarded the *Atreus*, Mark found himself face to face with a group of officers. He advanced towards the commander.

"If you will lend me a chart, sir," he began, "I will show you exactly the way the mine-layer went. She has been sowing mines all along her track."

A chart was at once opened on top of the skylight, and with a pencil Mark traced as nearly as he could the *Minna von Barnhelm's* course, from the time when he first saw her until she disappeared.

"It was just here where she began laying mines," he explained, indicating the spot, "about three miles to the east of where we are now. If you keep well to the westward, you will escape them, sir. But I can't say which way she steered after we lost sight of her."

"Of course not," nodded the commander. "You have done very well as it is. I'm tremendously obliged to you for the information."

He turned to his officers and gave orders for the squadron to proceed at full speed in pursuit, handing the navigation officer the marked chart.

"There's another thing," resumed Mark, fumbling in his pocket-book, and producing the strip of paper taken from Darby Catchpole's pigeon. He explained how he had come by it, adding: "It seems to be written in German shorthand. Perhaps you will take charge of it, sir."

"Excellent," smiled the commander. "You have your wits about you, my lad.

You have acted with commendable good sense and promptitude. This matter of the mine-field is most important. What is your name?"

"Redisham, sir—Mark Redisham. I am the brother of Midshipman Redisham."

"Indeed! Oh, then, just see if you can find him, and tell him from me to look after you until I want you again. Tell him he may show you over the ship!"

For a couple of hours or so Mark was in his glory going about the cruiser, examining the engines, the guns, the torpedo-tubes, inquiring into the mechanism of the water-tight doors, visiting the seamen's quarters, the conning-tower, and even watching the stokers at their grim work.

As they returned to the deck, a petty officer touched Mark's elbow.

"Captain Damant wishes you to go up to him on the bridge," he said.

Mark found his way, and climbed up to the commander's side.

"Take my binoculars and have a look at the steamer yonder," the commander told him, "and see if you identify her."

"I can identify her without the binoculars, sir," returned Mark. "It's the *Minna von Barnhelm*."

"Good," nodded Captain Damant. "I wanted to be sure. You can go now. Go and make yourself as small as you can in that corner of the conning-tower, and watch our destroyers. Don't be alarmed at the noise."

The destroyers were now stretched far in advance of the cruiser, bearing down upon the German in line ahead. Hardly had Mark settled himself in his corner, when the foremost of them fired a shot across the bows of the mine-layer.

The *Minna von Barnhelm* at once answered from small guns mounted on her upper deck, her shells falling short. Each of the destroyers fired a shot in turn, and every shot got home.

Within a few moments the mine-layer showed the terrible effects of the British guns. Her after-funnel fell over; one of her ventilators followed; her bridge was torn to shreds, and her top works were wrecked.

For a while it seemed to Mark that she was going to be left with this punishment, for the destroyers were continuing on their course, passing her on their port-beam. But presently he saw the immense four-inch guns of the *Atreus* herself being trained upon her from the forward barbette. Mark held his breath and waited, watching the long steel tubes moving as easily as if they were mere muskets taking aim.

Suddenly from one of them there was a great gush of fire and smoke, a staggering, deafening roar, which shook the whole ship, and a monster lyddite shell struck the *Minna von Barnhelm* on her quarter, exploding there with terrific violence.

Mark saw the gaping hole which it tore in the steamer's hull, and he knew

that no further shots would be needed. She was sinking by the stern, the men at the same time leaping into the sea.

The British ships, with one accord, converged towards her, and from each of them boats were being launched to pick up the survivors. The *Atreus* was the nearest, and just as her first boat pushed off the *Minna von Barnhelm* heeled over, shuddered, and sank in a riot of foam.

Mark and Rodney Redisham stood together at the gangway of the cruiser as the first boatload of survivors were brought on board.

As the last of them came up the ladder, it was seen that he was hardly more than a boy, wearing a fisherman's guernsey and heavy sea boots. He held up his head unashamed, almost insolently.

"Why, it's Max!" Rodney Redisham exclaimed.

Max Hilliger stared at the two brothers, a spasm of hatred on his face. He clenched his fist to strike at one of them, when a couple of seamen, with a loaded stretcher, marched in between.

The Germans were at once led below to have their wounds dressed, and to be provided with dry clothing.

"You had better slip down to the petty officers' mess now, Mark, and get some grub," Rodney advised. "I will see you later on. We're going into Haddisport, I believe, so you'll be put ashore. The destroyers are to be sent off on another job, up north."

It was two or three hours before they again met. Mark had had dinner, and was sitting chatting with a company of petty officers, when Rodney came to him.

"You're wanted in the chart-room," he announced. "Come along!" And as they were passing aft through one of the alley-ways, he added: "Captain Damant has had that pigeon message translated, and it seems to be important. He's going to ask you something about it."

Mark followed him up a flight of stairs to the deck.

At that moment there came a low, rumbling sound from under the bows of the *Atreus*. Then the frightful, ear-splitting crash of an exploding mine. A sheet of flame instantly enveloped the bridge. The vessel's back seemed to be broken. She listed over to the port side with such a jerk that all who were on deck were flung off their feet. Mark Redisham was pitched bodily over a machine-gun and flung far out into the sea.

He sank down, down into the depths. It seemed an age before he felt himself rising. At length, when he came to the surface, gasping, it was to find the air filled with falling splinters and a dense yellow smoke which almost choked him as he tried to breathe. He saw the doomed cruiser some distance away settling down by the bows.

He looked around him. Most of the debris from the explosion had been of

metal and had sunk. But he caught sight of a floating spar. He swam towards it. It was not large enough to support him, but it would help to keep him afloat until the poisonous fumes should clear.

He reached it and stretched forth a hand to grasp it, when another swimmer, coming behind him, shoved him violently aside and seized it.

Mark went under for a moment, rose again with his throat full of sea water, and grabbed the nearer end of the spar. As he did so he saw the other's face. It was the face of Max Hilliger.

They stared at each other. Both knew that one must yield.

"It's my life or yours," said Mark. "Which is it to be?"

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE MENACE OF THE MINES.

Hardly had Mark Redisham spoken the challenging words, when he realised that even if Max Hilliger should choose to yield to him the coveted chance of safety, he could not accept it. How could he afterwards forgive himself if he saved his own life at the cost of another's—even though that other were an enemy of his country?

The instinct of self-preservation was strong within him. He knew that by a turn of the hand he could take possession of the spar which would keep him afloat; he knew, too, that Hilliger was the better swimmer. But he did not hesitate.

"Take it," he said, pushing the spar from him.

He waited to see Hilliger seize and rest his arms over the support. Then he turned over on his side and struck out, swimming more easily among the waves than he had expected to do in his clothes and heavy boots. He could breathe more freely now, for the stifling fumes from the exploded mine no longer caught at his throat.

Uncertain of his best direction, striving only to keep his head above water, he glanced from side to side. In a ragged cloud of brown smoke and escaping steam he could dimly see the stricken cruiser, now about half a mile away.

She was perilously low in the bows, her afterpart tilted up, the blades of her propellers showing. Yet she did not seem to be sinking deeper. He supposed that her water-tight bulkheads had been promptly closed, that she still might keep afloat for hours.

Turning to see if Max Hilliger were following him, he caught sight of the destroyers rushing to the rescue, in spite of the danger from mines. He had not known that they were so close in the wake of the *Atreus*. Rodney had told him that they were going off on another job. He wondered if they would be able to save the ship by towing her into shoal water.

The shrill blast of a bugle reached him from the cruiser. As the smoke lifted for a moment he saw a throng of men on her decks, throwing things overboard—booms, hammocks, baulks of timber, crates, wooden gratings—anything that might help in saving life. Her boats appeared to have been smashed by the explosion. Everything beyond the bridge was wrecked—a funnel had fallen, the fire-control platform was down. He could see a gap in the forward turret, from which the great guns had been dislodged.

He thought of the stokers and engineers. None of the crew who had been in the forepart of the vessel when she struck the mine could have had any chance of life. Even as he swam, he passed many gruesome signs of the terrible destruction. He turned abruptly at sight of an uplifted hand and a young seaman's blood-stained face, which appeared immediately in front of him. He stretched out and caught at the man's wrist.

"Can I help you, mate?" he panted.

"No use, sonny," the seaman answered feebly. "Never you mind me. I've lost a leg, and I reckon my starboard side's stove in."

Mark held on, trying to get his free arm round the man's body. But he was drawn under, struggling, losing his grip.

When again he rose exhausted to the surface, and began once more to swim for his life, he was himself seized by the shoulder and pushed from behind. He made a spurt to free himself, and his right hand came down upon something solid, at which he grabbed with desperate fingers. It was one of the gratings that had been thrown overboard.

"Hold on to it!"

He heard the words confusedly through the buzzing of the sea water in his ears. He did not recognise the voice as that of his brother. Before he could turn to speak, his rescuer was swimming off again to the help of other possible survivors.

Mark reached over and managed to get a shin against the edge of the grating, pulling himself up until he rested bodily across the support. Thus raised above the surface, clinging with hands and knees, he could look round in search of swimmers who might share his refuge.

A little distance away he saw, and now recognised, his brother Rodney, swimming back to him with a hand under the chin of a wounded midshipman. The boy was brought alongside and lifted to the grating; but Mark Redisham saw

that he was already beyond all need of human help.

Rodney clambered upon the raft, and saw what Mark had seen.

"He was one of my pals at Dartmouth," he said. "Look around and see if there are any others."

"Max Hilliger is somewhere about," Mark answered; "but I see no sign of him."

"I expect he will be picked up," returned Rodney. "See! There's one of the destroyers putting out her boats."

The leading destroyer had meanwhile come close up to the *Atreus*, and was sending out a hawser, with the intention of getting her in tow by the stern. It was soon obvious, however, that this attempt to save the vessel was useless. She was settling down, the waves washing over her bows, her stern tilted high.

It was clearly time to abandon the ship. The order to do so was given; the men were falling in on her steeply sloping quarter-deck. Boats from the destroyers were pulled alongside, and without hurry or confusion men, officers, and captain left her to her fate.

A boat from the destroyer *Levity* picked up Rodney and Mark Redisham. Still in their wet clothes, they gave help in attending to the wounded. All of the survivors who were not hurt had been in the afterpart of the ship when she struck the mine. Those who had been below in the stokeholds and seamen's quarters were killed to the number of a hundred and forty men, apart from some thirty of the German prisoners taken from the *Minna von Barnhelm*.

Nor was this the end of the disaster. The destroyer's boats had barely drawn off from the sinking cruiser when she struck a second mine. It exploded the fore magazine. Two of the rescue boats were smashed; wreckage, falling from a great height, struck others, and one of the cruiser's shells, bursting on the deck of the *Levity*, killed three men.

When this happened, Mark was giving first-aid to a wounded signal-boy who had been carried below into the temporary cockpit. The shell exploded with a deafening crash just above his head. It seemed as if the stout deck plates were burst asunder. He betrayed no alarm, but went on with his work of attending to the signal-boy, until the surgeon came with his instruments and bandages.

Mark returned on deck, wondering what had happened, and was in time to watch the shattered *Atreus* taking her final plunge—the third ship which he had seen sent to the bottom of the North Sea on that memorable day!

Captain Damant stood near him, also watching.

"I should not have regretted it so much if she had been sunk in fair fight," the captain was saying to one of the officers. "This wholesale mine-laying, however, is something unexampled, and contrary to all international law. It is clear, too, that the enemy must have begun the work days before the declaration of war."

Mark saluted him.

"You wished to see me, sir," he reminded him.

"Yes," the captain nodded; "I wanted to know if the *Minna von Barnhelm* was the only suspicious-looking craft you saw this morning. But it is now obvious that she was not alone. I don't suppose," he added, "that you quite realise how important it was that you should give such prompt information."

"We didn't save the *Atreus*, sir," Mark regretted.

"That is true," acknowledged Captain Damant, "because, as a matter of fact, we altered our course, and ran into another mine-field. The important thing is that our wireless message was picked up by a squadron of our Dreadnoughts off the Dogger Bank. They were steaming towards the danger. What do you suppose would have been the result if they, as well as we, had run foul of those German mines? It is thanks to you that the Navy has been saved an even greater disaster than the loss of the *Atreus*. You may be sure I will see that your good services are recognised."

## CHAPTER V.

### UNDER THE SYCAMORE.

Long before the smoke of the destroyer flotilla blurred the clean line of the horizon, it was known in Haddisport that H.M.S. *Atreus* had been sunk by a floating mine. Among the first of the townspeople to hear the news was Darby Catchpole.

Darby had come ashore from the *Mignonette*, and had hastened to the naval signal station at the end of the pier to report what he personally knew of the mine-layer. His Sea Scout's uniform gave him a passport, and he entered the pavilion, undeterred by the armed bluejacket on guard at the door.

He found himself in a large room, in which were several officers and seamen. The officers were discussing a wireless message received from Captain Damant. He heard one of them transmitting the message by telephone. Another was working at the telegraph instrument. From an inner room came the busy clicking of a typewriter.

An officer whom he knew by sight as Lieutenant Ingoldsby, commander of a submarine, came up to him, and Darby told him of the loss of the *What's Wanted*, adding that another steam trawler, the *Pied Piper*, had met a similar fate, with the loss of all hands.

"I suppose the fishing will be stopped, won't it, sir?" Darby ventured anxiously. His father was an owner of several trawlers, and he foresaw the possibility of ruin.

"Not necessarily," the officer assured him. "We shall soon clear the sea of mines. If you are not otherwise on duty, you can be useful here."

Darby's eyes brightened.

"I'm ready now, sir, this minute, to do anything I can," he said.

"Good!" Lieutenant Ingoldsby nodded approval of this prompt willingness. "Go into the farther room, there. They'll tell you what to do."

Darby entered the tiny, sunlit room, from which he had heard the clicking of the typewriter. Two bluejackets stood between him and the table. One of them moved aside.

"A Sea Scout just come in, sir," he announced to the man at the typewriter.

The operator wheeled round, and Darby was astonished to recognise his own Scoutmaster, Mr. Arnold Bilverstone. He was aware that Mr. Bilverstone was in the Royal Naval Reserve. What surprised him was that Mr. Bilverstone had so quickly been installed in naval duties, and that he should already be wearing the uniform of a petty officer.

Responding to Darby's salute, Mr. Bilverstone questioned him concerning himself and his adventure, and, gathering a sheaf of papers, said:

"Take these to the Harbour-master. They are lists of selected steam trawlers that are to be brought at once into the inner harbour to be turned into minesweepers, flying the White Ensign."

Not Darby Catchpole alone, but several other Sea Scouts of the Lion Patrol were occupied about the town and harbour that afternoon, helping to convert a fleet of fishing boats into a fleet of naval auxiliaries.

Instead of trawling for fish, these stout little vessels were to engage in the perilous pursuit of picking up explosive mines from the waters of the North Sea. It only needed that their funnels and hulls should be painted grey, and that some alterations should be made in their dredging gear, and they were ready for their new and dangerous work, each with her daring crew of naval reserve men.

In the late afternoon, Darby watched the first of them going out, under the escort of a gunboat. It was astonishing how wicked looking a coat of war paint had made them.

He lingered at the naval base until the survivors of the *Atreus* were landed in boats from the destroyers, and with other Sea Scouts he helped in conveying the wounded to the hospital. On his return he met Mark Redisham, who told him of how Max Hilliger had been on board the German mine-layer.

"I've been looking and asking for him," said Mark, as they walked together across the swing-bridge. "I supposed he'd been picked up by one of the destroy-

ers; but nobody seems to know anything about him. I'm afraid he is drowned. We'd better call and tell his people."

Darby Catchpole shook his head.

"I've just heard that his people have left the neighbourhood," he explained. "Mr. Hilliger, being a German, couldn't very well stay in Haddisport. Of course, the consulate has ceased to exist. He has had to shut up his office and apply for his passports. I shouldn't be at all surprised if he, as well as Max, was aboard that Dutch ketch—the *Thor*—that we spotted off the Silver Pit. Perhaps he even went with Max on board the mine-layer. Anyhow, he's said to have sold his business and gone off."

"It looks as if he'd known long beforehand that there was going to be war," Mark observed.

"That is what the men in the trawl market are saying," resumed Darby. "They are saying, too, that for years past he has been acting as an agent of the German Navy against Great Britain, using his fishing boats to fetch and carry information. What about that pigeon message? Had it anything to do with him? Did you get at what was in it?"

"Yes." Mark Redisham gave a cautious glance at his companion. "But I've got to keep it a secret."

"Right," nodded Darby. "Then I won't refer to it again. Are you going to call at Sunnydene? I don't suppose you will find any one there, except perhaps a caretaker. The German servants were dismissed quite a week ago."

Sunnydene was the name of the Hilligers' luxurious mansion on the edge of the cliff, to the north of the town. It was a conspicuous, stone-built house, with gables and turrets overgrown with creepers, flanked by fir trees grotesquely bent by the harsh winds of winter. In the middle of the front lawn there was a tall flagstaff, rigged like a schooner's mast, from which, on occasion, the German ensign was displayed. The lower as well as the upper windows commanded a wide expanse of the North Sea, and it was from one of them, opening upon the terrace, that Herr Hilliger had watched the *Thor* setting out, with his son on board.

Time and again during this day he had stood looking out towards the far horizon, as if he expected something to happen. And now in the dusk of the evening he was once more gazing outward, with an expression of grave anxiety in his watery, blue eyes.

"The pigeon has not yet come home, Seligmann!" he said, turning sharply and speaking in German to his secretary, who had just entered the room carrying an overcoat and a yellow leather handbag.

"No, *mein herr*," the secretary answered, "I have again been into the loft. It has not returned. And already the car is at the door. It is time that we start."

"Strange!" ejaculated Heir Hilliger. "I cannot understand it. Max was to set it free at ten o'clock this morning. A bird that has so often found its way across from Heligoland is not likely to have lost itself on a shorter journey. It cannot be that the *Minna von Barnhelm* failed to come out from Cuxhaven. She was to have been at sea, equipped and ready to begin her work at once when Max should signal to her that war had been declared. Nothing can have gone wrong—nothing!"

He strode impatiently to and fro about the room.

"There is no help for it, Fritz," he resumed. "You must go without me. You have your passport. You will go by motor-car to Harwich, catch the night boat for the Hook of Holland, and join Max at Wilhelmshaven. You understand?"

"I understand, *mein herr*," returned Fritz Seligmann. "I have everything ready—the money, the secret code book, the plans, the letter to Admiral von Hilliger. But it is unfortunate that you come not also. If already our brave battleships are coming over for the great invasion, it will be better that you are in Germany rather than here in England."

"Very true," agreed Herr Hilliger. "But before three days I shall no longer be in England. I shall be on board the Admiral's flagship. Why should I remain in the enemy's country when I can be over there in my own, doing my duty for the Fatherland?"

An hour later, when the loaded car had gone off on its journey to Harwich and the house was in darkness, he was out in the grounds, prowling among the deep shadows of the trees. He seemed to have no object in his wanderings; but presently he entered the stables, empty now of both horses and motor-cars. He looked up into the blackness of the rafters, where the open square of a trap-door showed dimly. Then he determined to climb up into the pigeon loft. He clutched the sides of the ladder, his foot was on the lowest rung, when the sound of a footstep startled him. A hand caught agitatedly at his elbow. He turned with a nervous gasp, and drew back in amazement, as if he had seen a ghost.

"Max!" he cried. "You! Here? How is this? What has happened?"

Max stood facing his father, disguised in the engineer's cap and jumper that he had borrowed in place of his own wet garments on the destroyer which had brought him to land. He was breathing heavily, as if he had been running; as, indeed, he had, all the way from the harbour.

"I'm in time, then," he panted. "In time to stop you. But why are you not gone, hours ago? You got the message?"

"The message," his father repeated, recovering his composure. "It has not come. The bird is not yet home. You failed me. You did not set it free!"

"But I did, father!" protested Max. "It ought to have been here long since. I don't understand."

"Nor I," returned his father. "It was the best homing bird we ever had. Some one—why, what is the matter?"

Max was standing rigid, staring dazedly in front of him.

"I was thinking," he said slowly, "wondering—wondering if Mark Redisham——But no, it couldn't be. It's not possible. And yet there was that shot that I heard—a rifle shot—from across the sea! Are you sure the pigeon is not in the loft, father?"

"Never mind the pigeon now." Herr Hilliger drew him out into the stable yard. "Tell me what has happened. What of the *Minna von Barnhelm*? You signalled her? You went aboard? Why have you come ashore?"

"What?" cried Max in astonishment. "You have not heard? You have not been told? But she is sunk—sunk by the guns of a British cruiser—the *Atreus*. I was aboard of her—yes. I was picked up. And then the cruiser herself was blown up, sky-high, by one of our floating mines."

"Ah!" exclaimed Herr Hilliger, with a new eagerness. "Then the mines were laid?"

"Hundreds of them!" Max declared. "All along the coast."

"Good!" nodded his father, moving out from the yard into the drive. "We shall succeed."

He came to a halt under the shadow of a sycamore-tree.

"Listen, my son," he resumed, speaking very low. "This morning I have had a secret dispatch from Berlin. Everything goes well. Our brave soldiers are sweeping their way through Belgium. In a week they will march triumphantly into Paris. We shall have taken possession of Calais. The way to England will then be easy. Our battleships and submarines will command the Channel, and all the seas; cutting off supplies so effectually that Great Britain will be starved into submission, even before our transports and Zeppelins land their invading forces. Your opportunities, my dear Max, are even brighter than I had dared to dream."

He paused, drawing his son closer into the shielding shadows of the tree.

"But this delay in our getting over to Wilhelmshaven is most unfortunate," he continued. "As it happens, you had better have gone right across in the ketch, instead of changing into the *Minna*. As for myself——"

"Why didn't you go by the mail-boat from Harwich?" Max interrupted.

"My dear boy," exclaimed his father, "I waited for your message. All our plans—everything—depended upon my knowing the bearings of the *Minna* and my getting on board of her, as we planned."

"And now," pursued Max, "what do you propose to do?"

"Listen!" rejoined Herr Hilliger, still speaking in a cautiously low voice. "Everything that we now do must be in the service of the Emperor and the Fatherland. You and I are no longer concerned with England, in any way whatever,

excepting in hastening her complete downfall. Great Britain must be beaten to the dust. And I have come to the determination that for the present we can best serve the Kaiser's cause by my going at once to Wilhelmshaven, leaving you here in England."

"Leaving me here?" cried Max in surprise. "But why? Why should I, a German, remain here among our enemies?"

"To be of the greatest use to his Majesty the Kaiser," returned Herr Hilliger. "You have been associated with the English people. You know them; you speak like one of them; you can pass yourself off anywhere as English. You can look about you without being suspected, seeing things which it is important that the Admiral and his captains should know."

"What?" Max ground his heel into the gravel. "You want me to stop here and find out the secrets of our enemies—to continue your underhand work of sending private information to Germany about the British fleet? You want me to betray the people who have been my friends? No, my father, I cannot do that. I am a German; I will fight for Germany. I will give up my life for the Fatherland. But I will not pretend to be what I am not. I will not be a spy."

Herr Hilliger laughed, a low, contemptuous laugh.

"My dear Max," he said, "since when did you learn that to be a true patriot it is necessary to consider the advantages of your country's enemies? It is nonsense. Your highest duty, as my son and as a German, is to do all you can against the arrogant English. You shall obey me. Do you understand? Tell me, once: how many people know that you are here in Haddisport? How many know that your life was saved when the British cruiser was blown to pieces by our faithful explosive mine?"

"Nobody knows," Max answered sullenly. "Nobody on board the destroyer which picked me up knew me, even by sight. I did not intend that any one should guess I was a German. Nobody who was on board the *Atreus* knows that I was not blown to bits—except—yes, except Mark Redisham. He saw me swimming. But he doesn't know that I was saved."

"Ah!" nodded Herr Hilliger. "And he need never know. He must never know—never. It is better that he should believe that you were drowned."

Max clutched at his father's arm, pressing him back upon the grass behind the tree.

"Some one comes!" he whispered agitatedly.

They both saw the lithe figure of a youth approaching silently up the drive. He paused for a moment, looking at the front door of the dark, deserted house, strode to the porchway, and quickly ran up the steps. In the silence the two watchers heard the tinkling of an electric bell; but neither moved. Strange that they should thus hide themselves in their own garden!

They waited, knowing that the door would not be opened. Herr Hilliger ventured to lean out and look towards the porch. As he did so, the revolving beam of light from the lighthouse, half a mile away, illumined the trees, travelled slowly over the towers and gables of the dwelling, glinted for an instant on the upper windows, then spread its glow across the sea. Against this glow he saw the figure on the doorstep, clearly defined.

"It is one of your Sea Scouts," he whispered.

The Sea Scout ran lightly down the steps, turned, and came quickly nearer, walking so quietly on the gravel that Max could only believe that he wore tennis shoes. Then, as he came yet closer, to within a couple of yards of the two Germans, again the beam from the lighthouse swung round and shone in his face.

It was the face of Mark Redisham.

## CHAPTER VI.

### WHAT MARK FOUND IN THE PIGEON-LOFT.

The two watchers under the sycamore-tree held themselves so very still and silent that even if he had been searching for them Mark Redisham might have passed by without a suspicion that they were so near. His well-trained senses were alert, but he was not consciously listening for any betraying sound or looking for any movement.

He went on along the gravel drive with confident stride until he reached the stables. Here he paused, glancing backward before entering the gateway of the yard. He had expected to find the gate shut and bolted, and was surprised to see that the door of the motor-garage also was open.

The place was in darkness, but he noticed that the motor-car was not there. This appeared to indicate that, although the family might have gone home to Germany, yet they had not dismissed all their servants. Mark reflected that probably the chauffeur, who acted also as gardener, had been left in charge of the house and grounds until the property should be sold or otherwise disposed of.

Mark had no intention of asking the caretaker's sanction to do what he had come to do. Indeed, it gratified him that his precautionary ringing of the hall hell had not been answered. He went boldly into the stables.

Knowing that he was about to use his electric torch, he closed the door behind him, lest the light should be seen. He knew the place well. Even in this

past summer the Lion Patrol had had a scout game at Sunnydene. Pickets had been stationed at various points, and it had been his own part to steal into the grounds and make his way in the darkness into the harness-room without being caught.

He was now engaged in no ordinary scouting game, but in a serious duty imposed upon him by the officer in command at the naval base, and it was even more important that he should not be detected.

Feeling along the whitewashed wall, he touched the ladder leading to the loft. Up this he climbed through the trap-door.

He stood for some moments looking about him in the darkness of the loft. In the high door by which hay and straw were brought in there was a small hole, on a level with his eyes. Swallows used it as an entrance to their nests in the rafters. Going up to it and peering outward, he could distinguish the dark level of the sea, and presently the ruby gleam of the Alderwick lightship appeared, grew brighter, and faded against the dim horizon.

Mark realised that, if from here he could see that ruby gleam, it was certain that the crew of the lightship could equally well see the flash of his electric torch. Was it not possible that Heinrich Hilliger had used this hole in the loft door through which to flash his signals? Mark covered the hole by hanging his cap on a nail just above it.

Then he turned and closed the trap in the floor. It made more noise in falling than he had intended. Whether it was the displacement of air or his own fancy, there seemed to be a corresponding sound down below, as if another door had been suddenly shut, and as if the key of that other door had been turned in the lock.

"I suppose I'm a bit nervous," he said to himself. "It couldn't have been anything." He drew out his torch, pressed the switch, and turned the shaft of light upon the partition beyond which Hilliger's pigeons were kept. The key was in the door. Feeling like a guilty burglar, he turned it and entered, shielding the light from the open space in the gable by which the pigeons flew in and out.

There were no pigeons here now. The coops and perches were empty. He supposed that Herr Hilliger had taken the birds away with him, to use them in carrying secret messages back to England; although, as yet, there was no proof that Herr Hilliger had ever actually used any of his pigeons for this purpose.

Mark made a rapid survey of the untidy loft, with its lumber of old harness, rusty garden tools, bundles of sacking, broken fishing-rods, and discarded cricket bats. On a low shelf were some model yachts with torn sails and tangled rigging. He looked at the rough model of a steam trawler. The boat was curiously constructed with a boxed-in and bottomless well. Inside this well there was a crude model of a submarine. Some one—Max Hilliger, perhaps—had evidently

attempted to invent a device by which a real submarine might be hidden within the casement of a larger vessel, thus enabling it to be brought close to an enemy without being discovered. The idea was ingenious, but obviously not practical.

In a corner cupboard he discovered a box of electric light bulbs of various colours. The sight of these led him to search for electric wires. He saw none; but what he did find was a portable electric lamp coiled round with a wire so exceedingly long that, as he estimated, the switch might be worked here in the loft while the bulb could be cunningly planted amongst the gorse bushes halfway down the cliff, there to flash its signals of coloured light.

Mark wondered if he should take the lamp away with him, but decided to leave it untouched. If as he believed, Herr Hilliger was already on his way back to Germany, and if Max were drowned, there could be no more risk of their communicating with the enemy.

He turned his torch upon the long trestle table at the far end of the loft. It was littered with feathers and grain, and thick with dust. But in the midst of the litter were several things which he considered it his duty to examine. The first article he touched was a match-box, half full of very small elastic bands. Beside it was a spool of thin, narrow paper.

"Here's proof enough!" he reflected with satisfaction. For he recognised the paper and the elastic bands as being precisely similar to the material found on the leg of the pigeon shot by Darby Catchpole from the deck of the *What's Wanted*.

For a little while longer he continued his search. From a pile of old newspapers and tattered books, he idly drew forth a long, tin cylinder, thinking at first it was a telescope case. The lid had been jammed on crookedly, and he had difficulty in pulling it off with the help of his knife. When he succeeded at last in opening the canister, he saw that it contained several tightly-rolled sheets of paper. He spread them out on the table. They were maps, plans, and charts, very carefully drawn.

The uppermost one was a general map of the coast, including Haddisport and Buremouth, with the villages between and a wide strip of the sea, divided into numbered sections. The others—and there were some twenty of them—were detailed enlargements of the same sections, upon which were shown the principal buildings of the two towns, the particulars of the harbours and railways, with every road and lane and bridge, every field and coppice and house, distinctly indicated.

Mark Redisham had never seen such wonderful maps, or imagined that any existed so complete and correct. Nothing seemed to have been overlooked. On the margins of each sheet were notes, written in German, with numbers referring to certain features in the plans.

Mark saw much that he did not then understand; but there was one sheet in particular which was perfectly clear to him. It was a large scale chart of the section of the North Sea immediately facing Haddisport, giving the exact soundings of the channels and shallows and showing an outline of the coast, with every altitude measured.

The soundings of Alderwick Knoll were so precise and plentiful that it was evident to him that some important purpose was connected with this sand-bank. He could hardly doubt, indeed, that the chart had been prepared for the guidance of an enemy attempting an invasion!

So greatly was he impressed by this idea, that he became nervously excited over his discovery. What was he to do? Should he carry these charts and maps away with him, now—to-night? He had not been instructed to take anything away with him; but only to "have a look round" and report upon any discovery he might happen to make.

Thinking over the situation for a few swift moments, he determined to obey his orders to the letter. Accordingly, he returned the sheets to the map-case, put the case back where he had found it, and prepared to leave the loft.

He left no trace of his secret visit. Taking his cap and pocketing his torch, he climbed down the ladder into the garage. He pushed lightly at the door; but it did not swing open. He pushed it harder; still it resisted. Then he put his shoulder to it and gave it a shove. It did not move. He grappled with it, trying with all his strength to force it open and, realised, to his alarm, that it had been locked from the outside!

He grew hot and cold by turns. Had he been watched, stealing into these stables where he had no business which he could truthfully explain? If so, who could it be that had watched and trapped him? It could not be Heinrich Hilliger himself, or Max. Herr Hilliger had gone back to Germany. Max was drowned. The chauffeur had not returned with the car. Once more he put his shoulder to the door. No. It was certainly locked! He was a prisoner!

But Mark Redisham was not a Sea Scout for nothing. There were more ways than one of getting out. He tried the door of the harness-room. That, too, was locked. Yet there was still another door, leading into the stable. It opened with a simple latch and he crossed to the door giving on to the yard. Again he was foiled.

He looked to the window. It was heavily barred.

But not even now did he despair. Beyond the vacant horse-boxes was a small opening in the wall—a hatch through which the stable refuse was forked out. This hatch, he knew, was fastened only on the inside by a hook and staple. In a moment he had flung it open, to climb out without further hindrances and make his way among the fruit trees and across the tennis lawn to the back gate

of the Sunnydene property, and into the Alderwick road.

Five minutes after his escape, he was at home in his father's library, sending his report by telephone to the naval base.

His father, Major Redisham, had gone off to join his regiment, and the family supper was in consequence a melancholy meal. Mark said nothing of his visit to Sunnydene; but he was at liberty to tell his mother and sisters of the exciting events of the day—the loss of the *What's Wanted*, the sinking of the German mine-layer, and the terrible disaster to the *Atreus*.

"So you see," he concluded, "Rod was present at the firing of the first naval gun of the war!"

"Yes," said his mother; "but unfortunately Rodney's ship cannot be replaced, or the brave men who went down with her. He may not get another appointment for a long time. Is he coming home to-night, Mark?"

Mark shook his head.

"No, mother," he answered. "He was kept aboard the destroyer—the *Levity*. The whole flotilla went off to sea again as soon as the wounded were put ashore for hospital."

"I suppose they've gone to join the main fleet," his sister Vera conjectured. "Of course, the German battleships are out, and there'll be a great battle."

"The destroyers went south, however," Mark explained, "and the enemy fleet is much more likely to be hanging round off the Dogger Bank than down there in the narrow seas. It's my idea that the destroyers have gone into the Channel."

"Why?" questioned Vera. "What's the good of their going into the Channel when the Germans are in the North Sea? We want to fight them, don't we?"

"Well, you see," resumed Mark, "the British Army will be crossing to France. You don't suppose that ever so many of our transports—big liners crowded with troops—will be allowed to go over by themselves, at the risk of being sunk by German submarines? They've got to be protected on both flanks. I expect they'll steam across through quite an avenue of cruisers and destroyers."

Later, when Mark was saying good-night before going sleepily to bed, there was a ring at the front-door bell.

"Master Mark is wanted," the parlourmaid announced agitatedly. "There's a policeman and a lot of soldiers."

No longer sleepy, Mark hurried into the hall, where he found Constable Challis, Mr. Bilverstone, and two men in khaki.

"What's up?" he cried, seeing that the two soldiers were armed with rifles and fixed bayonets. "Are the Germans coming?"

"We want you to go with us," Arnold Bilverstone explained. "Get on your overcoat, and bring your electric torch. We're going to make a raid on Herr

Hilliger's pigeon-loft."

Mark was quickly ready to march off at the head of the company. As they filed into the Sunnydene ground they saw that the house was in total darkness.

Leaving one of the sentries posted outside the stable yard, Mr. Bilverstone led the way round to the rear of the outhouses, where he posted the second sentry. Mark crossed the tennis-court, dodged under the fruit trees, and crawled through the hatch door which he had left unfastened. Mr. Bilverstone and Constable Challis followed him through the stable and into the garage. They mounted one by one into the loft. Mark flashed his torchlight along the floor, up into the rafters, and again along the floor. Then he stooped and picked up the stub of a cigarette, sniffed at it and shook his head.

"Somebody has been here!" he cried. "The end of this cigarette's still wet."

He went beyond the partition and began to search. But his search was in vain. The maps, the electric signalling-lamp and coloured bulbs, the model of the submarine, the spool of paper, the elastic bands—all had been cleared away. Nothing remained to show that the place was more than an abandoned pigeon-loft.

## CHAPTER VII.

### UNDER THE WHITE ENSIGN.

Because he was a Sea Scout, clever at semaphore signalling, with a knowledge of seamanship, resourceful, and generally handy, Mark Redisham had no difficulty in entering the Royal Naval Reserve, the more especially as he was strongly recommended by Captain Damant. It satisfied him greatly to be appointed at once as signal-boy and wireless operator on board His Majesty's steam trawler *Dainty*.

She was named the *Dainty* when launched, and as the *Dainty* she had toiled and battled for three stormy winters on the wild North Sea. But now her impudent white and red funnel and her gaudy hull were painted a sombre war grey, her trawling gear had been altered, her fish-well turned into a cabin, and the name on her bows had given place to the number 99. She was no longer a mere fishing craft, but classed as one of the great new fleet of naval mine-sweepers, flying the white ensign, and manned by a crew of sturdy East Coast fishermen wearing the blue jacket and loose trousers and flat-topped caps of the British Navy.

It was a proud moment for Mark when early on the morning following the "raid" on the pigeon-loft he went on duty, and the *Dainty* steamed out of Haddisport harbour and bore northward abreast of the lighthouse and past his home on the cliff. She was one of a squadron of twelve, and they went out in the company of the torpedo gunboat *Rapid*.

Word had come that the Germans had sown an extensive mine-field to the west and south of the Dogger Bank, scattering their deadly explosives over the seas, to the peril of peaceful trading vessels as well as of any British battleships and cruisers that might enter the area of danger. Two Danish cargo steamers and half a dozen English fishing boats had already been blown up, and our busy scavengers of the sea were now to go out and rake up the carefully-sown seedlings of death.

The work was dangerous, for at any moment one of the stout little vessels of the squadron might find a mine with her keel instead of with her stretched wire hawser, which meant ten more good men sent to the bottom. And there was always the risk of a premature explosion if a mine had to be handled in releasing it from its moorings.

Mines are not pleasant things to handle at any time—certainly not such powerful ones as the Germans employ, with glass "beards," or projecting spikes, the breaking of one of which results in an explosion great enough to sink a Dreadnought! They are charged, not with gun-cotton, but with the even stronger explosive known as T.N.T., which has the quality that if the mine filled with it strikes a ship it blows in the side of the vessel and then continues its destructive work in the interior.

The skipper of mine-sweeper 99 was Harry Snowling, R.N.R., an old salt who had fished for thirty years on the North Sea, and knew its deeps and shallows as well as he knew the lines on his own honest, weather-beaten face. But, of course, he had had no experience of mine-sweeping, and had only vague ideas as to how the mines were to be located.

"What's she doin' of, bor?" he questioned, when they were far out in the blue water, watching a seaplane sweeping overhead and flying to and fro athwart the gunboat's course.

"Well," said Mark Redisham, "I'm not certain; but I suppose she's looking for mines. They're not floating right on the surface, you know. They're held just about a foot below low water level, so that when a vessel passes she'll go bang on to them. But the pilot up there can see them, as a gannet sees a fish, and I expect he'll drop a signal when he spots one."

For something like an hour the seaplane searched, followed by the gunboat, with the trawlers moving in pairs in her wake.

When at length a signal was sent down that mines had been sighted, "dans,"

or small buoys with flags attached, were put out to mark the spot from which operations were to begin. Each couple of trawlers got ready their dredge tackle, dropping over the stern a long wire rope, heavily weighted. The weight drawn by each boat was connected with that of its partner by a yet longer wire hawser, weighted to keep it submerged and stretched below the level of the floating mines. The two vessels, ranging themselves on either side of the mine-field, steamed ahead on a parallel course, so that their submerged gear should catch upon the mooring-lines and sweep up the mines floating between them.

This process was carried on simultaneously by the other trawlers, clearing a wide lane through the mine-field, while the gunboat and the seaplane continued their searching for new fields.

When the mines were thus caught and brought to the surface, they were exploded from a safe distance by gunfire. You may be sure there were many narrow escapes from serious accident.

During the first afternoon, the *Dainty* and her working partner, the *Ripple*, brought up two mines together. They came into violent contact with each other, exploding so close astern of the *Ripple* that she was caught in the edge of the upheaval and badly damaged. Her crew made for the boat, thinking that all was over with them; but her skipper controlled them, and himself crawled below into the narrow space near the screw shaft, discovered the damage, and stopped the leak sufficiently to enable the pumps to keep the water down and save the ship.

Within a quarter of an hour of this accident, one of the other trawlers struck a mine and was shattered to fragments.

At the end of two days, the field having been cleared, the gunboat returned to port. Shortly after she had gone, Mark Redisham and his companions watched a squadron of British dreadnoughts and cruisers steaming safely across the area from which the danger had been so industriously removed.

Their trails of smoke had hardly faded from the horizon when Mark, still looking in the direction in which they had disappeared, noticed a curious disturbance in the calm water, about a couple of miles away.

At first he thought it was a school of gambolling porpoises showing their fins, but presently the periscopes and conning-tower of a submarine rose to the surface. The conning-tower was marked "U15," and he knew by this that she was German.

It seemed to him that she had probably been lurking in wait for the battleships that had just passed. If so, she had certainly missed her chance of doing them any damage. One of her officers climbed out to the conning-tower platform, looked searchingly around the sea, but quickly disappeared again, and the submarine dived, having paid no attention to the trawlers.

Mark, taking counsel with the skipper, went into the wireless operating-

room and sent out a message, reporting what he had seen and giving the position. He did not expect his message to be picked up; but within an hour a British light cruiser came racing down from the north at twenty-five knot speed. The skipper and Mark watched her through their binoculars as she drew nearer, and identified her as H.M.S. *Carlisle.* They saw her suddenly alter her course, as though to avoid the mine-sweepers and possible floating mines.

"Her needn't be afeared," said Snowling. "Thar aren't no mines here now. Suppose you signals her, bor, and tells her it's all right!"

"Hold hard!" cried Mark. "Look! Look what she's after!"

In direct advance of the cruiser, he distinguished for a moment the two periscopes of the enemy submarine making a ripple as they moved through the calm water. In that same moment there was a gush of fire and smoke from one of the warship's 6-inch guns. A fountain of spray rose high into the sunlit air from where the shell had fallen. One of the periscopes seemed to have been struck. The submarine, evidently crippled, was emptying her ballast tanks to rise to the surface when a second shell struck her half-submerged conning-tower, smashing it like an egg.

"That's what I calls good marksmanship," declared old Harry Snowling. And going to the flag-halyard, he dipped his white ensign in salute.

The nearest of the trawlers hastened to the spot where the shattered submarine had gone down, hoping to save some lives; but nothing was found but a slimy patch of floating oil.

The *Carlisle* came within speaking distance of the trawlers, standing by for about an hour, and gave information of a new mine-field sown between the Dogger Bank and the Bight of Heligoland. Ten British trawlers, it was stated, had been captured by a German cruiser—the *Schwalbe*—which had taken them in to Emden. Their crews had been kept prisoners, and the boats had been fitted out as mine-layers to scatter mines indiscriminately wherever ships could sail.

The mine-sweepers were supposed to work in stretches of ten days at sea and six in port; but the *Dainty* and her companions continued at their task a longer time, for the danger was greater than ever the Royal Navy had counted upon.

Many neutral ships and fishing craft had been blown up, a British gunboat had been sunk, another badly damaged, and it was imperative that the seas should be kept clear. But at length a relief squadron from Grimsby came out to take over the work, and the Haddisport boats were dismissed for home.

Early on the next morning, Mark Redisham started up in his bunk, hearing the engines coming to a dead stop. He dressed himself in his oilskins and went out upon the rain-splashed deck. To his surprise he saw that a submarine had come close alongside. It was the H29, of which, as he remembered, his friend,

Lieutenant Ingoldsby, was the commanding officer. One of her crew had been taken ill, and Lieutenant Ingoldsby wished the *Dainty* to take the man on board and nurse him until he could be put ashore in Haddisport.

The sick man had been carried over a gangway thrown across between the two vessels when Mark, happening to glance over the *Dainty's* farther bulwark, in search of the rest of the squadron which had gone on in advance, saw instead the dim shape of a three-funnelled cruiser looming ghostlike through the rain mist. She was flying no ensign, but by the look of her he was almost sure she was not British.

Not asking himself why he did so, he strode across the gangway to where Lieutenant Ingoldsby knelt, doing something with a spanner, on the narrow deck abaft the conning-tower.

"Good-morning, sir," he began. "I think the cruiser over there is signalling."

"Cruiser?" repeated Lieutenant Ingoldsby, springing to his feet. He climbed a few rungs up the ladder of the conning-tower, and looked out over the wheel-house of the *Dainty*, behind which the submarine was well hidden.

"Just slip below and ask Jardine for my glasses, Redisham," he ordered. "I believe it's the *Schwalbe*—the ship we've been stalking! In fact, I'm sure!"

Mark had never before been on board a submarine, and when he got to the foot of the perpendicular ladder of the hatchway, he became confused by the strange complexity of tanks and machinery. An electric light shone in the far end of a narrow passage. He was making his difficult way towards it when the great boom of a naval gun startled him. The *Schwalbe* was opening fire on the mine-sweepers.

He stood still. The silence following the gun shot was broken by the banging of an iron door above his head, and the sharply-spoken command rang out in Lieutenant Ingoldsby's voice:

"Prepare to dive!"

## CHAPTER VIII.

### HOW MARK MADE HIMSELF SMALL.

On hearing the gun shot, followed so quickly by the command, "Prepare to dive!" Mark Redisham knew that the strange cruiser he had seen was unquestionably an enemy, firing upon the mine-sweepers.

An electric bell buzzed insistently; some one sang out: "Diving stations!" and there was a scurrying of bare feet along the narrow deck. It was useless now for him to go in search of Lieutenant Ingoldsby's binoculars. His impulse was to get off the submarine and aboard his own ship as quickly as possible. Yet for an instant he hesitated, lost in the confusion of dark passages and intricate machinery.

A second shot sounded. He turned and scrambled blindly back to the companion-hatch. But here he was stopped. The steep iron ladder was occupied by an officer who was even then screwing down the fastening of the watertight hatch-cover above his head.

"Can't I get off, sir?" Mark cried desperately. He had no fear, even though already he heard the gurgling of the water in the ballast tanks and knew that the submarine was on the point of being submerged. He clutched at the officer's naked ankles and repeated his question:

"Can't I get off, sir—on to my own ship—the *Dainty*?"

The officer, a sub-lieutenant in working kit, descended to the iron grating at the foot of the ladder.

"Not now," he answered quietly, as he pressed an electric switch, flooding the whole ship with light. "You must stop where you are. Sit down in that corner. Make yourself small. Don't touch anything, or you may get a nasty shock."

He bent down and disappeared through what looked like an oven door in the bulkhead. Mark could see the men hurrying to their posts. Two went forward to the torpedo-tubes, one to each main ballast-tank kingston, one to the hydroplane wheel, another to the motor switches. An engineer took charge of the air-escape vents.

Each kingston being opened and the water rushing in, the boat began to sink. Mark felt an uncomfortable, heaving motion beneath him. He heard the hum of machinery—the whirr of well-oiled wheels, the chunking of pistons and cranks. The Diesel engine was working whilst the conning-tower remained above the surface for the ship to get clear of the trawler alongside. Electric bells trilled their messages from the commander to the men at their various stations.

"Close everything!" he called aloud.

The petrol engine stopped. The ballast tanks were full, and the electric motors now took up the work of sending her along. To Mark Redisham it seemed that she was going round and round in a dizzy circle, already many fathoms deep under the sea. The smell of hot oil and the heaviness of the compressed air stifled him. Yet in his eager interest in all that was happening he would not have exchanged the discomfort for ease, or the possible danger for assured safety.

Suddenly, in answer to a turn of the horizontal rudder, she began to rise. Mark saw the sub-lieutenant crawl swiftly past him to the forward torpedo-

chambers. Bending over, and lying on his elbows, he managed to get a side-long glimpse into the conning-tower with its complicated network of wires, its confusion of switches, handles, levers, and brightly-polished instruments. The commander was there, he knew, although it was only now and again that Mark caught sight of the gold braid on his sleeve as he stretched out his hand to touch some switch or lever.

"Charge firing-tanks; flood torpedo-tubes; stand by to fire!" commanded Lieutenant Ingoldsby.

The periscope was now above the surface and his eyes were upon the image of his target reflected in the mirror. He was taking aim, manoeuvring the submarine into position as if she herself were a gun. For some tense moments all was quiet but for the purr of the motor and the working of the air-compressors for charging the torpedo-tubes. Then there came a thumping sound as of a heavy door being shut. This was repeated. Two torpedoes with their mechanism adjusted had been thrust into the breach of their tubes. Mark would have given much to see how it was done. But he did not dare to move. Obeying the recommendation to make himself small, he waited breathlessly.

"Number one—fire!" came the sharp command.

There was a violent gush as a torpedo was discharged on its errand of destruction. The whole vessel shuddered and was alarmingly unsteady until the compensating-tanks were filled and the true balance was regained. Then a second torpedo was fired. Mark listened, wondering, as the submarine dived with her nose down, if either of her weapons would strike the target at which it had been aimed. They had been fired at long range, but their rush through the water was quickly over. A low, rumbling explosion told that one of them had struck and burst against the German cruiser's bilge.

The H29 remained deeply submerged, her electric motor driving her forward at ten knots speed for something like a quarter of an hour, when once more the water was blown from the tanks and she rose to bring her periscope above the surface.

The sub-lieutenant was now in the conning-tower with the commander.

"We got her under the forward magazine," Mark heard Lieutenant Ingoldsby announce. "She's sinking by the bows. The German collier that we saw yesterday is standing by, picking up survivors. She's fitted with wireless, so we may as well keep out of sight. Carry on just as we are for another half-hour, Desmond, and shape a course for Haddisport Roads."

"Yes, sir," returned Mr. Desmond. "And what about our mine-sweepers?"

"Oh, they are all right!" the commander signified. "I've just counted them. I don't believe any of them was hit. Lucky for them that we turned up. She'd have sunk the lot."

"We've got one of the crew of the *Dainty* aboard of us, sir," the sub-lieutenant told him.

"Yes, I know," nodded the commander; "it's young Redisham. I sent him below for my binoculars. If you sight his ship, we'll put him back."

Mark stood up and saluted him as he came out into the hatchway.

"I hope I'm not very much in your way, sir," he faltered.

"Not at all," smiled Mr. Ingoldsby; "although we haven't much room to spare on a ship like this, as you can see. But don't stay here in the gangway. Come along with me. Mind you don't knock your head, and don't touch any of the switches."

He led the way through an intricate passage into the engine-room: an open space that could hardly be called a cabin, where men were at work with the electric motors. Here he paused to glance at a gauge.

"You've done very well, shipmates," he said, nodding his approval. "You've sent a German cruiser to the bottom—an old ship, it is true; but she'll do no more mine-laying mischief, and I'm just as pleased with you all as if she had been a Dreadnought. Jardine," he added, pushing open the door that gave entrance to his cabin. "Shaving water, and then breakfast."

## CHAPTER IX.

### AN EXPERT IN MINE-SWEEPING.

Mark took up his stand in the only corner he could see where there was no machinery, and feasted his curious eyes on everything within their range—the hammocks slung from the steel cross-beams, the safety-helmets hanging near, the controls of a multitude of electrical devices, the wheels governing the rudders, and the great array of enclosed cylinders and accumulators.

At the far end was an electric cooking apparatus at which the cook had already resumed his interrupted work of preparing the officers' breakfast. From a small boiler, Jardine filled a silver jug with hot water, which he carried into the commander's cabin.

On his return, Jardine went up to Mark and said: "The commander wants you."

Mark was shown into the state-room and was surprised to find it so large and comfortable. Lieutenant Ingoldsby stood before a tiny dressing-table, lath-

ering his face.

"Have you seen my aunt lately, Mark?" he questioned. "Is she nervous, living alone there on the cliff?"

"I saw her the night before we sailed," Mark answered. "She came in to bid good-bye to father. Yes, sir, I believe she is a bit nervous. She thinks there's sure to be an invasion, and that a whole army of Germans will come over in Zeppelins and flat-bottomed boats, guarded by submarines and Dreadnoughts. She said something about going inland to Bath or Buxton."

"Not very complimentary to the British Navy, eh?" laughed Mr. Ingoldsby, stropping his razor. "I hope Major Redisham reassured her. Tell me something about this mine-sweeping business, will you? The Admiralty don't seem to be altogether satisfied with the process. Too many precious lives are being sacrificed."

Mark described his work and told of the difficulties and dangers of dealing with contact-mines.

"The worst part of it is when we come bow-on to one of them," he said. "I've been thinking a lot about it. I don't know if there's anything in my idea, but it seems to me that the sweepers ought to be fitted with some sort of protective net in front, to ward off the mines, or even to pick them up—something like the cow-catcher on an American locomotive, you know."

Lieutenant Ingoldsby turned round sharply in the middle of shaving his left cheek.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "Very good. You've certainly hit upon the right notion, if you think it can be worked—and at once."

"It ought to be quite easy," Mark averred. "Just a steel-wire net in the shape of a fan, hinged from the trawler's cutwater and supported from pulleys at the end of beams shoved out like catheads over the bows. It would be lowered in front of her, below her water-line, to scoop up the mines, or drive them aside. There'd be scores of lives saved, sir."

"So I should think," assented the commander, proceeding with his shaving. "You ought to make a working model of the contrivance and submit it to the authorities. They're almost sure to adopt it, recognising you as a kind of expert on mine-sweeping. And now, there's something else I want to ask you. What has become of Heinrich Hilliger and his son, do you know? I have heard of your raid on the pigeon-loft at Sunnydene, and of the maps and charts that you found, and failed to bring away with you.'

"Max was drowned when the *Atreus* was mined," Mark explained. "And his father is believed to have gone back to Germany."

"Then whom do you suspect of having taken off the charts and things?" pursued Lieutenant Ingoldsby.

Mark could not explain this mystery. It had puzzled him ever since the night of its occurrence.

"You will be doing a service to your country," said the officer, "if you make a point of finding out exactly where those two are, and what they are doing. For my own part, I don't believe for a moment that Max Hilliger was drowned, or that his father has gone home to Germany. They are alien enemies, you know, and it is not to be wondered at if they are still in England—still even in Haddisport—working their level best to bring about the downfall of Great Britain."

Mark pondered over this recommendation while he was at breakfast in the engine-room, and resolved to make some investigations during his time of leave on shore. He also gave some thought to his invention for picking up explosive mines.

While he was drawing a plan of it, Lieutenant Ingoldsby, again at his post in the conning-tower, called out the command:

"Diving stations!"

The H29 was once more submerged. There was a cloud of smoke on the horizon which might be from the funnels of an enemy cruiser. Seen afterwards in the periscope mirror, however, the stranger turned out to be a British liner. The ballast tanks were blown out, and the submarine rose awash. The electric motor had stopped and the petrol engine had not yet been set in motion. Instead of the telegraph signifying "go ahead!" there came an ominous rasping sound from the neighbourhood of the forward torpedo-chamber. Something was wrong!

"Sounds as if we'd fouled some wreckage," conjectured the chief engineer, standing by his cranks and levers with his eye on the dial.

Mark Redisham was astonished to hear his name called from the conning-tower. He followed three of the men who also had been summoned. When he came out into the open air he discovered Mr. Ingoldsby and Mr. Desmond standing together looking forward along the narrow strip of deck to where a great round shape lay jammed between the hydroplane and its guard.

"It's a German mine!" cried Mark. "Don't let it be moved, sir. Wait! Keep the engines stopped! You've fouled its mooring; but it won't go off—it won't explode—unless one of the horns gets broken or bent."

"That's what I judged," nodded Lieutenant Ingoldsby, looking very grim. "But how is the thing to be cleared away if we don't move it? You know the tricks of these things. What do you advise?"

"Wait a bit, sir," urged Mark. He stooped and quickly took off his boots and stockings. "Let me go along and have a close look at it."

"No, I can't let you," objected the commander. "It's too dangerous."

"Then let one of the men come with me, sir," Mark suggested, not at all alarmed.

Before he could be stopped, he had slipped past the men and was making his way along the wet and slippery platform. Mr. Desmond, also in bare feet, went after him. They reached the place where the mine was lodged. The horns of the deadly machine were fortunately all pointed outward. The mooring line of flexible wire rope had been caught as the submarine rose to the surface and was securely fixed in the hydroplane bearings, held by its own weight and the weight of the sinker.

Mark went down on his hands and knees and examined the thing most carefully, seeing exactly how it was held, calculating how it would fall when released, estimating how it would be kept in position while the mooring-line was being severed. All his scout-craft was exercised. He looked round at the sub-lieutenant.

"We shall manage all right, sir," he declared calmly. "We want a couple of hammocks to pack round the base of the mine for a fender, a strong man with a crowbar to hold it from slipping, while another with a sharp file and a pair of pliers cuts through the mooring warp. When it's cut, you submerge the ship a couple of feet, let go, and the mine will float off. Then the gunner can fire at it and explode it. Do you understand, sir? Excuse my making these suggestions; but I've had a lot to do with handling explosive contact-mines during the last week."

His directions were followed in every detail. In half an hour the work was done without mishap, and the submarine and her crew were saved. The mine, released from its sinker, floated with its rounded top and horns above the surface. The ship stood off, her fourteen-pounder quick-firing gun was raised from its chamber, and the gunner's skill brought about the explosion.

Late in the afternoon of that same day the H29 appeared abreast of Alderwick Knoll. Darby Catchpole saw her from the cliff. Watching her through his telescope, he made out that the flag flying from her mast bore the sign of the skull and crossbones, and by this he knew that she had been in action and had come out victorious.

## CHAPTER X.

### DARBY CATCHPOLE'S DISCOVERY.

"I expect she has been putting a torpedo into some German mine-layer," said

Darby, speaking to Constable Challis, who stood beside him. "It's the H29."

"Ah!" nodded Constable Challis, "that's the submarine that Lieutenant Ingoldsby's in command of, isn't it? I wish I'd known when I saw his aunt, Mrs. Daplin-Gennery, along the parade just now."

Turning to see if that lady were still in sight, he saluted an elderly gentleman who was hobbling past with the aid of two sticks and with a folded newspaper under one arm.

"Good-evenin', Mr. Croucher," he said. "Any news in the evenin' newspaper, sir?"

"Worse and worse," responded Mr. Croucher, coming to a stop. "Liège has fallen. It will be Namur next, and then Paris. France hasn't a chance. Neither has Russia." He gazed searchingly across the sea. "And then, if the enemy's ships slip out from the Kiel Canal, we're doomed."

"You think so, sir?" questioned Challis, easing the collar of his tunic as if it choked him.

"Think so?" cried Mr. Croucher almost resentfully. "I know! There is nothing more certain. Don't you make any mistake, constable. We've lived long enough in a fool's paradise. I tell you, the Germans have been preparing for this for years and years, only awaiting their chance. And they've got it, now. Nothing can stop them—nothing! Look how they're sweeping through Belgium! Those siege guns of theirs are simply awful. No fortress can resist them, and their naval guns are even greater. What our people have been thinking of over here I don't know. They don't seem to realise our danger. Why, we've no home army worth speaking of, now that the only soldiers we had have gone over to France, leaving us defenceless. We're at the enemy's mercy, Challis."

Constable Challis glanced aside at Darby Catchpole, who was closing his telescope, the submarine having passed beyond sight.

"And how could we hope to prevent their landing on an open coast like this?" pursued Mr. Croucher, bending forward on the support of his two sticks. "I tell you, if their ships break through the cordon of our fleet, we're doomed."

"Indeed, sir?" said Challis with composure. "I wasn't reckonin' on the Germans comin' over here to Haddisport, sir. How will they land their cavalry and artillery through shoal water? They can't bring transport liners across Alderwick Sands."

"Liners?" repeated Mr. Croucher. "Who spoke of liners? They've got hundreds and thousands of flat-bottomed barges lying in the shallows behind the Frisian Islands, ready to be filled with troops and towed over here and beached. They don't need any liners."

Darby Catchpole here ventured to intervene. "And are our Dreadnoughts and cruisers going to hang back while the enemy troops are crossing, sir?" he

inquired. "Won't our submarines have a chance?"

"Strictly between ourselves," observed Constable Challis, "I don't believe that a single German soldier will ever set foot in England, except as a prisoner of war."

"Nonsense, Challis, nonsense!" retorted Mr. Croucher. "I've no patience with such childish hopefulness. We're at war against the greatest army the world has ever known, and we're not prepared for it. The Germans will treat us just as they are now treating the Belgians. We've got no army capable of facing them. Even our navy is weaker than it ought to be. The Germans have their Dreadnoughts as well as we, and quite as powerful. They've got crowds of them, and——"

"Not like the *Iron Duke*," Challis interrupted. "Not like the *Queen Elizabeth* or the *Lion*. What about our 13.5 and 15-inch guns, sir?"

"Our guns are not much good against explosive mines and submarines," rejoined Mr. Croucher. "Look what the enemy have done already with their mines! Catchpole, here, can tell you about the loss of the *Atreus*. And now one of their submarines has sunk another cruiser—the *Pathfinder*. Didn't you read about it in the paper? They've got their spies everywhere, too. They know what we're doing as well as we know it ourselves! Spies, Challis? Why——" He lowered his voice as he glanced along the cliff to the turrets and gables of Sunnydene. "I've been watching that house," he went on, mysteriously. "It's supposed to be empty. No postman goes there, no trade-carts stop at the gate, no gardener looks after the grounds. And yet, only yesterday there was smoke from one of the chimneys—puffs of white smoke, long and short. What was the meaning of it? Signals, Challis, signals!"

"Was there any ship passing, to take up the message, sir?" questioned Darby Catchpole.

Mr. Croucher looked at the boy severely.

"Do you think they'd make signals to seagulls?" he asked. "Of course, there were ships—plenty of them—tramps, coasting schooners, fishing boats. Any one of them might take a message over to Heligoland, telling secrets about the movements of our warships. The house is a perfect nest of spies, in the pay of the enemy. It's all very well for them to pretend to have gone away to Germany. But they haven't. Depend upon it they're living in some subterranean chamber, where they've stored arms and munitions of war, lying low there to join the enemy troops when they come over to murder us all. I tell you, we're doomed, Challis—doomed!"

"Strictly between ourselves," said Constable Challis, when the old man had gone beyond hearing, "I'm not so sure he isn't right about Sunnydene. Mrs. Daplin-Gennery declares she's seen Herr Hilliger prowlin' around at night, like-

wise his son, Max, who's supposed to be drowned. And young Mark Redisham, who's a Sea Scout like yourself, has found out a thing or two in the pigeon-loft. Strictly between ourselves, I may tell you that we made a raid on the place a few nights ago. Somebody had been there in front of us, however, and cleared everything suspicious away. You may take it from me, as that somebody was either Herr Hilliger or his son."

Darby could have said something concerning his own suspicions of a message sent by pigeon post; but he knew that Constable Challis was a gossip, and he held his own counsel. Nevertheless, he thought it in some way his duty as a Sea Scout to keep an eye upon Sunnydene, and he seldom passed the house without glancing up at the windows and the chimneys to see if there were any sign of habitation.

He was beginning to be assured in his belief that there was no real foundation for further suspicion, when, returning one moonlight night along the cliff from the Alderwick Coastguard Station, he saw something which renewed all his doubts.

During his absence, several tramps and coasters had anchored for the night in the roads; for the coastwise navigation lights were not now lighted to guide ships on their way, and general traffic on the sea ceased after dusk.

Amongst other vessels lying in the fairway inside of Alderwick Knoll, one in particular attracted his notice. It was a foreign-looking ketch. The moon was not high, and he could see the vessel plainly outlined against the track of light across the waves.

At night time, one ketch-rigged boat is very much like another; but there was something in the angle of her bowsprit, in the rake of her two masts, as well as in the clumsy lines of her hull which made him almost certain that she was the *Thor*—the same Dutchman in which Max Hilliger had sailed for Germany hardly more than a fortnight ago. Furthermore, she was anchored in precisely the same spot as on the earlier occasion, directly opposite Sunnydene, and visible from any one of the many front windows. Her riding-light was hung low on her foremast, and there was a second light abaft her mizzen.

Having no pressing need to get home to his supper, Darby lingered, anxious to make certain of the identity of the ketch. He could get into the town as easily by walking along the beach as going by the cliff path or the main road.

For some minutes he stood by the side of a tall gorse bush. Nothing happened. But at length as he watched, the vessel's stern light went out, then reappeared and continued to go in and out with curious regularity.

A person ignorant of the Morse code might have believed that a message was being flashed; but Darby Catchpole knew that it was only that one of the crew was pacing the deck and passing to and fro in front of the lantern.

While he waited in the silence, however, he heard the unmistakable sound of a boat's keel crunching on the shingle. He turned and glanced back at Sunnydene. Only the roof and towers could be seen over the edge of the cliff; but from a small window in the east gable there came a quick flash of light. Was it a signal?

Darby crept upwards a few feet and watched for a repetition of the flash. How long he waited he did not know; but when he stepped back three or four paces he again saw the light and almost laughed aloud when he discovered that it was no more than a reflection of the moon in the glass. Yet it had seemed to move. He was not sure even now that it was not a signal to the ketch.

Wondering if the casement were swinging loose on its hinges, he mounted to the top of the cliff and crossed the road to get the window between him and the light of the moon. An owl flew silently over the tops of the intervening fir trees. The house seemed indeed to be deserted. The idea that there still were alien enemies living in it was, after all, ridiculous, and it was only a waste of time to hang around the place any longer.

Beyond the long front garden wall was a pathway leading amongst the gorse and bracken to the main road. Darby determined to take this way back to the town.

He turned into the dark shadows of the path; but stopped abruptly, hearing the click of a gate latch. Some one was coming out by the side gate of Sunnydene. Quick footsteps were approaching, rustling in the dry bracken. He drew back and looked out from his ambush to see a cloaked figure dart past him in the clear light of the moon.

"Max!"

Darby leapt forward, clutching at a wing of the cloak. But it was wrenched violently away, and the hand beneath it was flung out, striking him a blow in the face that sent him reeling to the ground, while Max Hilliger, with a tin case full of maps and charts under his arm, stole downward to the beach.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE ESCAPE.

Max Hilliger had not waited to ascertain who it was that had leapt out upon him from the shadows.

Against the light of the moon he had caught a glimpse of a Sea Scout's flat-topped cap, and the young voice that had uttered his name was no doubt the voice of one of his former companions of the Lion Patrol, who had been lurking in ambush to detain him, and perhaps bring about his arrest.

Max could only believe that his assailant was Mark Redisham, who lived near, and who had already shown inconvenient vigilance against him.

Mark Redisham had by some means intercepted the pigeon with the message which he, Max, had sent to his father from on board the *Minna von Barnhelm*. He had dared also to enter the pigeon-loft at Sunnydene, and perhaps to examine these special maps and charts that were now going over to Germany.

"Yes," Max ruminated as he made his way down the slopes of the cliff towards the beach, "it could only have been Mark Redisham. But whoever it was, I have given him a stinging knockdown blow that he won't forget in a hurry!"

By paths well known to him, he reached the foot of the cliff, and started off across the grassy denes, taking cover in the hollows and in the shadows of the gorse bushes, tightly gripping the tin case of charts under his arm and the small bag which he carried in his left hand. His right hand went to his belt, where there was a loaded revolver.

"If he'd shown fight," he reflected, fingering the weapon, "I might have used this. But it's a good thing I didn't. The noise would have alarmed the whole neighbourhood, and the Tommies on sentry-go along the beach would have nabbed me."

He knew that there were armed sentries on the beach. Since the beginning of the war, the whole of the east coast of Great Britain had been patrolled and watched at night by men in khaki with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets.

He was running the risk even now of being seen and made to give an account of himself. It was for this reason that he was so careful to take cover and to make no betraying sound as he went at Scouts' pace towards the sea.

For himself he had no fear, excepting that, if caught, he would be compelled to explain the compromising contents of his bag and the tin canister. It was the men in the waiting boat about whom he was anxious. They were Germans, and although one of them, Hermann Körner, could speak excellent English, yet the others might easily betray themselves as foreigners and enemies.

When he reached the higher ridges of sand that intervened as a natural barrier between the beach and the level grass land, he went down on his elbows and knees and crept over the loose sand until he could look down upon the foreshore. He had come out, as he had intended to do, directly opposite one of the groins of black timber that reared their protecting walls across the beach. The deep-driven piles at the near end were covered with sand; at the far end they were washed by the tide. Many a time had Max dived into the deep water from the end of this

same groin. As he looked at it searchingly now, he distinguished the dark shape of the boat against the blackness. It was about fifty yards away from him, with only an open slope of sea sand and shingle between. In a few moments he might be seated in the boat, when the rowers would push off.

But on that stretch of moonlit beach two figures had suddenly appeared. They were striding quickly towards the boat. He could see the moonshine glinting on their bayonets, and hear their heavy tread on the sand. One of them lowered his rifle, with a hand on the lever, as he called out a loud challenge to the boat:

"Who comes there?"

Max Hilliger's plan was working just as he had hoped. A tall man stood up from the boat and strode towards the two sentries.

"Friends!" he answered. And Max recognised the voice of Hermann Körner. "It's all right, boys."

The patrol saw only indistinctly that he wore the uniform of a naval officer. Never doubting that he was British, they drew to a halt in front of him.

"We've got strict orders not to let anybody come ashore," one of them said.

"Yes, well," was the ready response, "you do your duty. But I have my duty also. I come ashore from ze revenue schooner out there. I report something. Listen!" He had seen their regimental badges in the moonlight, and noticed that one wore a corporal's stripe. "You are not local men," he went on; "you are probably strangers on the coast." He pointed to the cliff. "What sort of peoples live in the third house?" he questioned. It was Major Redisham's house which he indicated. "You don't know? Well, I recommend you keep a watch on it. Half an hour ago there was signals flashed from one of ze upper windows. It is well you go up and make inquiry into the matter."

The two men in khaki were now standing with their backs to the groin, beyond which Max Hilliger was crawling stealthily to the boat.

"Do you say they're alien spies, signallin' to some ship out at sea?" the corporal asked.

The stranger shrugged his shoulders in a way which to any one suspicious must at once have betrayed that he was a foreigner.

"Such is my impression, corporal," he answered, watching Max Hilliger step into the boat. "And knowing that there was a military patrol here, naturally I come ashore to warn you. Good night."

They waited until he had returned to his companions and pushed off. Then they crossed the denes together, and climbed the cliff path to the suspected house.

Pushing open the gate, they entered the drive, where they were confronted by Mark Redisham and Darby Catchpole. Mark's greatcoat covered his naval clothes. Darby wore his Sea Scout's uniform, and he was dabbing his swollen

nose with a blood-stained handkerchief.

"Signal lights have been seen flashing from the windows of this house," began the corporal.

"Who said so?" demanded Mark. "I'm sure no light of any sort has been seen. All the windows are thickly curtained. You're making a mistake."

"Oh, no, we're not!" insisted the corporal. "A naval officer from the revenue ship out there came ashore to tell us about it." He indicated the *Thor*.

"There's no revenue boat out there," declared Darby Catchpole. "That ship's not even British. You've been hoodwinked." He turned to Mark. "Do you see how the trick has been played?" he cried. "It's quite plain. While one of the boat's crew, speaking English, came ashore and kept the patrol off the scent, Max Hilliger slipped into the boat unseen! What's to be done?"

"If Max has gone aboard the ketch, we can't do much more than we've done already," declared Mark. "I've telephoned to the naval base, telling them to send out and capture the ketch while she's still at anchor. But are you certain sure that it was Max Hilliger you saw?"

Darby dabbed his handkerchief to his nose, which was still bleeding.

"What's the good of asking such a question?" he objected warmly. "I saw him as clearly as I see you now. He rounded on me when I called his name, and then fetched me a blow in the face that sent me sprawling. I saw what he carried, too—a long sort of tin box under his left arm and a bag in his left hand."

"The charts!" Mark Redisham ejaculated. "The charts!" Then to the corporal he added: "It's clear you've been had. The men in that boat were Germans, and a young German has escaped with them, taking a lot of charts and maps that will be no end of help to the enemy if they should attempt to land an invading army on this coast. That chap who kidded you about signal lights only wanted to draw your attention off the boat for a minute. You wouldn't have committed a crime if you had put a bullet into him. Haven't you been ordered not to let any boat come ashore?"

"Yes, of course," admitted the corporal. "But he was in uniform. He looked and talked like a British naval officer."

"Anyhow, you'll have to report the matter to your colonel," rejoined Mark.

The corporal seemed to have a sudden inspiration.

"How am I to know what you're tellin' me is true?" he demanded. "Who are you? What are you doin', spyin' round out here at this time of night?"

"I am the son of Major Redisham, who is now with his regiment in France," Mark answered. "I am, myself, in the Royal Naval Reserve, serving the King. My chum, here, is a Sea Scout. If that isn't enough, you can go up to the house and see my mother."

"Listen!" cried Darby Catchpole excitedly. "The ketch is lifting her anchor!

She's making sail! Come along—quick! Don't stand jawing here."

The patrol shouldered their rifles and followed the two boys down to the beach. There came to them a curious, spluttering sound, like that of a motor-car being started. Mark Redisham stood still, listening and watching. The *Thor's* sails were up, but there was very little wind to fill them. Nevertheless, she was moving. There was a commotion of water under her stern.

"She's got petrol engines!" Mark declared. "Look! Look, she's off!"

The corporal, realising the gravity of his former omission, now attempted to repair it. He threw himself forward on a knoll of sand, and levelling his rifle, took aim and fired at the escaping ketch.

## CHAPTER XII.
### A FLEET IN HIDING.

Standing at the vessel's stern beside the steersman, Max Hilliger saw the flash and heard the sharp report. He laughed. There was a second shot. A bullet whistled over his head and tore through the canvas of the mizzen sail.

"Hard a-starboard!" he ordered; and when she turned with her bow to the north-east, he added: "Steady!"

He glanced astern, taking his bearings by the familiar landmarks.

"Be careful, my friend," said Lieutenant Körner, at his side. "There is the sandbank."

"That is why I am careful," returned Max. "We're going to cross it. It's our only safe way. If you keep to the channel, you must either risk a shot from the naval gun on Haddisport pier, or else run up against the destroyer anchored off Buremouth. I'm going to take her across the shoal, through a gap that's used only by the lifeboatmen. Leave it to me, Hermann."

It was a feat in seamanship which no local fisherman, familiar with the dangers of the Alderwick shoal, would have believed possible. But Max Hilliger knew every fathom over the sunken bank, and he brought the boat through so skilfully that no one on board even guessed how narrow was their escape from disaster.

When at length she was safe beyond the reef, her course was set and she sped along, driven by her powerful motor.

The sea was clear of all traffic during the night, and there were no ships in

sight to notice her unusual speed or to question her business. And if there were mine-fields to fear, those on the British side of the North Sea were known to Max Hilliger, while Lieutenant Körner knew equally well how to avoid those sown by the Germans in their own waters. So they went on in safety.

On the following morning, when they were off the Dogger Bank, heavy rain was falling. A fleet of fishing craft at work loomed dimly through the mist. As a precaution against suspicion, Körner stopped the petrol engine, depending upon the sails. The rain mist was still thick at mid-day, when, as from behind a curtain, a squadron of British battle cruisers and light cruisers appeared, accompanied by a patrol flotilla of destroyers and submarines. They passed within a mile of the *Thor*, and challenged her by signal. The Dutch colours were run up to her masthead and she was allowed to go on unmolested.

During the short time the warships were in sight, Max Hilliger was busy taking notes concerning them. With the help of an English book of reference, he was able to identify each one of them and to discover all particulars as to her speed, tonnage, and armament. He noted with particular interest that one of the destroyers was the *Lupin*, by which he had himself been rescued when the *Atreus* was mined, and that another was the *Levity*, upon which, as he had lately learned, Rodney Redisham was serving as a midshipman.

"Ah!" he regretted, gazing at the formidable bulk of the nearest battleship, "if this tub were only your submarine, Hermann, how you could distribute your torpedoes and send every one of them to the bottom! Look at their great guns—as great even as some of our own! We shall not easily beat them in a pitched battle. And they outnumber our High Sea Fleet. It must be by our submarines that we conquer them. Hermann, I want you to get me on board your submarine. Then we can get about the seas, sinking every English warship that we can find!"

"Very well, my friend," returned Lieutenant Körner. "For you it will not be difficult. It needs only that you mention the ambition to your uncle, Admiral von Hilliger, and the thing is settled. Is it not so?"

It was to Admiral von Hilliger's flagship, the armoured cruiser *Schiller*, that Max was now bound. She was known to be lying behind the island of Heligoland, protected by the fortress and by the mine-fields of the Bight.

Lieutenant Körner made a course by secret passages through the mines and under the lee of the Frisian Islands, and it was just before sunset that the *Thor* entered the estuary of the Elbe and came into the midst of the Kaiser's High Sea Fleet.

Max Hilliger had constantly heard and read of the huge navy, the construction of which had played so prominent a part in Germany's plan of world-dominion; but his dreams had never presented anything to compare with the vast number and might of the warships now arrayed before his wondering eyes.

They stretched in an almost unbroken line across from Cuxhaven to Brunsbuttel—battleships which appeared to him far more powerful than any of the British Dreadnoughts that he had seen passing in the distance from the cliffs of Haddisport; armoured cruisers that looked like impregnable floating fortresses; light cruisers built for speed; and a vast multitude of destroyers, submarines, mine-layers, troopships, and armed liners.

His heart seemed to swell within him in patriotic pride. This was the fleet designed for the conquest of Britain, and he could not imagine how its purpose could fail.

Believing that the sea power of Great Britain was doomed to be broken, and that the future of the Fatherland was fated to be one of shining glory and greatness, he was thankful that he was a German; thankful that it was now to be his privilege to fight for her in the conquest of her worst enemy.

Lieutenant Körner steered the ketch to her anchorage beside his submarine at the rear of the main fleet; and, in the deepening dusk of a rainy evening, Max was conveyed in a motor-launch to Admiral von Hilliger's flagship.

The admiral was at dinner and could not be interrupted even to receive his nephew from England, but Max found friends amongst the junior officers, and at length he was admitted.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE GERMAN ADMIRAL.

In the admiral's state-room, Max quickly won his uncle's favour by producing his collection of special maps and charts—the same collection which Mark Redisham had discovered in the pigeon-loft at Sunnydene.

On the charts of the North Sea were clearly shown not only the depths in fathoms and the positions of newly-placed buoys and lightships for the guidance of pilots, but also the areas which the British Admiralty had sown with defensive mines.

Admiral von Hilliger examined them with keen scrutiny, stroking his long, fair beard with satisfaction as he observed particular features which were new to him.

"*Ja*," he nodded, making a mark with his pencil. "We shall use this channel when we go to bombard their fortified coast towns. It is just here that our in-

vading troops can make a landing. You have two and a quarter fathoms of water close up to the beach at low tide—a lonely piece of exposed coast, within easy reach of a railway junction, and three cathedral cities. There are no fortifications to oppose us; and the little English Army is already in France! But first, my dear Max, we shall annihilate their miserable North Sea Fleet. Once we have got rid of their boasted Dreadnoughts and secured command of the seas, the rest will be as simple as eating your breakfast."

"If there is going to be a sea battle, uncle," Max ventured boldly, "I should not like to miss seeing it, and perhaps taking a small part in it."

The admiral shrugged his decorated shoulders and took up the chart of Alderwick Knoll.

"As a holiday entertainment it would be interesting," he responded. "And certainly there are ways in which your knowledge of the enemy may be useful."

"Also my knowledge of submarines," Max added.

"So?" returned his uncle, studying the chart. "And you have the wish to fight under the sea, eh? Well, my dear child, that is perhaps possible! We have many under-sea boats in commission, and many more building, for which we shall require crews. I will arrange it. In the meantime, you will be provided with a midshipman's uniform and remain on board the *Schiller*. But what is this so carefully prepared chart?"

"It is a reef off the English coast, sir," Max explained, "a place convenient for our submarines to lie safely hidden, to pounce out upon enemy ships and sink them. Also, there is a secret store of petrol buried in the sand dunes quite near. My father has not been idle."

"Good!" said the admiral. "Yes, we shall sink their ships—merchant ships as well as vessels of war. We shall blockade their coasts, and so, stopping their food supplies, starve the contemptible English. But that will be when we have destroyed their battle fleets, as we shall do as soon as they choose to come out from their fortified harbours, where at present they remain in close hiding."

Max Hilliger very well knew that Sir John Jellicoe's Grand Fleet was not in hiding; but he did not wish just now to contradict his uncle. He simply said:

"Some of their cruiser squadrons are nevertheless venturing nearer to our mine-fields than is good for them, sir. To-day, for example, we passed a squadron hardly a score of miles from the south-west of Heligoland."

"Ha!" cried the admiral, growing excited. "So near? Why did you not inform me at once, instead of wasting my time and our opportunity? Already we might have sent out a flotilla of our faithful submarines to torpedo them! A squadron, you say? Of what strength?"

Max produced the notes that he had taken.

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed his uncle, at sight of the precise details.

And, gathering the charts and the notes, he got into his oilskins and hurried out of the cabin to hold a council of war with several of his fellow admirals and captains on board the cruiser *Klopstock*.

Max saw no more of him that night; but by the bustle and excitement and incessant noise that kept him from sleeping, he knew that the ship was being prepared for action.

Early in the morning he was awakened by the chunking of the engines and the noisy working of the ammunition hoists. He got up and dressed in his midshipman's uniform and went out to the upper deck. The rain had ceased, but there was a thick mist over the sea, through which he could only dimly make out the cliffs of Heligoland with their concrete battlements and bristling guns.

As the cruiser drew nearer, he could see the forts more clearly, with the naval harbour, from which a large flotilla of destroyers and submarines had just come out. Here the *Schiller* came to a stop beside other cruisers—the *Klopstock* with her four tall funnels, the *Goethe*, the *Ariadne*, the *Coblentz*, and the great *Derfflinger*, with her five pairs of 12-inch guns—while twenty destroyers, accompanied by six submarines, disappeared in the mist on their way out to sea.

On board the *Schiller* all was cleared for action, everything inflammable was left behind, and the decks were flooded in case of fire, the guns were loaded and the men at their stations all ready for fighting, waiting only for a wireless message to come back from the advance scouts to say that the enemy had been found.

Instead of a Marconi message, there came the distant booming of British 4-inch guns, mingling with the sound of the drums as the bands on the German cruisers played "Der Wacht am Rhein."

"Ha!" cried Admiral von Hilliger, rubbing his hands together as he paced his quarter-deck. "Now we have them!"

A signal was sent out to two of the cruisers, the *Klopstock* and the *Coblentz*, which immediately steamed off, to be followed a little later by the *Schiller* herself and the *Ariadne*, which took a slightly different direction, in order, as was intended, to take the enemy on the opposite flank and so envelop them.

In the open sea, outside Heligoland, and beyond the area of the German mines, British destroyers and submarines, supported by light cruisers and battle cruisers had for a week past been busily reconnoitring, showing themselves boldly, and inviting the Kaiser's ships to come out. But until this morning the invitation had been ignored.

Now, however, as the flotilla of German torpedo boats sallied forth to give chase to what they supposed was a mere patrol of light craft which they might easily deal with, a strong, picked force of our destroyers, headed by the new light cruiser *Athene*, dashed out from the mist to cut off the German boats from home

and engage them at leisure in the open sea.

The action was begun by the *Levity* and the *Lupin* in a running fight, and so well were their 4-inch guns served that one of the enemy destroyers was crippled in trying to escape, and shortly afterwards a second was seen to sink. The *Athene* manoeuvred to get clear of Hermann Körner's submarine, which was within torpedo range.

Then the German destroyers scattered, drawing back to the mine-field, and to the support of the *Klopstock* and the *Coblentz*, which were now coming out.

The *Athene*, leading the line of destroyers, met the heavy gunfire of the *Klopstock*, and engaged her at a range of about three thousand yards.

For half an hour the two cruisers fought, the *Athene* holding her own against a ship more than double her size. She sustained some damage and a few casualties, and the situation was becoming critical when a second British light cruiser, the *Sarpedon*, steamed up to her support. Three destroyers joined in the attack with their torpedoes, whereupon the German turned tail and disappeared in the mist.

The *Athene* and the *Sarpedon*, followed by the destroyers *Levity* and *Lupin*, now gave chase to the German *Coblentz*, and drove her, seriously injured, to the protection of the mine-field. Ten minutes later the armoured cruiser *Schiller* came out, with Admiral von Hilliger in command, and his nephew, Max, on board.

She at once opened her guns on the *Athene* and the *Sarpedon*. Salvo after salvo was directed towards the two British cruisers, but every shell fell short, while many of the *Athene's* 6-inch shells battered her sides. A division of our destroyers joined in the fray with their deck-guns, and the *Levity* in particular annoyed the Germans by the accuracy of her aim.

Max Hilliger watched her through a pair of powerful binoculars, and once, when the air was momentarily clear of smoke, he caught sight of Rodney Redisham in a prominent position on her high bridge.

He went up to the admiral.

"Turn your guns on that destroyer, sir," he implored. "Sink her! Sink her!"

## CHAPTER XIV.

### BRAVE AS A BRITON.

Whether it was that Admiral von Hilliger supposed that his nephew had some

vital reason for drawing his attention to the *Levity*, or that his executive officers had resolved independently to punish this particularly bold and annoying destroyer, it is certain that the *Levity* became for some minutes a special mark for the *Schiller's* big guns.

Shells fell around the little vessel like a storm of hail, and many must have hit her but that she remained end on, thus making herself a smaller target. At length one fell between her funnels, crashed through her deck-plates, and exploded in her engine-room, leaving her helpless.

The *Athene* and the *Sarpedon* continued to send their 6-inch lyddite shells into the German cruiser, their forward guns firing at the rate of half a dozen rounds a minute.

These two British light cruisers were themselves receiving a large share of the *Schiller's* fire at long range, and were being constantly aimed at by torpedoes from the enemy submarines and destroyers, while there was always the danger of their running foul of floating mines. They were being hard pressed. Already the *Athene* had sent out wireless messages to the British battle cruiser squadron in the rear, reporting that she was in need of help.

The German cruiser *Klopstock* had by this time reappeared from the mist, and was steaming down to join battle. The situation was critical, yet the British ships stood their ground, and a well-placed shell from the *Sarpedon* smashed the forward bridge of the *Schiller* and injured her foremost funnel, while another from the *Athene* burst through her port bulwarks amidships and so damaged her internally that her engines stopped and she was seen to be on fire.

At this moment the four-funnelled *Stein* loomed out of the fog. The *Athene* signalled to her consort and the destroyers to withdraw and accompany her to cut off this new enemy cruiser.

All followed her excepting the disabled *Levity*, which remained rolling helplessly within point blank range of the *Schiller's* guns. The explosion of the shell in her engine-room had burst one of her main steam-pipes, crippling her for the time. Her own 4-inch guns were served, but her shells fell short. Below decks the men kept grimly at their work in their efforts to repair the damaged machinery, and all the time shells fell fast and thick round the wounded vessel.

"It looks as if we were done for, this time," the commander admitted to one of his lieutenants, as Rodney Redisham mounted to the bridge to give a report from the chief engineer. "We can't live long through this."

"Unless one of the flotilla should return and take us in tow," suggested the lieutenant. "They don't seem to realise that we are crippled, sir."

"I am not going to ask for help, however," the commander resolved. "It would be too risky for one of them to come back now." He lighted a cigarette. "We will just hold on with our flag flying until we sink. Anyhow, we have done

our duty."

"The chief engineer says he can't repair the steam-pipe without drawing the fires, sir," Rodney reported.

"Thank you, Redisham," nodded the captain, "We will stick to the ship, but see that every one wears a life collar."

He continued to pace the bridge. The officers stood each at his post waiting for the end. No mercy could be expected from the Germans. The *Schiller* had now only one small target within range, and although her gunners were aiming badly, yet here and there a sailor dropped wounded by flying shrapnel, and more than one shell burst inboard, wrecking cabins and killing two men.

Ah! Suddenly the *Lupin*, with magnificent British pluck, was seen bearing down upon the *Levity* at full speed, little heeding the fact that she was charging into an inferno, and that at any moment a well-placed shot might sink her. She was coming to the help of her sorely-tried consort.

With splendid seamanship she was brought round. Not a shot touched her. She came close alongside. A rope was thrown to the *Levity*; a hawser was quickly passed and secured. In another minute both destroyers would have been out of danger; but just as the *Levity* was hauled round broadside on to the German guns, the strained cable snapped.

All seemed over now. There could be no escape for either the stricken *Levity* or her daring rescuer. The gunlayers on board the *Schiller*, fearing that they were being baulked of their prey, redoubled their efforts to sink her.

"Every man for himself!" shouted the British commander.

From the *Lupin*, now standing off, there came a tremendous cheer.

Rodney Redisham, coming up on deck through the splintered companion, heard the cheer repeated, and saw his commander and fellow officers gravely raising their hands aloft in a last farewell salute. He turned and glanced round to the westward, and to his amazement there came plunging out of the mist the giant shape of a British Dreadnought cruiser, flying a vice-admiral's pennant.

It was the *Saturn*, the first of the battle line.

The mighty 13-inch guns of the cruiser boomed out across the sea, and with the first salvo the *Schiller* was hit in a vital part. The hail of shells round the two destroyers suddenly ceased. Another hawser was shipped, and the *Levity* was towed away.

With the battle cruiser squadron the light cruiser squadron also appeared and joined in the confused fighting. The *Saturn* and her immediate consorts gave chase to the *Stein*, very quickly sank her, and set the *Klopstock* on fire. A second of the German destroyers was sent to the bottom, whilst many others were badly damaged.

In the meantime, the *Athene* and the *Sarpedon* had driven one of the enemy

cruisers, the *Coblentz*, back towards the *Schiller*, where she turned and engaged them hotly at long range. Both of the British ships received a good deal of injury themselves before they succeeded in sinking her.

The crippled *Schiller* was still above water, trying to escape with all the speed which her damaged engines would allow. The *Sarpedon* gave chase and opened fire upon her at a range of about ten thousand yards.

Admiral von Hilliger replied feebly with his after-turret guns and attempted further to check his pursuer by dropping explosive mines in his wake. But the British ship, with her greater speed, quickly overhauled him and exchanged broadsides with him.

Flames and thick smoke were still rising from the *Schiller*, when a shell, falling close beside her, sent up a great fountain of water which deluged her decks and extinguished the fire.

Shortly afterwards, a beautifully-placed shot took away two of her funnels, and again she was seen to be on fire. All amidships became a raging furnace; her mainmast fell by the board. Then there was a sudden silence on both sides. It was now only a question of saving lives.

The *Sarpedon* bore down upon her stricken enemy, going close up to her on the windward side and launching two of her boats.

At close quarters the devastating effect of the British 6-inch lyddite shells was plainly apparent. The German flagship's thickly armoured hull was like a sieve. Her fore-bridge was a tangled mass of ironwork; the wire stays of her foremast were swinging in the air. Her guns were smashed and bent, some looking round corners, some lying on their sides. Her upper decks were in a state of chaos; her fallen funnels and ventilators were red hot, and every boat was burnt. She was sinking in a cloud of smoke and flame and hissing steam.

Unnoticed by any one near, the periscope of a submarine was moving in the midst of the drowning Germans who had jumped into the sea from the doomed cruiser. The submarine was the British H29.

Below, at his post in the conning-tower, Lieutenant Ingoldsby watched all that was going on about him. He had been prepared to send his last remaining torpedo into the *Schiller*, but this was now unnecessary. He watched the *Sarpedon's* boats coming to the rescue of the struggling Germans, whom he could not himself attempt to save. He watched the cruiser sinking.

There appeared to be only a very few living beings left on board of her. A couple of officers stood under the wreckage of her fore-bridge. There was a lonely figure on her quarter-deck, dimly visible amid the smoke and flames. He, too, looked like an officer, though little could be seen of his uniform, excepting a broad band of gold on his sleeve. His head was bare. He held his hands pressed to his eyes, as if he were blinded by the smoke, or as if he were unwilling to look

upon what little remained of the ship.

Suddenly, while Ingoldsby watched, he saw one of the officers under the bridge climb up by a stanchion and leap over into the sea. The other ran aft into the smoke, disappeared for a moment, and then again was seen staggering along the red hot deck with his cap held over his mouth, dodging in and out amongst the wreckage.

For an instant he stood in hesitation, and Ingoldsby saw that he was only a youth, a midshipman. Then again he ran as with some madly hopeless purpose aft towards the quarter-deck. He was lost in the smoke for a while, but once more he appeared, crawling perilously along the narrow strip of coaming at the edge of the flame-swept deck.

Had the boy wanted to save his own life he might have done so many times by leaping down into the sea. But such most surely was not his design. Lieutenant Ingoldsby understood his intention, and thrilled with admiration as he saw it most bravely fulfilled. Dashing through the smoke, the lad at last reached the officer who had stood alone on the quarter-deck; caught him by the arm, spoke to him imploringly, and then led him gently to the vessel's side. They stood together, an admiral and a midshipman. Together they leapt into the waves.

"About the pluckiest act I've ever witnessed!" declared Lieutenant Ingoldsby. "Desmond, you ought to have seen it."

"Seen what, sir?" Lieutenant Desmond inquired.

"I'll tell you about it afterwards," returned Ingoldsby, still gazing intently into the periscope mirror. "Hullo! She's gone down!"

Just at this juncture, as the *Schiller* sank, a large German armoured cruiser, coming out of the mist, opened fire upon the *Sarpedon*, whose two boats were busy picking up survivors. To save his ship, and in obedience to orders he had received to retire, the British commanding officer steamed off, abandoning his two boats with the officer in charge of them, nine seamen, and the prisoners whom they had so far rescued.

Lieutenant Ingoldsby set his electric motor to work and started off to attack the enemy cruiser, but the latter altered course to the northward before the submarine could be brought within torpedo range. Ingoldsby thereupon returned to the boats, emptying his ballast tanks and rising awash close beside them, greatly to the astonishment of their occupants.

He stepped out on the deck of the conning-tower, followed by his sub-lieutenant and quarter-master.

"I'm sorry I haven't got anything like room for the lot of you, sir," he said to the officer in charge of the boats. "What had we better do?"

"We have twenty-five survivors," the other answered, "most of them badly wounded. Three of them are officers. One, indeed, is an admiral. You'd better

make sure of him, in any case."

"I think I shall be justified in making sure of my own countrymen first," returned Ingoldsby. "Yourself and your men. That's ten all told. Well, perhaps I can make room for the admiral and his two officers; but no more. You see, we may have to submerge. We can let the rest of them have the boats. I can give them water, biscuits, and a compass, and set them a course back to Heligoland. They're not all of them wounded, are they? Some of them look as if they could work the oars. Which is the admiral?"

He looked across at the farther boat and saw a red-bearded man at the stern lying back with his head resting on the gunwale, while a youth in midshipman's uniform, kneeling at his side, was bathing his eyes with a bit of rag dipped in sea water. Like the rest of the rescued Germans, they were woefully bedraggled and wet, their scorched clothes hanging in tatters.

"Ah!" exclaimed Lieutenant Ingoldsby, recognising the man whom he had seen on the quarterdeck. "It's the same. And that's the boy who saved him. I'm glad you picked them up. Draw the boat alongside and let us get them aboard."

The midshipman turned a wan face towards him, gazed at him with red and swollen eyes, and shrank back.

"Queer!" murmured Lieutenant Ingoldsby in perplexity. "I'm almost certain I've seen that boy before, somewhere!"

He went below to plan how the additions to his ship's company could be accommodated and to send up provisions for the boats. The British sailors were brought on board.

"The admiral will share my cabin," he said. "Bring him down, Desmond."

"He refuses to come, sir," declared Lieutenant Desmond, "or, rather, the middy refuses for him. The middy speaks wonderfully good English."

Ingoldsby, still more puzzled, went back on deck. The admiral was now sitting up in the stern sheets of the boat, blinking his inflamed eyes, and looking exceedingly miserable.

"Won't you come on board, sir?" Ingoldsby invited, speaking in the best German he could muster.

It was the midshipman who answered.

"No," he said. "We will not be indebted to our enemies. It would be better for us to die here and now."

Lieutenant Ingoldsby gave a curious start of recognition and stood staring into the youth's haggard face.

"Max Hilliger!" he cried. "You—here! Why, you were at home in Haddisport only a couple of days ago! How did you come to be aboard a German cruiser—and dressed as an officer, too? You used to be a Scout—an English Sea Scout. You haven't the right to wear the uniform of an officer, even an officer in the German

navy."

"I have the right to fight for my own country," Max answered boldly. "And if I wear an officer's uniform, that is my affair and the affair of my uncle, Admiral von Hilliger."

"Ah!" rejoined Ingoldsby. "He is your uncle. is he? That explains. I had forgotten you had an uncle in the Kaiser's service. But you did a jolly plucky thing when you saved him just now, Max; as plucky a thing as I've ever seen. While I watched you doing it I was wishing that you were British. You were really as brave as a Briton. I hope you didn't get badly burnt."

Max glanced downward to his left leg. The bare skin was scorched. His left arm, too, was blistered from elbow to wrist.

"You had better come aboard here and I will give you some dressing," Lieutenant Ingoldsby advised. "Bring Admiral von Hilliger with you. We haven't much accommodation. But we shall not be very long getting across to England."

Max Hilliger frowned.

"I suppose you mean us to go aboard as your prisoners of war?" he said. "Perhaps you could force us, since we are helpless. But you cannot take us all. It would be better if you took some of our severely wounded. My uncle and I very much prefer to stay where we are and to find our own way back to Germany, or die on the way."

"Oh, I'm not going to force you!" returned Lieutenant Ingoldsby. "A submarine is not supposed to carry passengers or to take prisoners. Remain in the boat if you wish. But at least you will not object to our attending to the wounded before we part."

So shockingly hurt were many of the Germans that it seemed almost a hopeless task to give them even ordinary first-aid. But for half an hour or so the British officers and men were occupied in doing the best they could. They were short of bandages, but with true British sympathy for their unfortunate enemies, they stripped themselves of everything but their trousers, and tore up their clothes with which to bind the wounds.

In the circumstances, Lieutenant Ingoldsby could not have been blamed for giving Admiral von Hilliger and his nephew their liberty. But had he foreseen what their freedom was to cost in innocent lives it is probable that he would have acted differently.

## CHAPTER XV.

## TREASURE TROVE.

"In the very probable event of an invasion," asserted Mr. Croucher, addressing a group of four Sea Scouts who had gathered at the lookout station on the sea-front, "in the very probable event of an invasion, we are totally unprepared and defenceless. As I was saying to Mrs. Daplin-Gennery only the other day, we ought to have big guns stationed at intervals all along the coast. A few newly-enlisted Territorials are billeted in the town; but what good will they be when the Germans come over here in force?"

"They could give the alarm, sir," suggested Ned Quester, whose brother was a Territorial.

"Give the alarm?" repeated Mr. Croucher with contempt. "And what then? No amount of alarm would repel an invading army. We want guns—guns, and men who can handle them. Civilians are not allowed to take up arms. Look at what has happened in Belgium! We ought to have realised long ago that the Germans intended to make war on us. They've been planning it for years. My argument is that we ought to have batteries posted all along the coast."

"Aren't warships, that can move about, as good as fixed batteries, sir?" questioned Darby Catchpole.

"Warships are no good against Zeppelins," declared Mr. Croucher. "Take my word for it, the enemy have got many more airships than we've any idea of; and every one of them capable of carrying a company of soldiers with heavy artillery. Then they have their flat-bottomed barges; hundreds of them, which they will use as transports."

"But we have our battleships and submarines, sir," interposed Mark Redisham, "and it isn't at all likely that the enemy can get past them."

"Don't be too sure, Redisham," urged Mr. Croucher. "Don't be too sure. They can slip past them in a sea mist and land troops here on Haddisport beach. And when they do, we shall be annihilated. It's no good thinking that our dwelling houses are any protection. One shell from a German cruiser, one explosive bomb from a Zeppelin, would smash any of the houses along this esplanade. I wonder people are so callous as to live in houses that are little better than targets to be aimed at from both sea and air!"

Darby Catchpole ran his eye along the exposed dwellings.

"Sunnydene is about the best target of the lot," he smiled. "It would be funny if the enemy were to bombard the property of the brother of one of their own admirals!"

Mr. Croucher shook his head wisely.

"They won't bombard Sunnydene," he affirmed. "Young Max Hilliger, who,

it seems, was rescued with his uncle from the *Schiller*, will see to it that the house is not harmed."

"In that case, Sunnydene would be a safe refuge for us," Mark Redisham declared. "At the first alarm we ought to round up all the women and children and corral them in the grounds."

"The chances are that the Germans would batter Sunnydene to bits in aiming at your own house, Mark," laughed Darby.

"For my own part," resumed Mr. Croucher, "I am getting a man to dig a refuge trench in my back garden. He'd nearly finished it yesterday, only unfortunately in the heavy rain last night the sides fell in for want of supports. The corporation ought to have proper trenches dug on the denes where the inhabitants could fly in case of danger."

"And get killed while they're flying," mischievously suggested Seth Newruck.

"Mrs. Daplin-Gennery is going to have one dug in her kitchen-garden," observed Mark Redisham. "Her gardener has enlisted, however, so we Scouts are going to do a good turn by digging it. Indeed, we are now on our way down to the beach to have a bit of practice and plan out the thing."

"Ah!" said Mr. Croucher, "I expect you'll do it so well that you'll have all the neighbourhood asking you to dig trenches in their gardens. Well, it's for the good of the community. If the War Office and the Admiralty together won't look after us, we must look after ourselves."

Mark got three spades from his own tool shed and borrowed another from Mrs. Daplin-Gennery's chauffeur. Armed with these implements, he and his companions went down to the foot of the cliff.

It was useless to think of digging even an experimental trench in the loose sand of the beach, so they selected a piece of more solid ground between the foreshore and the grass land. They chose the spot almost at random. Even Darby Catchpole did not realise at first how near they were to the groin from which Max Hilliger had escaped into the boat with his case of charts.

Mark Redisham staked out the ground and they began to dig, piling the soil on the side nearest the sea. It was decided that when the trench was deep enough, it should be roofed in with cross planks and brushwood, upon which the soil should be heaped to resist the impact of bombs from the air or shells from the sea; but at present the work was only undertaken as practice in excavation. The cross planks, the sap trench, and the means of entrance and exit would be properly applied when the dug-out came to be made in Mrs. Daplin-Gennery's garden.

They had been digging for about half an hour, when Seth Newruck's spade chipped against something that was neither soil nor stone. He looked down at

the thing in wonder, then grabbed at it.

"Darby! Mark!" he cried. "See what I've found! A cigarette case! It's silver!"

His companions all crowded up to him to look at it over his shoulder. Certainly it was a silver cigarette-case, and a very handsome one. There was a monogram engraved in the centre of its chased surface.

"It isn't even tarnished," declared Mark Redisham. in surprise. "It's almost new. It can't have been buried very long. How deep did you find it?"

"Just here," Seth explained, pointing out the spot about two feet down.

"That's queer!" resumed Mark. "I can't understand—unless some one has been digging here before us, quite lately, and dropped it by accident. Some of the Territorials, perhaps."

"Now that I come to think of it," said Darby Catchpole, "the ground did look as if it had been disturbed. There was no grass growing on top."

Mark Redisham had opened the case. It contained three cigarettes, held in place by a band of blue elastic. He took one of them out and examined it.

"I've seen a cigarette like this before," he averred. "They're Egyptian, see! 'Vafiadi, Cairo.' Who was it that I saw smoking one? Not Lieutenant Ingoldsby: not Captain Damant." He looked again at the monogram, and gave a long, low whistle of astonishment. "Oh, I know, I know now! Keep on digging, you chaps," he ordered. "Here you are, Seth. Findings are keepings."

He seized his spade and continued digging until his back ached and the perspiration rolled down his sunburnt cheeks. He moved from place to place in the trench, keeping it at a uniform depth. They had got below the dark soil to the soft sea sand.

"You're making it too wide, Mark," Darby objected.

Mark went down on his knees and began to sniff about.

"Don't you smell something?" he questioned, scratching at the sand with his hands. Then he pulled and tugged at something heavy. "Eureka!" he shouted. "Look here, Darby! Petrol! a tin of petrol! two tins—a whole lot of them!"

Darby leant over from the side of the trench and saw the exposed tops of a number of square red canisters.

"Enough to keep a motor-car going for a year," he declared.

"Yes," added Mark, "or a German submarine for a month."

"Why German?" Darby asked.

Mark laughed.

"Because," he answered, "I don't suppose Herr Hilliger would have been so considerate as to keep a secret store of petrol for the accommodation of his enemies. Yes, you may stare. But even if the letters 'H.H.' on that silver case didn't stand for Heinrich Hilliger, I should still have known that the cigarettes

were of the same brand as the remains of one that I found on the floor of his pigeon-loft."

He vaulted out of the trench.

"Newruck and Quester will keep watch here," he said to Darby. "I want you to come along with me to the naval base."

## CHAPTER XVI.

### THE BOMB-PROOF SHELTER.

Nothing was said in Haddisport concerning the discovery and removal of the secret store of petrol buried in the sand on Alderwick Denes. The reason for the silence was that no one unconnected with the naval base knew anything about the matter.

Any day during the herring season carts may be seen on the denes carrying to and fro the fleets of nets that are spread out to dry on the grass; and if two heavily-laden carts in particular were noticed being drawn along the lower road towards the town, no one was any the wiser as to their contents, since the red-painted tins of petrol which they carried were successfully hidden under cover of herring nets. Mark Redisham and his fellow scouts knew too well the importance of their discovery to say anything about it, even in their homes.

One thing which the members of the Lion Patrol had especially laid to heart from the beginning of the war was the necessity of keeping silence when in the performance of their duties they chanced to come into possession of a naval or a military secret.

They had shown that they could be trusted with information which never came to the knowledge of the ordinary reader of newspapers or of local gossips such as Constable Challis and old Mr. Croucher. Amongst themselves they might indeed talk and compare notes; but only within limits. Mark Redisham, for example, knew many things which he never mentioned to Darby Catchpole, while Darby was similarly silent towards Mark.

"Strictly between ourselves, sir," said Constable Challis, meeting Mr. Croucher on the esplanade, "I believe young Mark Redisham knows exactly where Sir John Jellicoe's Grand Fleet is at this moment, and what our submarines are doin' across there under the very noses of the enemy's forts. He knows a lot, sir. But you can take it from me, you might as well try to get blood out of a stone

as information out of him."

"It's the same with young Catchpole," nodded Mr. Croucher significantly. "Time after time I've asked that boy to tell me in confidence things which I'm certain he knows—things about our ships and their mysterious movements, things about our awful disasters at sea which are being systematically hidden from us; but it's useless, Challis—useless, and we are kept in the dark; always kept in the dark."

"Talking about bein' in the dark, sir," resumed the constable, "have you seen the trench as the Scouts have been makin' in Mrs. Daplin-Gennery's kitchen-garden? You ought to. It's a room that you could live in, with four feet of sand piled on the roof as a refuge from bombs and shells. It's so comfortable and safe, sir, that Mrs. Daplin-Gennery threatens to invite her friends to take afternoon tea with her in it. And there's what they calls a sap trench—a tunnel leadin' from it right up to the kitchen door, so that the household can escape into it on the first alarm, and be as safe as a rabbit in its burrow."

"Indeed?" said Mr. Croucher. "But mightn't it fall in, as mine did?"

"Not a bit of it, sir," declared Chain's. "You could mount a 6-inch gun on top of it. Those Sea Scouts knew what they was doin' when they planned and built it. It's not an ordinary dug-out, sir, like yours and the vicar's. First of all they quarried a deep pit and shifted the bicycle shed into it. They packed the shed round with sandbags, roofed it with cross planks, covered it with brushwood, and then piled a mound of sea sand on top. Even supposin' a Zeppelin bomb was to drop on it, there'd be no explosion. If a shell from an enemy ship was to smash the house, the people in the underground shed would be safe, bein' too far off for the chimneys and bricks and things to fall on them. Of course, it can never be really needed. The Germans'll never come here."

"Don't be too sure about that, Challis," Mr. Croucher retorted warmly. "Mrs. Daplin-Gennery and her household may have to go into their refuge any day, any night. As I have argued all along, if the enemy's battleships break through, we are doomed. We can't resist them, either on sea or land, let alone the air. We are in constant danger. Look at what they're doing on the Continent! They've already occupied Brussels, you know. Antwerp has fallen, too. They will take the Channel ports next—Ostend, Calais, and Boulogne—and then, Challis, it will be the invasion of England, and they will serve us just as they have served the poor Belgians—perhaps worse."

Constable Challis shook his head and smiled compassionately upon the timid, old gentleman.

"You may take it from me, sir," he averred, "the Germans will never get to Calais. The Allies won't let 'em. And try how they will, they'll always be brought up against the British Navy. Not but what Mrs. Daplin-Gennery is quite right to

have that trench made. It comforts her and her servants to know that it's there."

"They may have need for it much sooner than you think, Constable," declared Mr. Croucher, turning in at Mrs. Daplin-Gennery's gateway.

In the garden he encountered Seth Newruck.

"Is Redisham in the trench?" he inquired. "I have come to have a look at it."

"There is nobody there now, sir," Seth answered. "Mark Redisham is out at sea with the mine-sweepers. I've just been making things a bit tidy. I'm sorry I haven't time to stay, sir; but I've got to go down to the naval base to see our Scoutmaster. Mrs. Daplin-Gennery has gone into the town in her motor-car; but I daresay if you ask the cook she will show you into the trench, or," he reflected that Mr. Croucher was lame, "you could get into it yourself easily enough if you're careful about how you go down the ladder."

Mr. Croucher looked somewhat disappointed. He had resolved to ask Mark Redisham to dig a similar refuge in his garden at Rose Cottage.

"Gone out mine-sweeping, has he?" he ruminated. "When will he be back?"

"I don't know, sir. Perhaps in a week; perhaps in a day or two."

"That reminds me," pursued Mr. Croucher, detaining Seth with a grip on the boy's shoulder. "Is it true that Redisham has invented a new contrivance for picking up German mines, and that the Admiralty have adopted it?"

"They're always making improvements of one sort or another," Seth answered evasively.

"Yes, I suppose so. But I understand that this invention of Redisham's is not only an improvement, but an entirely new idea, on the principle of a torpedo net, and that it's the means of saving dozens of valuable lives. I have noticed some of the mine-sweeping boats going out with curious gear at their prows. How is it worked?"

Seth Newruck was not quite sure whether or not he was expected to regard the matter as a naval secret.

"How is it worked, eh?" repeated Mr. Croucher. "I am sure you know."

"I'm afraid it would take too long to explain, sir," Seth answered guardedly. "You should go down to the harbour and get one of the naval officers to show you. But there's the cook at the kitchen door, sir. I must be off. Good-morning, sir."

Mr. Croucher's puffy eyes followed the boy as he ran off.

"Just the same as the rest of them," he complained. "There's no worming information out of any of them. One would think that they were all bound down by an oath of secrecy."

Seth Newruck had spoken quite truthfully when he said that he had no time to spare. He was glad to have such a valid excuse to escape from the inquisitive questioning of the old gossip. He was due to report himself for duty at the naval

base at eleven o'clock, when Mr. Bilverstone would probably send him on some errand to the coastguards or to the police-station, or give him some piece of clerical work to perform. It was already half-past ten, and he had a long walk through the town.

As he went at scout's pace along the esplanade, he glanced eastward across the sea to a grey-painted gunboat which he quickly recognised as H.M.S. *Rapid*. She was steaming northward, followed by a flotilla of mine-sweepers. He wished that he might be on board of her, little dreaming that she was destined never again to return to her moorings in Haddisport harbour. He heard a whirring in the air and looked back for a moment to watch a seaplane flying overhead. Very soon the seaplane passed above him, and by something in its colour and structure he knew it to be the machine of which Lieutenant Aldiss was the pilot—Lieutenant Aldiss who had lately done such wonderful, daring things in the aerial raid over Düsseldorf. The aeroplane presently circled round and seemed to hover above some dark-sailed boats outside of Haddisport, as if the pilot were inspecting them with suspicion.

Seth Newruck looked at the boats curiously as he ran, but they were soon hidden from view beyond the trees of the park. He walked through the park and down the long High Street. At the top of each of the narrow scores leading downward to the beach, there was a group of people, eagerly looking out to sea. Beyond the Town Hall, Seth paused and mingled with a group at the top of Fisherman's Score.

"What are they looking at?" he questioned of a man in khaki. "Is it a wreck?"

"Nobody seems to know," the soldier answered. "It's something about those boats out there."

The boats were certainly curious enough to excite interest. Seth Newruck had never seen any exactly like them before, although he prided himself on his knowledge of sailing craft and the varieties of rig. The nearest resemblance to them that he knew were galliots in a Dutch picture at home. They were clumsy, untidy-looking vessels, with bluff bows and weather boards, tall masts, and patched, ill-fitting sails. He counted thirty at the least.

He thought for an instant of Mr. Croucher's often-repeated statement about the flat-bottomed boats in which the Germans were expected to bring over their invading troops. Could these be raiding Germans? he wondered. Then, as one of the sloops turned shoreward, he saw a flag at the peak of her mast. It was black, yellow, and red.

"They're Belgian!" he cried, and ran off down the town.

While he ran he recollected something which he had read in the newspaper that morning. Antwerp had fallen and was occupied by the Germans. The

Belgian Army and British troops had retired. The Belgian people, driven from their homes, had fled to the coast, and now the enemy had reached Ostend.

A glimmer of the truth was revealed to him. These boats which he had seen making for Haddisport were surely Flemish fishing smacks bringing the hard-pressed, homeless Belgians across to the friendly refuge of England.

## CHAPTER XVII.
### TOLD THROUGH THE TELEPHONE.

Seth Newruck's belief was confirmed when he reached the harbour and met his Scoutmaster and Darby Catchpole.

"Give whatever help you can, Newruck," said Mr. Bilverstone. "These boats coming in are from Ostend, with Belgian refugees, who will want food. Many of them will be ill, some wounded. The boats will be brought up alongside the *Kingfisher*, first of all. Then the people will be taken to the public hall."

The jetties and quays were crowded with townsfolk, watching the trawlers drift slowly in to the outer harbour. As the first boat came alongside the quay there was an audible gasp of pity for the forlorn victims of war. The little craft was thronged with women and children, looking miserably ill and hungry, and still showing in their grim faces the lingering horror of all they had gone through, mingled with doubt as to the manner in which they would be received in a foreign land.

Then caps were raised in silent salute, handkerchiefs were waved in welcome, and the townsfolk pressed forward eagerly to throw down tins of biscuits, bags of buns, bananas, and chocolate, and to pass cans of hot coffee and milk.

Among the most eager was Mrs. Daplin-Gennery, who had loaded her motor-car with food from a neighbouring confectioner's and got Darby Catchpole to help her to distribute it as each boat was warped in. All the time, tears of sympathy and sorrow were running down her cheeks, and she spoke to the Belgians in French, which some of them understood. Once, when a particular boat was passing, crowded with women, all of whom seemed to be ill, she took off her rich coat and threw it down to one of them and then returned to her car to buy yet more food.

There were over fifty boats in all, bringing considerably more than a thousand of the poorest refugees from all parts of Belgium, with such little treasures

as they had been able to snatch from their desolated homes. Many of them had brought their dogs, their cats, and their canaries. Many were wounded, and had to be taken to the hospitals. Some were taken to houses in the town, but most of them were driven in cars to the public hall, where they were well cared for.

Mr. Arnold Bilverstone, taking temporary leave from his duties at the naval base, had mustered all the Scouts in the town to give help in attending to the distressed refugees. He was busy in the public hall, making a list of the Belgians' names, when Seth Newruck went hurriedly up to him and plucked at his sleeve.

"Mr. Bilverstone, I've got something to tell you, sir," began Seth.

Mr. Bilverstone laid aside his fountain pen and prepared to listen.

"Yes," he smiled, "what is it? Some more families got accidentally mixed up? Children separated from their mothers and sent to the wrong billets?"

"No, sir, it's not that," Seth went on haltingly, as if fearing that after all his communication was of no importance. "It's something I've seen. I don't know if you noticed one of the Belgian boats, a small, yawl-rigged vessel, called *La Belle Pucelle*, of Blankenberghe? She was one of the last that came in, and about the most untidy of the lot. She was like a floating rag-bag."

"I didn't see her to my knowledge," returned Mr. Bilverstone, turning back a page of his list, "but I wrote her name within the last half-hour. Here it is, *La Belle Pucelle*, with the names of the thirty-nine refugees who crossed in her—twenty-two women, five children, four infants in arm's, three men, apart from a crew of four men and a boy, and two dogs of doubtful breed. That's the lot."

Seth Newruck was looking at the list over the Scoutmaster's shoulder.

"That is eight men, including the boy," he said. "But as a matter of fact, sir, there were nine, and you haven't got the ninth man's name, because he didn't get registered. He didn't come ashore in the same way as the rest of them. I watched him, sir. The reason why I took particular notice of him was that he looked of a different class from the others, and was about the only refugee of military age, apart from the fishermen who did the seamen's work."

"Well?" urged Mr. Bilverstone.

"He wore a very shabby overcoat," Seth continued, "but beneath it he had a good tweed suit. Just as the boat came alongside the quay he slipped behind the mainsail; and when he appeared again, he had taken off the overcoat, changed his cloth cap for a bowler, and was carrying a brown leather handbag. While the other refugees were pressing forward to receive the food that was handed down to them, he got round to the stern, stepped on the quarter rail, and from that on to the quay, where he quickly disappeared in the crowd."

"I expect he was an Englishman who had missed the passenger steamers and come over by the only way possible," suggested Mr. Bilverstone.

"No, sir," insisted Newruck, "he wasn't an Englishman, nor yet a Belgian.

He wasn't even a genuine refugee. I'm rather good at remembering faces, sir, and I knew I'd seen his face before, somewhere; though it wasn't until he'd gone that I realised who he was. I'm certain, now, however, I know that he was an alien enemy, a German, and a spy. I know that he was Fritz Seligmann—Herr Hilliger's secretary."

Mr. Bilverstone looked up sharply.

"Indeed?" he cried. "You are sure?"

"Certain." Seth Newruck nodded emphatically. "I believe he has smuggled himself over here to do some spying work."

The Scoutmaster was silent for some moments. He took up his pen, but did not use it.

"Look here, Seth," he said presently. "There may be more in this than appears on the surface. That man has come over here for no good. He ought to be tracked. Unfortunately, I can't leave this work just now. But you can be spared, I think. Suppose you go up to Sunnydene. That's where he'll make for. Go up and have a look at the house. If you see anything to show that some one has entered—any smoke from the chimneys, if the gate has been left open, if there are any new footprints on the garden path—let me know at once. Mrs. Daplin-Gennery will let you use her telephone. I expect I shall be at the naval base until about midnight. If I don't hear from you before then, I shall understand that nothing has happened, or that you have made a mistake in supposing that the man was Hilliger's secretary."

Mrs. Daplin-Gennery had taken into her home a family of the Belgian refugees. They were people of good class, from Bruges; and after all the misery they had endured in their flight to Ostend, and the hardships of their crossing the North Sea in a crowded, open boat, she was unwilling to allow them to undergo the further discomfort of being, as she said, "herded" in the public hall. So she had brought them, a mother and two daughters, to Green Croft, providing them with new clothes, giving up to them two of her best bedrooms, and entertaining them with the most dainty dinner that her cook could serve.

During the meal they had told her so many thrilling and shocking stories of the German invasion and occupation of Belgium that she was worked up into a condition of extreme nervousness and began to dread more than ever the possibility of the enemy extending their march of ruthless conquest and destruction by coming over to England.

When her three guests had retired for the night, and she was left alone, her nervousness increased; she started at every little sound that broke the silence of the house, and when at length there came a violent ring at an electric bell, she clutched the arms of her chair, trembling.

The ring was repeated. Some one was at the front door. She tried to mas-

ter her fears. Rising unsteadily from her chair, she crept silently out into the unlighted hall and stood listening.

Again came a ring. She strode across to the hall table, opened its drawer and took out the loaded revolver which she had kept there since the beginning of the war in case of emergency. Gripping the weapon tightly, she approached the door and drew the bolt.

"Who's there?" she demanded. "What do you want at this time of night?"

"It's Seth Newruck," came the answer. "I want to know if you will allow me to use your telephone, ma'am, to speak to the naval base?"

With all her courage coming back to her, Mrs. Daplin-Gennery flung open the door.

"Goodness gracious, boy!" she cried, hardly able to see him in the pitch darkness. "Whatever are you doing out alone at such an hour? Come inside, quick! Yes, of course you can use the telephone."

She led him into the morning-room, where she lighted a candle, bright lights being prohibited. There she left him with the telephone receiver at his ear.

He was not long in getting into communication with Mr. Bilverstone.

"I've been watching Sunnydene since dusk, sir," he reported. "One of the window blinds had been moved. I knew there was some one in the house. But nothing happened for hours, until, at last, just as I was thinking of going home to bed, I saw a man come out of the grounds by the side gate with a spade over his shoulder. He went down the cliff to the denes. I took cover and followed him. He was making straight for the place where we discovered the petrol, but stopped half way. There was a patrol of Territorials on the beach. He'd seen or heard them, and he had to turn back. As he passed the bush where I was hiding, I saw him more distinctly; but it's fearfully dark, and I could only judge by his figure and walk that he was Fritz Seligmann."

"That's all right, so far," Mr. Bilverstone interposed across the telephone. "Did he go back to the house?"

"Well, sir," Seth continued, "he went by a round-about way, and I lost sight of him for a long time and couldn't move for fear he should see me. While I waited, a very queer thing happened, sir. There were no ships anchored in the Roads, and of course there were none under weigh; and yet when I looked out to sea, I noticed a tiny, green light somewhere about the middle of Alderwick shoal. It disappeared as suddenly as it came. And then, sir, there was a curious grunting noise from the same spot. Are you listening, sir?"

"Yes. What sort of a noise do you say it was?"

"I said grunting, sir; but if it had come from deeper water I should have said that it was the sound made by a submarine emptying or filling her ballast tanks. Do you think it could have been?"

"Wait. Let me consider." There was a long pause. "It's just possible. You've to remember that secret store of petrol. There is no doubt that Heinrich Hilliger intended it to be used by a German submarine. In that case it's not wildly improbable that a German submarine is hanging round with the intention of lifting it, not knowing that it has already been removed. But they can't very well come ashore for it while the sentries are patrolling the beach. Neither can Seligmann do any digging, unless he's desperate enough to shoot the sentries first, and so get them out of the way. Now, if it was indeed a submarine that you heard—a German submarine—and if she is short of petrol, she will wait there, submerged. In that case we may be able to drop on her. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," returned Seth. "And I understand, or rather guess, something else. I guess that if she has come to fill her petrol tanks from Alderwick beach, she must have been piloted there by some one who knows every fathom of that shoal. Don't you think it's likely that Max Hilliger is aboard of her, sir?"

"Listen!" Mr. Bilverstone's voice responded. "I will send a couple of marines along to keep watch, while you cut home and dress yourself up as a fisher boy and come down to me here at the naval base."

"A fisher boy, sir?" Seth inquired in wonder.

"Yes," came the answer. "At the first gleam of daylight you are going out with me in a shrimping boat, to fish for shrimps round about Alderwick shoal. You understand? Right."

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### A SHRIMPING ADVENTURE.

"Not such a bad take for the first, eh?" said Arnold Bilverstone, emptying the pocket of the shrimping net into the basket between the thwarts. "If you're fond of shrimps, Seth, you can have a good feed at teatime."

Seth Newruck, astern at the tiller, bent forward to examine the catch of the dim light of the early dawn.

"I should like them very much better if they weren't so beastly difficult to peel, sir," he answered. "I nearly always break them."

"That is probably because you don't go the right way about it," rejoined Mr. Bilverstone, glancing shoreward. "You should press the head and tail firmly towards each other, giving them a gentle half turn. That loosens the scales, and

you can draw the shrimp free as easily as drawing your finger out of a glove. Luff!"

Seth luffed, and the lugger came up to the wind and bowled forward with a musical gurgle of water along her strakes.

Mr. Bilverstone was in no hurry to add to the little pile of jumping, wriggling crustaceans in the basket. He was much less intent upon catching shrimps than watching the growing light in the eastern sky and calculating the boat's distance from Alderwick Knoll.

"When we get abreast of the lighthouse," he said, "we'll put out the gear again and creep along the shore. Don't stare about too much. We must pretend to be tremendously interested in our work. But keep your ears open. When we've passed Sunnydene we shall tack out as if we were making for the north end of the shoal. If a periscope pops up, we'll just go ahead as if we hadn't noticed it. A submarine couldn't torpedo a cockleshell like this, and unless she comes up awash we're just as safe from gunfire."

"What I don't understand," said Seth, "is that, supposing a German submarine to be lying submerged out there in the shoal water; supposing she has come to refill her petrol tanks, how could she get the petrol on board? She couldn't come alongside the beach; and submarines don't carry boats."

"The new German ones do," Mr. Bilverstone informed him. "They keep a collapsible boat stowed in a hatchway abaft the conning-tower. But, of course, it could only be launched when the submarine is awash. As for getting the petrol aboard, you may be sure they'd manage it somehow if it were still where they think it is."

"They can't find out that we've removed it, unless they come ashore to look," Seth reflected.

Mr. Bilverstone paid out the lugsail sheet an inch or two and perched himself on the windward gunwale.

"As a matter of fact," he said, "I believe they know already. I didn't tell you; but an hour ago, while you were having a sleep under my writing-table, we had a report from the two marines patrolling Alderwick beach. At about two o'clock they saw an electric light signal flashed from the foreshore, near one of the groins. There were no ships in sight, and no answering signal was seen. Still the light kept on flashing. The two marines crept up, one on either side of the groin. They got so near that one of them called out a challenge. As there was no response he fired. The light went out then. There was no cry, no sound, no movement. Nobody was shot; yet nobody ran away. The two marines and two Territorial sentries searched, but found absolutely no trace of the chap who had been signalling. He had vanished as completely as if the tide had come up and swallowed him."

"That's queer!" murmured Seth. "Very queer. There must have been somebody working the hand-lamp, sir."

"Not necessarily a hand-lamp," Mr. Bilverstone smiled. "None of the patrol thought of it, but it's easy to imagine how a tricky German, such as Fritz Seligmann, could plant an electric bulb in the sand or shingle, or even among the timbers of the groin, and work the switch from the top of the cliff by means of a long-distance connection. A spy was caught three nights ago signalling from the air. He flew a kite with an electric current running through the string. Spies wouldn't be much good if they weren't tricky."

Slowly the dawning light in the eastern sky grew brighter, changing from steel grey to gold, tinged with a rosy glow. Again and again Mr. Bilverstone put out the gear. No one seeing the two occupants of the little boat, with its brown lugsail, would have believed them to be anything else than ordinary shrimpers. They both wore tanned canvas overalls and oilskin sou'-westers, and their manner of working contributed to their disguise.

Twice they passed along the leeward fringe of the shoal. Seth Newruck's eyes searched the ruffled water where the waves broke here and there above the shallows; but he saw nothing unusual.

"I'm afraid we shall have only the shrimps for our trouble, sir," he remarked with a shiver, for the morning was very cold.

"Don't be impatient," nodded his companion, opening a Thermos flask. "We haven't finished our job yet. Here, have a drink of warm tea; and there are some biscuits in the locker behind you. Come forward here, and I will take the tiller for a spell."

He took the boat outward, as if he were making for the lightship, leaving the shoal in his wake.

"Don't look round, sir," Seth whispered agitatedly. "I can see two periscopes, close together. And there's a sort of commotion in the water round about them, as if the submarine were rising."

Mr. Bilverstone put over the tiller, so that the boat yawed and her sail began to flutter. He left the tiller and crept forward over the thwarts, seized the halliard, and lowered the sail, then hauled it up again, returned to the tiller and brought her up to the wind, going on as before.

"What did you do that for, sir?" Seth inquired, amazed at what he took to be an example of bad seamanship. "She was going on all right."

Mr. Bilverstone took a drink of tea.

"It was a signal," he explained. "All the time while we've been out they've been watching us from the naval base. The *Kingfisher* has had her steam up ready to come out as soon as we should give the sign. We have given it. You will see her presently. What about the periscopes?"

"They're still there, sir," Seth answered. "I can see the top of her conning-tower above water. She's moving. I believe I can hear her engines grunting. So she's got some petrol left. Hullo! I can see a man's head and shoulders."

"She's bound to come up and work her petrol engines to generate electricity," said Mr. Bilverstone, going on a fresh tack. "Haul in the net, quick! Those Germans will guess we had a hand in it when they see the gunboat coming after them."

Seth got the gear inboard, and again his companion tacked. The boat was making for home, with both wind and tide in her favour.

Mr. Bilverstone could now watch the submarine. She was awash, and her petrol engines, making a great clatter, were evidently working up to full speed. Two of her crew had come out on the platform of her conning-tower. One was in officer's uniform. The sun, piercing the mist, shone upon his brass buttons and the gold badge on his cap. He stood looking southward to where two plumes of smoke from a steamer's funnels rose into the morning air over the lighthouse point. It could be seen that he had his left arm in a sling.

"She's coming after us, sir!" cried Seth. "She'll sink us!"

"She's trying to escape from the gunboat," declared Mr. Bilverstone. "You see, she can't submerge until her electric batteries are charged, and she can go quicker on the surface. Look! There comes the *Kingfisher*!"

The officer disappeared for some moments, but returned with a pair of binoculars, which he levelled upon the gunboat. The submarine quickly increased her speed, sending up a great fountain of foam as she cut through the water. She passed so close to the shrimp boat that it rocked on the waves she left in her wake. Seth Newruck saw the number on her side—U50. He also caught a glimpse of the face of the young officer on the deck of her conning-tower.

"Look!" he cried excitedly. "Look, sir! It's Max Hilliger himself!"

Hardly had he spoken when there was a spurt of fire and smoke from one of the *Kingfisher's* 4.7 guns; a shell whistled through the air and sent up a tall column of spray as it fell midway between the submarine and the shrimping boat. The submarine, now fully on the surface and racing along at eighteen-knot speed, offered a good target; but she manoeuvred, steering a zig-zag course, seldom exposing her broadside. A gun was raised from its concealed hatchway on her after platform, and she replied to the *Kingfisher's* fire without visible effect.

Arnold Bilverstone, nervously gripping the boat's gunwale, was leaning forward, gazing fixedly northward along the coast.

"That's good!" he exclaimed. "There's a couple of destroyers coming out from Buremouth. They'll head her off."

The chase continued. Suddenly the submarine's gun disappeared. The two men on her conning-tower went below. She seemed to be slowing down. A shell

from one of the two destroyers fell perilously near her, deluging her with spray.

"She's hit!" cried Seth Newruck. "See! she's sinking!"

"Submerging," corrected Mr. Bilverstone, watching the conning-tower slowly disappear.

The *Kingfisher*, going at her best speed of twenty knots, was soon abreast of the shrimper, separated by hardly more than fifty yards. Just in time her course was altered; she went abruptly to starboard, and so luckily avoided the torpedo which was aimed at her from the submerged enemy. Seth saw the disturbance of the water as the deadly weapon sped on its fruitless errand.

The gunboat gave up the dangerous chase and steamed a confusing, irregular course until she rounded the southern extremity of Alderwick Shoal, and thus got the protection of the sandbank between her and the submarine. But of the submarine herself and her periscopes no more was seen.

Arnold Bilverstone steered alongside the gunboat. Both he and Seth Newruck were taken on board, their boat being hoisted on deck with its catch of shrimps, which were consigned to the seamen's quarters. Later on that same day, on his way home up the High Street, Seth Newruck encountered Constable Challis.

"I thought you'd be interested to knew," said the constable, "as that dug-out at Green Croft came into use this mornin', when them naval guns were firin'. Mrs. Daplin-Gennery made sure it was the Germans comin' to make an invasion. She got all her household, includin' three Belgian refugees, into the shelter in double quick time; and there they remained until long after the firin' had ceased. Between ourselves, they might have remained comfortable in their beds. There was no cause for alarm. It was only that the *Kingfisher* discovered an enemy ship layin' explosive mines off the coast and gave chase and sent her to the bottom."

Seth smiled to himself. Constable Challis was curiously astray in his information.

"Did you see what took place, constable?" he inquired, assuming ignorance.

Challis shook his head regretfully.

"I wasn't on duty at the time," he answered. "Anyhow, Mrs. Daplin-Gennery had a rare fright. I'm told, indeed, that she's had a disturbed night from beginnin' to end. No sooner had she got her refugees to bed, when somebody or other had the impudence to knock her up askin' to use her telephone. At two o'clock in the mornin' she was again alarmed by hearin' a rifle shot on the denes. Then there was the naval guns. What the rifle shot was about I don't know. Inspector Jenner was up there on special duty shortly afterwards, but knew nothin' about it."

"Oh!" nodded Seth, with new interest. "And what was the special duty?"

Constable Challis bent nearer to the boy and lowered his voice.

"Strictly between ourselves," he said. "There's a rumour goin' about that one of the Germans has come back to Sunnydene—that secretary—and that he's been up to some spyin' tricks. Inspector Jenner, with assistance, went to arrest him. They broke into the house and made a thorough search, but he wasn't there. There wasn't a trace of him on the premises."

"Still," said Seth, "I suppose the police will keep a watch?"

"You may take it from me," declared Challis, "if that there Seligmann is anywhere about Haddisport, we shall nab him."

## CHAPTER XIX.

**U50.**

"*Dainty*, ahoy! Show a light at your gangway while I come aboard of you."

It was a dark, boisterous night, with fiercely driving rain. Mark Redisham in his dripping oilskins was pacing the wet deck of the mine-sweeper, lying at anchor in a land-locked bay on the north-east coast.

The *Dainty* and her consorts had been at their perilous work dredging for explosive mines off the north of Ireland and in the Pentland Firth, battling day by day with stormy seas, incessant rains, and bitterly cold winds. It had been a most uncomfortable trip, and Mark and his shipmates were rejoicing in the prospect of a few days' rest at home. Even the necessity of anchoring at night irritated them because of the delay.

The trawlers were lying now in the midst of a large flotilla of destroyers and light cruisers. Mark had read a flashlight signal from the bridge of one of the cruisers, inquiring which was the commodore of the mine-sweepers, and he had answered it with his electric torch. A pinnace was approaching the *Dainty*, and it was an officer in the stern sheets who had hailed him.

Mark held a lighted lamp in the open gangway, and the pinnace came alongside. The officer, a sub-lieutenant, climbed on board to speak with the skipper in the shelter of the wheel-house, leaving a midshipman in charge of the boat. Mark was about to enter into conversation with the bluejackets when the midshipman stood up. The lamplight shone in his face.

"Hullo, Rodney!" cried Mark in astonishment, recognising his brother. "What an unexpected meeting! How are you? Have you come off the *Levity*?"

They clasped hands.

"No," Rodney answered. "No, the *Levity* is in the repair yard. She got a bit knocked about in the scrap we had with the enemy off Heligoland. But in any case, I was only aboard her temporarily. Destroyers don't carry midshipmen as a rule, you know. I've been appointed to the *Dauntless*, the new light cruiser out there. Captain Damant is in command of her. She's heaps better than the *Atreus*; in fact, she's about the best light cruiser in the service. I thought you'd heard of my luck. I wrote to mother about it."

"But I haven't seen mother for over a week." Mark explained. "I expect to see her to-morrow, though."

"I'm afraid you won't," Rodney told him. "I believe you've got to sweep up a new mine-field that the Germans have laid south of the Dogger. That's where the *Rapid* was sunk this morning."

"The *Rapid*! Was she mined?"

"Yes, worse luck. No lives were lost, though; and, of course, she was obsolete, and no good for fighting, so it's not very serious. We'd already paid the enemy in advance, seeing that Lieutenant Ingoldsby torpedoed one of their newest destroyers yesterday afternoon. I'm awfully glad to have met you. Give my love to mother and the girls when you get home, and tell them I'm getting to know the North Sea as well as I know our own garden. Good night."

Mark drew back to make way for the lieutenant, who had been giving the skipper instructions for the sweeping of the new mine-field.

At daylight the next morning, having taken in fresh stores, the *Dainty* and her consorts steamed off.

On arriving at the scene of their duties they found another fleet of trawlers already at work, helped by an aeroplane. They combined in a systematic sweep of the known area and exploded some scores of mines without an accident. The new picking-up net lately introduced was doubtless the reason of this freedom from disaster.

Sweeping the seas for explosive mines indiscriminately laid by the enemy for the destruction of any ship which might run up against them, was not the only work in which the British steam trawlers and drifters were engaged. These stout little vessels, with their hardy crews of North Sea fishermen, were also engaged to act as scouts and messengers patrolling the coasts. Many of them were fitted with wireless masts, by means of which they sent out reports by code of anything suspicious which might be observed.

Thus, while the *Dainty* was still in the neighbourhood of the Dogger Bank, threading her way through a fleet of English herring smacks, Mark Redisham was able to send out a wireless message intimating that a German submarine of the largest and newest type had been seen. He gave her number as U50, and added that she had been watched taking in a supply of petrol and other stores from a

captured English trawler manned by Germans.

Less than an hour afterwards two British destroyers were seen racing at top speed in the direction in which the enemy trawler had disappeared. They went out of sight. There came the sound of gun firing, and Mark afterwards heard that the trawler had been sunk and her German crew taken prisoners.

While the guns were firing and the *Dainty* was yet within sight of the drifters, Mark again saw the submarine, or, rather, he saw her periscopes moving above the surface about a mile away. At the same time the skipper was watching a confused cloud of black smoke through the rain mist on the western horizon.

"Looks like a big liner," Snowling conjectured. "Give her a signal that there's an enemy submarine prowlin' around."

Before going to his instrument room Mark looked searchingly at the smoke.

"That's not a liner," he decided. "There's too much smoke for a liner. And there's more than one. It looks like a patrol of cruisers."

He sent off his wireless message and got one back to say that it had been received and understood. On returning to the deck he searched for signs of the submarine, but found none. The funnels of three British cruisers were now visible above the line of the sea. The *Dainty* was steered towards them. When their turrets and hulls came into view, Mark succeeded in identifying the ships as the armoured cruisers *Pomona*, *Graemsay*, and *Ronaldsay*. They were followed by a light cruiser and a division of destroyers. He signalled to them:

"Keep to the eastward of the fishing fleet."

But his warning advice did not divert the warships from their course. They approached at easy speed in line-ahead formation, the *Pomona* leading.

"They're all right, don't you trouble," observed Skipper Snowling. "I expect that that submarine has made off to Heligoland. They're all of 'em afraid of the very sight of the White Ensign."

The great, three-funnelled cruisers were a noble sight as they steamed along so steadily. Mark Redisham watched them through his binoculars, paying his attention to each one in turn and trying to discover in what small details of structure they differed one from another; for they were all three of the same class. Each was of twelve thousand tons displacement, each carried the same number of heavy guns, and each, as he knew, had the same complement of seven hundred and fifty officers and men.

As the *Pomona* came nearer he looked at the officers on the bridge. They wore their greatcoats, but he could still make out their respective ranks by their stripes and badges.

Suddenly one of them at the starboard end of the bridge pointed excitedly into the sea and shouted. Instantly there was a loud crash, an explosion. The whole ship staggered.

"Glory be!" cried Skipper Snowling. "That's a torpedo! It struck her amidships!"

In the excitement of the next two hours Mark Redisham got a confused impression of all that happened. He saw the *Pomona* listing over in a cloud of smoke and escaping steam. She was sinking. The *Graemsay* and the *Ronaldsay* were putting out their boats as they closed upon her. Their engines were stopped as they took up positions about four hundred yards apart from her to give assistance.

Hardly had they stopped when there was a second heavy explosion, followed by a third. The *Ronaldsay* had been torpedoed under her after-magazine. The air was filled with flying wreckage, which fell among her boats.

The *Dainty* and her consorts, as well as the fishing smacks and steam drifters, hastened to the rescue. Already the cruisers' picket boats and cutters had picked up many survivors from the *Pomona*. Some were returning to the *Graemsay*, when she, too, was hit by a fourth torpedo from the hidden enemy.

Looking round in the direction from which, as it seemed to him, the weapons had been fired, Mark Redisham saw the submarine's two periscopes moving along the surface some three hundred yards away. Then the upper part of her conning-tower rose. The gunners on the stricken *Graemsay* immediately opened fire upon it, and their ship's engines were put full steam ahead with the intention of running her down. But the cruiser was badly holed below water; she heeled rapidly and finally turned keel up.

In the meantime, the light cruiser and her flotilla of destroyers were coming down at racing speed, and the smacks and trawlers were drawing nearer. There were boats in plenty to give help to those who could swim or who had managed to seize upon floating wreckage; but, unfortunately, many had been killed or hopelessly maimed by the explosions, whilst others had not been able to escape from the stokeholds and lower decks, the loss amounting to the terrible total of sixty officers and fourteen hundred men.

"Seems to me," said Harry Snowling, helping Mark Redisham to lift a wounded stoker from the dinghy to the *Dainty's* deck, "as there must have been a whole crowd of submarines lyin' in wait to do this. 'Taren't proper warfare, like gunfire in an open action."

"I have seen only one," returned Mark, standing up and glancing over the side. "The same one that we saw taking in petrol from that stolen trawler. She's in sight even now, Harry. I can see her plainly, waiting, I suppose, to have a shot at the light cruiser—if she's got any more torpedoes left. I can make out her number. It's the U50. There's a group of Germans on her conning-tower platform. I believe they're gloating over what they've done. One of them's a middy, with his arm in a sling. Ah! They're going below now! They're going to

submerge."

He did not guess—he did not dream of the possibility—but had he taken his binoculars, he might have distinguished the features of the "middy" to whom he referred, and recognised them as the features of Max Hilliger.

## CHAPTER XX.
### PUT TO THE TEST.

"It's astonishing how much more interesting the North Sea has become since the beginning of the war," remarked Vera Redisham, standing at the dining-room window, busily knitting a khaki muffler for some unknown soldier at the Front. "There's a steamer passing now, a neutral, and I'm simply dying to know where she comes from and where she's going, and if she has been in danger from German torpedoes."

Her brother Mark, home on shore leave, was seated at the fireside, making up arrears in his reading of the newspapers. He was dressed in mufti, and looked very different from the rough-clothed signal boy who for weeks past had been battling with autumn storms and the perils of floating mines on the wave-swept decks of the *Dainty*.

"What flag's she flying?" he questioned, turning in his comfortable chair.

"I can't make out," his sister answered. "It's blue, with a white cross. And the same colours are painted on her side. And, oh, Mark, isn't it sweet of her? She's saluting the *Kingfisher*!"

"So she ought to," declared Mark, dropping his paper and rising to his feet. "All neutrals ought to salute the White Ensign, seeing what our Navy is doing by keeping the seas clear of the enemy. A Danish ship saluted our squad of minesweepers the other day. Blue with a white cross? She must be Greek. I expect she's carrying a cargo of currants. Isn't her name painted on her side?"

He went to the window and looked out upon the sea.

"Yes, she's Greek," he decided. "She's from Pireus. That's the harbour outside Athens, isn't it? Who's this coming in at the gate? A policeman delivering handbills!"

The parlourmaid presently brought in a sheet of typewritten paper, saying that it had been left at the door by a police sergeant. Mark Redisham took it from her and glanced at it. It was an order, issued by the Chief Constable of the county,

under the Defence of the Realm Act.

"This ought to keep silly people along the front from showing lights from their windows," he announced. "Listen!"

> "All lights visible from seaward shall be effectually obscured. No person shall show a light on the shore or on the land adjoining thereto, or visible from seaward.
>
> "The public are hereby warned that non-compliance with this regulation will render them liable to instant arrest, and that patrols have been instructed to fire at sight and without further warning on any person found signalling."

"That's what should have been done weeks ago."

"Bright lights on motor-cars ought to be prohibited, too," pursued Vera.

"Yes," agreed Mark, "and all Germans ought to be shut up. If innocent Belgian refugees are not allowed to stay in Haddisport, why should we let Germans live in houses overlooking the coast? They ought to be cleared out instead of being given the chance of sending messages over to Germany. It's certain there are spies all along the East Coast. Otherwise, how could the enemy know so well about the movements of our warships?"

He picked up the ball of khaki wool which Vera had dropped.

"I believe they're only waiting their chance to slip across and do a bit of raiding," he went on. "The Admiralty seem to think it possible, anyhow. That's why they have altered the positions of the lightships and buoys. I expect they'll continue to shift them about, so that the enemy may be confused."

"Of course, motor-cars and bicycles, however brightly lighted, can't send messages across the North Sea," Vera reflected.

Mark shrugged his shoulders.

"What's to hinder a motor-car being fitted with secret aerials?" he asked. "The Germans are not children. They're up to all sorts of cunning tricks. Why, only last week one of our Haddisport drifters went out to the herring fishing with a splash of red paint on her starboard bow. Nobody knew who put it there, the crew least of all; they didn't even see it. But when the boats were drifting to their nets on the fishing ground, a German submarine came nosing round, spotted the red splash of paint, and then went off in a bee-line for Heligoland."

"Well?" questioned Vera, not understanding. "What did it mean?"

"Well?" repeated Mark. "I don't know what it meant. But the men on the submarine did. It was a pre-arranged sign—a message. It's an old Scout trick. Darby Catchpole wanted to communicate with me once, by a way we'd fixed upon. I watched for the postman, and when he came past this gate I saw some

flour dust on his left arm. That meant 'No.' If the flour dust had been on his right arm, it would have meant 'Yes.' In the same way a German spy could put a secret mark on a railway carriage or a motor-car, going to a known destination, and give information to hundreds of other spies along the route."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Vera. "Perhaps it was a spy who tied the mysterious piece of ribbon to the handle-bar of my bicycle yesterday!"

"Likely enough," surmised Mark. "Perhaps the same one who daubed the paint on that fishing-boat. There's no doubt there are spies around here. And there's a green motor-car that goes dashing about between here and Buremouth with lamps shining like searchlights. The police and the military patrols have had instructions to capture it. Constable Challis has been put on night duty now. Challis is rather too fond of talking, but he's an uncommonly smart policeman."

Mark Redisham's estimate of Constable Challis was justified sooner than he expected.

On the very next night, indeed, Challis was on his beat patrolling the rabbit warren and the dark lanes to the north of the town, when his smartness was put to the test.

Formerly he would have been watching for tramps, suspicious loiterers, and possible burglars; but, since the outbreak of war, crime had diminished, even gipsies were fewer, and he could do nothing so useful as to watch the road for unauthorised vehicles and for spies flashing signals across the sea.

Before ten o'clock he had visited five different houses to alarm the occupants by informing them that lights were visible from their windows.

In three cases it was discovered that the lights were to be seen through the chinks of imperfectly drawn curtains or ill-fitting blinds; in one case a nurse had left the gas burning by mistake, and in the other, where the light came through an open stable door, a groom was attending to a sick horse and had not known of the new regulations. By midnight, however, the whole neighbourhood was in darkness.

Yet, still there were belated cyclists carrying lighted lamps. The worst offenders were the motor-cyclists, and these were mostly military men who, as Challis reflected, ought to have known better. Once a large motor-car dashed along the road at high speed with acetylene lamps which shone for many yards in advance of the wheels, illuminating the trees and hedges on either side of the road.

Much to Challis's surprise, when he stood and held out a warning arm and called to the driver to stop, he was obeyed. Even more to his surprise, he discovered the driver to be Mrs. Daplin-Gennery, and that her companion was her nephew, Lieutenant Ingoldsby.

"Very sorry, ma'am," said Challis apologetically, "but I've got strict orders

to stop all cars with high lights. I'm afraid I must ask you to lower yours, or else screen them."

"Quite right, constable," laughed Lieutenant Ingoldsby, jumping out. "I'm glad you stopped us without opening fire upon us."

Challis gathered that Lieutenant Ingoldsby was on the way to Buremouth to visit a friend who had been sent home wounded. When the car had gone on, with greatly reduced lights, he returned towards Haddisport along the edge of the cliff, then made inland to the Alderwick road.

As he approached the road through the intricate maze of bramble and gorse, he became aware of the sound of an approaching car. Could it possibly be Mrs. Daplin-Gennery returning so soon?

Instead of going into the road, he concealed himself within the shadow of a hawthorn-tree and watched. The car was coming slowly—so slowly that it made very little sound; and its lights were exceedingly dim. He waited, feeling instinctively that something was about to happen. It occurred to him that the dimness of the lights and the quiet slowness with which the car was moving were due to the extreme caution on the part of the driver, who evidently wished to escape observation.

In the darkness Challis could hardly see the vehicle itself, only the two tiny lights which were like the glimmer of candles. Suddenly, just opposite to him, it stopped, then backed and curved towards the farther side of the road.

Only at that moment did the watcher realise that just at that point was a narrow lane leading to Alderwick Hall. It was into this lane that the car was backing, obviously for the purpose of concealment. When its whole length was within the lane, hidden under the overhanging trees, it stopped.

The driver got out, stood for some moments as if listening, then went softly to the front of the car to extinguish the lamps. As he bent down to the first of them, the light shone in his face.

Challis hitched his cuffs back from his wrists. His eyesight was very keen. He had seen the man's face and recognised it. It was the face of Fritz Seligmann, the German spy!

With the stealthy softness of a cat stalking its prey, the policeman crept forward, and, just as Seligmann had raised his hand to turn out the second light, leapt upon him, gripping him from behind by the two arms.

There was a heavy gasp from the astonished German as he went down on his knees, the policeman's weight on top of him. He writhed and struggled to free himself, and succeeded in getting his right hand to his hip pocket, from which, with an effort, he drew his loaded revolver.

Challis guessed rather than knew what was in the man's hand. In an instant he had seized the German's wrist, twisted the hand under it, and secured the

weapon from the helpless fingers.

"Now," he said, speaking for the first time, "I think I've got you. If you move I'm goin' to use this here pistol. You're an enemy, and you may take it from me I don't care if I shoot you dead here and now no more than if I killed you on the field of battle."

Seligmann was lying with his face to the grass, panting, writhing, heaving under the weight of the constable's knee planted in the small of his back, while the cold ring of the revolver muzzle was pressed against the bone behind his ear and the policeman's forefinger was twitching at the trigger.

Thus they remained for some minutes, the one utterly helpless, the other resolute, alert, and astonishingly strong.

In those tense minutes Challis wondered what he was going to do. He did not want to use the revolver as anything else than a menace, and yet he knew that if he should move there would be a struggle, during which, by some trick or dexterity, his captive might escape.

In the back pocket of his overcoat was a pair of handcuffs. But how could he get hold of them without dropping the revolver? How could he hope to fix them on the German's wrists?

But if he could not get at the handcuffs, at least he could summon help. There were houses within call. The nearest was Sunnydene, for which Seligmann had no doubt been shaping; the next was Green Croft, then Major Redisham's. He managed to draw out his whistle, while his captive straggled more desperately than ever to get free. Just as he raised the whistle to his lips, he heard the quick patter of feet along the road. He blew a long, shrill blast.

Seligmann heaved himself upward with a mighty effort; but the revolver muzzle was pressed yet more forcefully against his skull, and the constable's knees were almost breaking his back.

The footsteps approached swiftly, and at length the flash of an electric torch shed its slanting ray upon the desperately struggling pair.

"What's up? Hullo, Challis, I've been searching for you."

It was the voice of Mark Redisham. He had received a telephone message from the police-station, bidding him find Constable Challis and help him to waylay this same suspected motor-car, coming from Buremouth.

"Quick! Feel in my back pocket for the handcuffs," Challis ordered, dropping the revolver and seizing his prisoner's two wrists. "Right. Now hold his head while I put 'em on. Then you can drive him and me to the police-station."

There was a sharp clip as the steel rings were locked upon the German's wrists. Mark went to the car, turned up the lights, and got ready. They bundled the prisoner into the body of the car, where Challis sat with him, covering him with the revolver. Mark drove off through the town, and soon brought up at his

destination. In the car they discovered a complete wireless outfit, a signalling lamp, and a handbag containing certain compromising documents.

"Yes," said the Superintendent, when Seligmann was safely locked in a cell. "He has been busy with that wireless apparatus to-night. Some of his messages were jammed, but not all of them. Not all."

## CHAPTER XXI.
### THE RAIDERS.

Whether Seligmann's wireless messages had anything to do with the matter or not can only be conjectured. But it is true that at earliest dawn on that same misty, November morning the fishermen of the Haddisport herring fleet, at work with their drift nets south of the Dogger Bank, were surprised by the sudden appearance in their midst of a squadron of eight grey-hulled Dreadnoughts and cruisers, bearing due westward at breakneck speed.

Looming out of the mist, they tore onward through the nets, regardless of the damage they caused. They showed no lights, even from their cabin portholes; they flew no flags.

One of the skippers, watching them, was so sure that they were British battleships that he waved his morning teapot at them in greeting; but some of the Englishmen shook their heads in doubt. There were peculiarities in the structure of the ships which were not familiar.

They passed so close to the *Mignonette* that Sam Quester, perched on the roof of the cuddy scuttle, saw the faces of the officers on bridge and quarterdeck, and was able afterwards to assert that he was almost sure one of the officers on the leading Dreadnought was Max Hilliger's father.

By the time they had passed out of sight into the mist the fishermen had come to the correct conclusion that the squadron was a part of the German High Sea Fleet. But what was their purpose? Where were they going at such a headlong rate? And where in the meantime was the British Fleet?

Twenty miles farther to the westward the Germans were again seen, flying the White Ensign, this time by a patrol of English mine-sweepers, which immediately sent out a wireless message of warning. The enemy flagship tried to jam the message. Nevertheless it was picked up by His Majesty's torpedo gunboat *Kingfisher*, lying at anchor in Buremouth Roads. The *Kingfisher* sent the warn-

ing onward, to be repeated and repeated north and south about the sea.

How did it happen that the Germans knew so well that on this particular morning they were in no danger of being intercepted by British cruisers? Had this been the secret of Fritz Seligmann's activity that night?

The wireless message from the *Kingfisher* reached the naval bases of Buremouth and Haddisport. Off Buremouth two destroyers were at anchor. They at once got up steam and pushed out in the wake of the gunboat. At Haddisport there was a submarine—the H29. She was ordered to follow. But where was her commander, Lieutenant Ingoldsby?

By the merest chance, Mark Redisham heard the question asked. He had come to the naval base to report the arrest of Fritz Seligmann, using Seligmann's car, which he had left at the pier-head. Constable Challis had told him that Lieutenant Ingoldsby had gone with Mrs. Daplin-Gennery to Floxley Hall, outside Buremouth.

Mark gave the information to Mr. Bilverstone, who telephoned to Green Croft and got a prompt answer. Mrs. Daplin-Gennery had just returned; but had left her nephew at the bedside of his wounded friend.

"All right, sir," said Mark, "I'll go and fetch him."

It was a journey of nineteen miles there and back, but Seligmann's car was a powerful one, well supplied with petrol, and Mark Redisham was an expert and cautious driver. He posted off to Floxley Hall at top speed.

Meanwhile, the enemy Dreadnoughts and cruisers were still being watched from the decks of the patrolling trawlers. They were racing towards the English coast, their tall funnels belching black clouds of smoke, their officers and men all at their fighting quarters, their heavy guns loaded, their torpedo-tubes charged.

"They look as if they was skelterin' away from an enemy," observed one of the English skippers. "But hold hard! They'll go slap into our mine-field, sure's a gun, the course they're makin'. Taren't possible they can hit the open lane."

A field of defensive contact mines had been laid for the protection of the coast, with secret gaps or passages which were supposed to be known only to naval men and responsible pilots. It was clear, however, that the Germans were well aware, not only of the exact locality of the mined area, but also of the open lanes through which they might pass in safety, for without slackening speed the ships rushed through in an unbroken procession, never swerving until they came within sight of the Alderwick lightship.

Here they separated into two divisions, the one steering direct for Buremouth, the other for Haddisport.

The *Kingfisher*, steaming out to inquire into the truth of the wireless message she had received, made her presence known by flashing her searchlight through the gloom of the early morning mist. The enemy flagship, bearing west-

by-south, instead of answering the signal, opened fire upon the British gunboat, at the same time showing the German flag in place of the White Ensign.

Confronted by so formidable an antagonist, the little *Kingfisher*, with her smaller four-inch guns, could not attempt to engage. She fired seven shots, which all dropped short, while shells were falling all round her. One struck her foremast and smashed her aerials, another exploded under her bridge, fatally injuring a seaman at her steering-wheel and cutting the compass in half.

The two destroyers raced up to her help, making as much smoke as possible to hide her. All three, hopelessly outranged, could only steam about in a zig-zag course at their fullest speed and at length take refuge in the mist.

The battleships did not follow in pursuit. It was not their intention to enter into a sea fight, if one could be avoided. Theirs was the sinister purpose of bombarding defenceless towns and spreading "frightfulness" amongst unoffending civilians.

While one division of the squadron branched off to pour their devastating shells into the houses of Buremouth, the other steamed abreast of Alderwick Shoal, and from the security of the deep water sent salvo after salvo into the buildings of Haddisport.

From the bridge of the flagship Heinrich Hilliger bent his binoculars upon his own house to seek for a signal which he failed to discover, or, rather, which was never displayed, his faithful secretary being at the time securely confined within the narrow walls of a prisoner's cell in Haddisport police-station.

Not finding the expected signal, Herr Hilliger transferred his attention to the business in hand, indicating the particular houses and buildings at which he desired the gunlayers to take especial aim: first, Green Croft, associated in his mind with the mischievous submarine commander, Lieutenant Ingoldsby, whose torpedoes had robbed the Kaiser's High Sea Fleet of at least two important ships; and then in turn the lighthouse, the parish church, the town hall, the chief hotels, the harbour, and finally the naval base, with its wireless station and battery of guns.

Mark Redisham and Lieutenant Ingoldsby, tearing in their motor-car along the deserted highroad, had heard the booming of heavy guns out at sea. The alarming sounds drew nearer and nearer, from two directions.

"They're bombarding Buremouth as well as Haddisport, sir," Mark declared, leaning forward to increase his speed.

"Faster! faster!" cried Ingoldsby. "Give her all she can do. Let her rip. But keep your head—keep cool—keep a sharp look-out!"

Mark had no need to be urged or cautioned. He had perfect control of the machine; he knew every turn and curve, every dip and rise of the road. The telegraph poles flashed by as if they had been park railings set side by side, and

there was no traffic to interfere with his onward, headlong pace.

As they left Alderwick village behind, and dashed along the open highway across the moorland, the first shell from the German battleships shrieked over their heads; a second crashed into one of the houses on the esplanade; another laid the lighthouse in ruins.

In the town shells were falling thick and fast, exploding with deafening noise. In the market-place a big hotel was on fire, and the car was checked by a crowd of excited people; but Mark made his way through, sounding his hooter, and arrived without hurt at the harbour, where the submarine was waiting ready for her commander to jump aboard.

The bombardment lasted some thirty minutes. The ships, dimly visible through the mist and smoke, steamed southward abreast of the town, firing their eleven-inch shells from starboard. Then they returned and repeated the manoeuvre, firing from their port sides and ending where they had begun. It was not safe for them to continue any longer, since every moment added to the danger of their retreat being cut off by a squadron of British Dreadnoughts racing towards them in response to urgent wireless messages.

Favoured by the fog, they took to flight, the battleships leading in order to give the smaller cruisers in the rear the opportunity of dropping some hundreds of explosive mines in their wake.

Already submarine H29, with Lieutenant Ingoldsby at his post in the conning-tower, had entered into pursuit, making for the gap in the British minefield through which alone the enemy ships could pass. But he had not counted on their hasty retreat or calculated the speed of their flight.

As they crossed in advance of him, not seeing his periscope, he fired his two bow torpedoes, and missed. He got astern of them and fired two more. But just as the missiles left their tubes there was an ominous crash and a fierce explosion.

The submarine had run up against one of the Germans' floating mines, which broke her like an egg, and the H29 and all who were in her sank to their last resting-place at the bottom of the North Sea.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### CUT AND RUN.

Seth Newruck, who lived at the north end of the town, had been to Alderwick

Hall to take certain reports and accounts to the Scout Commissioner, and was returning across the fields when he heard the firing of naval guns from somewhere out at sea.

He had previously seen the gunboat leave her anchorage, and he believed at first that her gunners were practising, or that perhaps some of the patrolling trawlers were exploding floating mines. He was not alarmed.

But very soon the loud, insistent booming convinced him that the guns were heavier than those of the *Kingfisher*, and that some sort of naval engagement was going on out there beyond the curtain of sea mist.

He began to run. Coming out upon the highway, he crossed the warren to the edge of the cliff and stood looking out to sea. He could see the flashes of the guns, flickering through the fog like summer lightning.

If ships were firing upon the *Kingfisher*, then assuredly they were enemies—a squadron of the German Fleet! Perhaps they were even engaged with a division of our British Dreadnoughts! The thought thrilled him in all his nerves.

After a while there was a lull. Seth went on, beyond the ravine, beyond Sunnydene. When he got close to the front gate of Green Croft, and again looked searchingly outward, he distinguished the shadowy forms of three great battleships, led by two light cruisers. They were steaming southward, with their broadsides towards the land.

Suddenly, from the foremost battleship, there came a flash. She was hidden in a cloud of smoke. He heard a shrill shriek, and saw a high fountain of spray rise from the deep water inside Alderwick Shoal, where a shot had fallen. At the same moment there was a terrible, ear-splitting, earth-shaking boom.

Seth trembled from head to foot; less with fear than with boyish excitement. Was it possible that he was, after all, going to witness at first hand some actual incident of the great war? His heart was beating furiously against his ribs; he went hot and cold by turns. He knew that he stood in danger. The next shot might come farther than the sea!

"I wonder if I'm afraid?" he asked himself.

Then he thought of the people in the houses near him, and of his duty as a Scout. If the danger should come nearer, how could he give help? He remembered the refuge trench which he had helped to dig in Mrs. Daplin-Gennery's garden. Now most surely was a time for it to be used!

He ran in at the gateway and up the gravelled drive. The window blinds were down, the front door was shut. He went round to the back entrance and was about to hammer at the kitchen door when it was flung open.

Mrs. Daplin-Gennery stood in the passage, wearing a blue dressing-gown. Her long, black hair hung loose over her shoulders, making her face look very white. Her arms were bare, and he saw that she held a revolver in her right hand.

Behind her were other women—her lady's maid, the Irish cook, the parlourmaid, and two others.

Seth Newruck raised his hand in the Scouts' salute.

"You'd better all get into the trench, ma'am," he advised. "There's a lot of German warships out there beyond the sandbank."

Even as he spoke there came the loud, whistling rush of a shell overhead and a terrific explosion rent the air as the thing fell somewhere in the fields beyond. The servants screamed. Mrs. Daplin-Gennery alone was calm.

"Are there troopships and Zeppelins with them?" she questioned. "Are they going to land? Is it an invasion?"

"No." Seth shook his head. "I don't think so. But, anyhow, you'd better take shelter in the dug-out."

Mrs. Daplin-Gennery stood aside, thrusting the others in advance of her. They had more than once rehearsed this scene. One by one they obediently and very quickly rushed forward and disappeared into the sap trench. Their mistress followed, but hesitated half-way down the sunken ladder.

"You must come, too," she called to Seth. "There is plenty of room."

Seth drew back a step and turned as if to leave.

"As soon as you're all safe in the dug-out," he responded quietly, "I'm going to run home, to look after my mother and sisters. Father's out with the Fleet."

There was another loud boom of a gun; but this time it came from the direction of Buremouth.

"Quick! Come into the trench!" urged Mrs. Daplin-Gennery, now at the foot of the ladder and out of sight. "You'll get killed if you don't. And if they land troops—if it's an invasion—you must stay and defend us helpless women. You're the only male person here. Besides, you're a Scout; you know what to do if any of us are wounded."

This argument presented a new aspect of the situation. Seth descended the ladder, and as he turned into the darkness of the sap trench the pistol was thrust into his hand.

"If a German shows his face, shoot him!" he was ordered.

"They won't land, ma'am," he declared with confidence, following along the covered way to the refuge of the sunken bicycle shed under its protecting mound of sandbags and earth. "They couldn't land through shoal water."

His further assurances were cut short by a deafening explosion. The earth shook, there was a prolonged roar and clatter of tumbling masonry, mingled with the splitting of timber and the crashing of glass.

"Wirra-wirra!" cried the Irish cook. "It's the house they've struck, and we'll all be kilt entirely!"

A shower of loose sand, dislodged by the concussion, fell through the cracks

in the roof of the shelter, the support timbers creaked ominously. Then suddenly all was silent except for the cries of the frightened kitchenmaid.

Seth ran back along the covered way and found the entrance blocked by a confusion of fallen bricks and garden soil. But there was a second exit which admitted light and air to the refuge, with a second ladder. Up this ladder he climbed and thrust out his head above ground to see what damage had been done and discover if the house were on fire.

His nostrils were assailed by the pungent fumes from the exploded eleven-inch shell. Clouds of drifting smoke and dust obscured his view; but as they cleared he saw that the gable end of the house had fallen, carrying with it a chimney-stack and some of the wrecked furniture of an upper room. The windows were all smashed. The shell seemed to have burst somewhere between the adjoining stables and the conservatory, both of which were a mass of ruins.

"It's a good thing nobody is hurt," he said, returning to report on what he had seen. "You're quite safe now. I don't suppose a second shot will be aimed at the same place."

There was another fierce explosion, very near. Again and again the guns boomed out their thunder. The sounds of bursting shells came clear and sharp, repeated again and again as the bombardment of the town was continued.

"I can't be of any more use here," said Seth, returning the revolver to Mrs. Daplin-Gennery. "When the firing stops, you can get out all right. I must go now. I believe Major Redisham's house has been struck. They're firing their broadsides right into the heart of the town now! Listen!"

He was back at the ladder; but the lady's maid held him.

"Don't leave us!" she implored agitatedly. "It's not all over yet. Stay where you are."

He yielded to her entreaties. The enemy ships had gone about and were returning abreast of the town, firing salvos as they passed, steaming very quickly. They must already have got some inkling or suspicion that a squadron of British cruisers was coming down in hot haste from the northward, for abruptly they ceased firing and turned outward, disappearing into the mist. They had run risks out of all proportion to the gain of such a cowardly raid.

Straight across from Wilhelmshaven they had made their bold dash for the English coast to bombard a couple of undefended towns which they might attack without venturing too far south or too far north, or lingering too long. If they stayed no more than one brief hour in English waters and then fled for very life, they had reason. Quick of heel and heavy of hand as they were, they owed their escape wholly to the fog which shielded them.

Coming out from the trench, Seth Newruck ran through the front garden to the edge of the cliff and saw the *Kingfisher* returning to port with her topmast

broken and her bridge badly battered.

He turned in at Major Redisham's gate, hoping to find Mark. The house had not been touched by the shell fire. Mrs. Redisham and her two daughters and servants had taken refuge in their dug-out. They were excited, but not frightened. Their chief anxiety was about Mark, who had gone out after supper on the previous night and not come back.

Seth offered to make inquiries concerning him, saying he was sure to be all right somewhere, and ran off again.

At the top of the town he encountered Mark in a strange motor-car. Mark pulled up at sight of him.

"Do you know if my people are safe?" he asked.

"Yes. I've just seen them," Seth answered. "They're only worried a bit to know where you've been all night. Whose car have you got?"

"I'm not quite sure," Mark laughed. "I suppose it may be considered a prize of war. We captured it last night, Challis and I, along with the German spy who was using it. Jump in! There's no real need for me to go home, now that I know they're safe. I will telephone to them from the post-office. It's pretty awful down there. Ever so many people have been killed and injured. Mr. Bilverstone has got a whole troop of nurses and stretcher-bearers at work. Come along, we can help."

Seth jumped up beside him. They drove past the lighthouse, where a shell had struck and exploded, doing considerable damage, then turned aside to ascertain that Seth's mother and sisters were safe.

Some dwelling-houses near the Town Hall had been wrecked. Windows were smashed everywhere; an hotel in the market-place was in ruins.

Mark made room for two women and three children who were seriously injured, and conveyed them to the hospital; then he went about the town, using the car for ambulance work and giving first-aid where he could.

The hospital staff, the doctors, with the police, the local Scouts, and many other willing helpers were kept busy. Over thirty persons had been killed, more than a hundred were severely injured. The damage to property could not easily be measured, but the most serious destruction was in the crowded quarters of the old town where the fishermen lived. In the course of his work of taking the injured to the hospital, Mark Redisham called at the police-station. A side of the building had been shattered by one of the German shells. The wall and a part of the roof had fallen in, burying a warder and two prisoners in the ruins. Men were engaged in clearing away the debris of bricks and tiles and heavy wooden joists. They had rescued the warder and one of the prisoners, only slightly hurt.

Mark waited until the third victim should be found. A heavy beam of timber had to be lifted. It was moved at last, and Mark saw what was beneath it.

"It's the German spy!" he cried. "It's Fritz Seligmann. He's dead—quite dead!—killed by his own friends!"

## CHAPTER XXIII.
### STRIKING THE BALANCE.

In their hurried flight from Haddisport and Buremouth, the raiding Germans had made a novel and unexpected departure from the recognised methods of warfare. By dropping floating mines in their wake, they showed that their battleships may be more dangerous in retreat than when advancing.

Retreat is not an inspiring proceeding; it depresses the spirits of officers and men, and this would be very evident in the case of the German seamen who had so long boasted of the great things they would accomplish when a naval war came. But if when their ships were in flight the crews knew that they were laying snares to trip up their pursuers their retreat would be robbed of its depressing effects. Any British vessels of war venturing to follow on their heels would inevitably be destroyed.

They were not yet hidden in the fog when Lieutenant Ingoldsby's submarine, manoeuvring to torpedo them, ran up against one of their mines and was instantly sunk, with the loss of her gallant commander and every one of his crew. Hardly had the H29 disappeared when two of the patrolling trawlers, steaming up to her rescue, were also sent to the bottom.

The German light cruisers must have been fitted for this purpose of mine sowing. When the battleships were advancing, these smaller, high-speed scouts would act as a screen, and in retreat they would keep astern of the big ships, dropping a trail of small mines overboard as they fled.

The sacrifice of the H29 and the two trawlers was a serious disaster; but at the same time it taught our Navy a valuable lesson in tactics. Never again would any British warship pursuing a German follow directly in the wake, but always on a parallel course.

It was the wounded *Kingfisher* which brought into Haddisport the news that a new mine-field had been sown. A fleet of mine-sweepers, led by the gunboat *Stormcock*, was at once sent out. It included the *Dainty*, with Mark Redisham on board, and throughout the rest of that exciting day the people on shore were startled by repeated loud detonations as the floating mines were one after another

exploded by gunfire from the trawler's decks.

The *Dainty* and three of her consorts remained at sea for a week, doing patrol duty—cruising between the English coasts and the Bight of Heligoland in search of enemy ships or ships carrying contraband of war. They were now armed with machine-guns and could defend themselves in emergency.

At this time the chief interests of the war were centred upon the commerce destroyers on the outer seas and the military operations in France and Flanders. The Germans were making their great effort to force a way through to Calais. Their navy was hemmed in by the watchful British Fleet, and for a long time after the bombardment of Haddisport the North Sea was clear of their ships. There was no target for British naval guns.

Some few of their destroyers and submarines, it is true, contrived to steal out from the protection of their fortified harbours, and two British cruisers—the *Hawke* and the *Hermes*—were sunk by their torpedoes.

Fearing to risk their battleships in an engagement on the open sea, the enemy were using their small craft in the pirate work of sinking innocent merchantmen and fishing boats. They had seized the Belgian port of Zeebrugge, and were making this a base for submarines.

It was surmised that they intended also to station a force of torpedo boats at Antwerp, in spite of the breach of Dutch neutrality which the use of the River Scheldt would imply. But to enter either seaport they had to run the gauntlet of our North Sea patrols, and on at least one occasion they met with complete disaster.

A patrol of English trawlers was cruising off the Dutch coast, not far from the mouth of the Scheldt. Mark Redisham, on board the *Dainty*, was enduring as best he could the dull monotony of his confined life on a small vessel pitching uncomfortably on a rough sea in a bitterly cold wind. He was walking the wet deck, his oilskins dripping with rain, when he saw smoke on the dim horizon to the north. It came from the funnels of four torpedo-boat destroyers.

Mark watched them, and presently determined that they were Germans, making for the Scheldt.

"You'd best rap out a wireless message," said Skipper Snowling.

"I don't think there's any need," returned Mark. "Look what's coming along behind them!"

He indicated a second cloud of smoke, much greater in volume than the first, and blacker. The Germans also had evidently seen it, for they had put on full steam, doing their best to escape. Whatever their pursuers might be, they were quickly lessening the distance that divided them from their prey. Mark watched the chase excitedly.

The four enemy boats were small compared with British destroyers; but

they were going at quite twenty-six knots speed. Each was armed with three quick-firing guns and two machine-guns, and carried a crew of sixty officers and men. They flashed past, paying no attention to the trawlers.

Through the black oil smoke in the distance could now be distinguished a British light cruiser and four destroyers, rushing along like railway trains, with their high prows smothered in white spray. They were overhauling the Germans hand over hand.

"They can't escape! They can't escape!" cried the skipper.

Apparently the fugitives realised this; for they turned abruptly to starboard and at once opened fire on their pursuers. The distance between was about four miles, and it was at this range that the British cruiser, and her consorts, extending themselves into line abreast formation, began their cannonade. The shells from the two opposing sides crossed in front of the patrol of trawlers, which stood by, witnessing the fierce combat.

It lasted hardly more than an hour, a running fight in which everything depended upon marksmanship and in which the superiority of the British gunnery was from the first apparent.

A few moments after the action began, the leading German boat was struck in a vital part. Clouds of wreckage and smoke filled the air about her as the British lyddite shells hit her and exploded, smashing the thin steel plating of her hull. When the smoke cleared, there was nothing left of her but a few survivors struggling in the waves.

The remaining three vessels, still going at full speed, tried to dodge the shots, while their own guns were kept at work. The British destroyers had selected each her own target, and continued pounding away at it from a distance. Superior range and weight of guns soon proved their advantage. The second of the German boats was sunk, then the third, and finally the fourth; the Kaiser's Navy was poorer by the loss of four useful units.

Promptly, when the first of them went down, the trawler patrol hastened to the spot to pick up survivors. From all four some few were rescued, to be taken to England as prisoners.

Three officers and ten men had been saved by the *Dainty* when the cruiser steamed near, stopped, and dropped one of her boats. As the boat came alongside, Mark Redisham glanced instinctively at the men's caps and was surprised to read the name H.M.S. *Dauntless.* He looked at the midshipman in the stern sheets. It was his brother Rodney.

"So that's your new ship?" said Mark when they had greeted each other. "She's a smart one. I hope there are not many casualties."

"Hardly any to speak of," Rodney answered. "One officer and four men slightly wounded, that's all; and hardly a scratch on any one of the ships. We've

wiped off an old score, anyhow. What we've just done will balance the loss of the *Atreus*."

"Yes," interposed one of the German officers who had been listening very attentively. "But the balance is still considerably in favour of Germany. You are forgetting what our *Emden* has done; you are forgetting how our Admiral von Spee annihilated a squadron of your Dreadnoughts, how one of our tiny submarines recently sent three of your best cruisers to the bottom. Did we not sink two more of your cruisers only last week? Have we not successfully bombarded your fortified coast towns——?"

What more he would have said was left unspoken, for at that moment one of the bluejackets in the boat leapt from his seat and seized him by the throat with one strong hand, while he lifted the other to strike him.

"Stop that! Stop that!" cried Rodney Redisham in a voice of stern command.

The seaman instantly let go his hold and stood back abashed.

"Beg pardon, sir," he said humbly, touching his cap; "but my brother Tom went down with the *Atreus*; my mother and sister were killed by a German shell in Haddisport, and I didn't reckon I was doin' no harm in goin' for the first German as have come within reach of my fist."

"It is not English to strike a prisoner, however," the midshipman reminded him.

For some reason which Mark Redisham did not understand, none of the prisoners were left on board the *Dainty*. They were distributed among her three consorts, which followed the flotilla towards Harwich, leaving the commodore to return alone to Haddisport.

Skipper Snowling took her northward along the Dutch coast before making a slant across the Silver Pit. He had not gone many miles when a German destroyer came in sight, bearing down towards him.

"Looks as if she was a straggler from that other lot," Snowling continued, and he altered his course to get nearer to a Norwegian steamer to the west of him.

To his surprise and annoyance, the destroyer also altered course and gave chase. Snowling put on more steam, and, as a precaution, got his machine gun ready for action, with Mark Redisham at the breech. In their weeks of minesweeping work Mark had proved himself an excellent shot. He had seldom failed to explode a mine when firing at it.

The German signalled to the *Dainty* to stop and haul down her flag, but the White Ensign remained proudly at the trawler's masthead and her engines never went so well.

The destroyer opened fire and there was an immediate reply from the gun on the trawler's deck. Mark aimed with cool precision and made many direct

hits in vital parts, while shots from the German fell thick around him.

The two vessels blazed away at each other as hard as they could for about a quarter of an hour, no great damage being done on either side. But the destroyer, with her greater speed, was quickly overhauling the mine-sweeper, and at last the two came broadside to broadside.

"Look out, chaps!" cried Mark. "She's going to torpedo us!"

All the hands wore their safety collars and lifebelts, and the boat was swung out ready over the quarter rail. The skipper was at the steering wheel.

"Keep cool all," commanded Snowling. "Let 'em know as we're Britons. Give her another peppering, Mark!"

Mark and his assistants had already shown that they were better gun-layers than their enemies, and their next cannonade sent splinters flying from the destroyer's decks. Her wireless machinery and aerial was already wrecked. Her guns were silent for a while as she manoeuvred to discharge a torpedo.

Suddenly Harry Snowling put his helm hard over, the *Dainty* swung round bow on, and she raced forward like a mad animal direct for the destroyer and crashed into her amidships, her powerful prow smashing like a battering-ram into the steel plates.

The destroyer's bridge fell over, and the five officers and men who had stood upon it were flung headlong into the sea.

The trawler's engines were reversed. She backed out of the gaping hole she had made and then stood still as if to take breath after her exertion. The German boat, badly damaged, but not injured below water, just turned round, and, without waiting to pick up any of her men in the sea, made off as fast as her condition would allow her in the direction in which she was originally going.

"And now," said Harry Snowling, when the survivors had been picked up and stowed safely below, "I reckon we may as well steer straight for home and get a coat of paint over them scratches on our bows."

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### THE MEETING ON THE CLIFF.

"Beautiful view from here," remarked the stranger, dropping the stub of his cigarette on the pavement of the esplanade. "I should say it must be sharming in der spring, ven der gorse vos all in bloom. It minds me of Scotland."

He spoke very softly, with a slightly Scotch accent—or was it merely broken English? Mr. Croucher took it to be Scotch; but he was not very quick at recognising accent, and perhaps it was the reference to Scotland which gave him the idea.

"Yes," he agreed, "nice, pure air, too. It's what I call clean air."

"But in ze vinter," the stranger resumed, "it is probable ze beople in dese houses get much more air than zey vant."

Mr. Croucher turned with his back to the sea and contemplated the houses referred to. They had a new interest for him this morning. It was the first time he had seen them since the visit of the German raiders. The house directly opposite him was as seriously damaged as if an earthquake had shaken its foundations. The windows were smashed and boarded up, a large part of the roof had fallen in; the gable end was in ruin, and some of the bulging walls were shored up with beams of wood.

The stranger also had turned and was regarding the wrecked dwelling curiously, with his watery, blue eyes blinking through gold-rimmed spectacles.

"You have had a fire here, it seems," he casually observed, standing slightly back so that Mr. Croucher should not look into his face and penetrate its disguise.

It was a flabby, clean-shaven face, with a double chin which was partly hidden by the wide, turned-up collar of his heavy overcoat. He was a tall, robust man. At first sight of him Mr. Croucher had supposed him to be a naval officer in mufti.

"No," explained Mr. Croucher, "it wasn't a fire. All that devastation is the result of the bombardment the other morning. It was awful while it lasted. They started firing just opposite here," he pursued; glad to have a listener, and proceeded to give an ample account of the bombardment and its results, concluding with a reference to the sinking of submarine H29. "Her commander, Lieutenant Ingoldsby, lived in the very house we're now looking at," he added.

From Green Croft the stranger transferred his attention to Sunnydene, a little farther towards the end of the cliff.

"That house wasn't touched," Mr. Croucher informed him. "They didn't aim at it. You see, it belongs to a German, the brother of one of the Kaiser's admirals, and of course they had instructions to do it no harm. I don't know what amount of truth there may be in it, but it's whispered in the town that German spies were busy along here on the night before the raid."

"Indeed?" The stranger had taken out his cigarette-case and opened it. He took one for himself and politely held the case in invitation towards Mr. Croucher.

"Thank you, but I don't smoke," said Mr. Croucher, watching the other strike a light.

Just for an instant, as the man turned to shield the flaming match from the wind, it occurred to Mr. Croucher that there was something not altogether unfamiliar in his face and figure. And surely it was not the first time that he had seen that same fat hand with its diamond ring, holding a flaming match and lighting a cigarette in that same way! But he dismissed the idea as impossible. No, this was a perfect stranger.

"Spies? But you amaze me!" the other exclaimed, dropping the dead match. "Have not all alien enemies been interned—as certainly they should be? Or are some of our own beople vorking for Germany?"

This expression of concern for the Empire's safety gave Mr. Croucher confidence.

"No," he declared warmly. "They have not by any means all been interned. That very house along there—Sunnydene—has been a nest of plotting spies all along. Hilliger and that secretary of his—a fellow named Seligmann—had caused no end of mischief before Seligmann was arrested."

A look of eager interest leapt into the stranger's face, which, however, he contrived to conceal from Mr. Croucher.

"So?" he said, controlling his excitement. "They arrested him, did they? Ven vos dat?"

"Two or three nights ago," Mr. Croucher innocently answered. "The night before the bombardment, it was. In the ordinary course of things, I suppose he would have been tried and hanged as a spy. He was imprisoned in Haddisport gaol; but the next morning, when the German battleships were bombarding the town, one of their shells struck the police-station, burying him in the ruins, and he was taken out dead."

"Dear me!" exclaimed the stranger; and with surprising abruptness he saluted and went off, walking very quickly towards the end of the cliff, where he turned inland and disappeared among the bushes beyond Sunnydene.

He had been gone only a few moments when Mark Redisham and Seth Newruck came along, with telescopes under their arms. They were on coast-watching duty.

"I wish you two Scouts had been here five minutes ago," said Mr. Croucher, as they drew near him. "There was a stranger in conversation with me very much interested in the bombardment. You might have been able to tell him more about it than I could—especially about the arrest of Seligmann."

"I don't see what a stranger could want to know about Seligmann," said Mark. "What was he like? Was he English?"

"English? I suppose so; either English or Scotch. He spoke with a sort of accent. He was tall, fair, rather stout, and wore spectacles."

"Are you sure he wasn't German?" questioned Seth. "Perhaps he was a

spy—a friend of Seligmann's wanting to know what had become of him."

"Nonsense," objected Mr. Croucher.

"He lighted a cigarette, didn't he?" said Mark, observing a dead match on the pavement.

"How do you know it wasn't a pipe or a cigar?" asked Mr. Croucher sharply. He was always being tripped up by these Sea Scouts, who seemed to know things by an extraordinary instinct.

"Because there's the fag end of a cigarette lying at your feet, with some ash beside it that the wind hasn't yet blown away," Mark Redisham quietly answered.

He had the curiosity to pick up and examine the fragment before handing it to his companion.

"What do you make of it, Seth?" he inquired meaningly.

"Crumbs!" cried Seth. "Why, it's the same brand as those we found in the silver cigarette-case—marked 'Vafiadi, Cairo'! I wonder if the stranger was Herr Hilliger?"

"That's just what I was wondering, too," nodded Mark. "It's possible."

Mr. Croucher stared at the two Scouts indignantly.

"Do you suppose I shouldn't have known him?" he demanded. "Herr Hilliger wears a beard and has long hair. This man was clean-shaven, and his hair was quite short. Besides——"

"It wouldn't be impossible to shave off a beard and get a short crop," declared Mark. "Which way did he go?"

Mr. Croucher indicated the direction. The two Scouts went off hurriedly. Mark led the way across the warren to the Alderwick road and the little cross lane.

"It was just here that we captured Seligmann," he explained.

They searched the ground and discovered in the soft mud the newly impressed marks of the tyres of a motor-car and of a man's boots.

It was useless, of course, for them to attempt to track the car. Had they been able to do so, the trail would have led them many miles away, through village after village and town after town, northward along the coast. They might have run the car to earth at last on a desolate stretch of moorland where it had halted. Thence they might have followed Heinrich Hilliger's tracks to a pile of ruins—the ruins of an old-world castle—on the edge of a steep precipice overlooking the sea.

At the foot of the precipice was a tiny bay of deep, clear water, fringed with rocks. Between two of the rocks a small boat was drawn up on the shingle—a curious, collapsible boat made of water-tight canvas stretched on a steel frame. A pair of sculls lay across the thwarts. Nobody was in charge of it.

Heinrich Hilliger looked down into the depths and saw the boat as he passed along the edge of the cliff and made his way through the heather to the

ruin. He gave a long, low whistle and a whistle came back to him in response.

"You have managed it, then!" cried a young voice; and from beyond a corner of the grey stone wall his son Max ran out, dressed in the uniform of a German naval officer.

The father and son embraced. Then Max laughed, looking at his father in amusement.

"It's as well you gave me the signal," he said, speaking in German. "I should hardly have known you without your beard. Well, you have been to Haddisport? What news of Fritz?"

"The worst news," answered Herr Hilliger. "He was caught. He was taken to prison. More than that, when we bombarded the town, one of our shells struck the prison-house and poor Fritz was killed! It seems like fate."

"Killed! By our own guns! Father, are you sure?"

"Absolutely. It is in the newspapers, and I have had confirmation of it from Old Croucher, whom I met outside Sunnydene. He did not recognise me; but he saved me the risk of showing myself in the town."

Max clenched and unclenched his hands.

"This is what comes of the silly, useless notion of bombarding open towns!" he declared. "What good has it done, to knock a few shops and hotels to pieces, to smash the windows of a few seaside villas, and to take the lives of a lot of innocent women and children? There was no military advantage in it! You have not even frightened the English people. They are only laughing at us for using our battleships to fire their shells into unfortified places instead of going out boldly to face the enemy in a fair and open fight!"

"You forget, my son," returned Herr Hilliger, "we sank a British submarine; we sowed many hundreds of explosive mines. There was some good in that, eh?"

"Not that I see," retorted Max. "The commander of that submarine was once my friend. He has dined at your own table. And from what I understand, the English mine-sweepers exploded all the mines before the day was out. I don't agree with sowing explosive mines on the high seas. It's not playing the game."

"Bah! Don't talk to me about playing the game, my dear Max. It is not a game; it is war. If we mean to beat the English we must not be hampered by any childish ideas of fair play. As for the killing of Fritz, it is of course unfortunate; but it could not have been foreseen. We must get some one to take his place, yourself, perhaps."

"No." Max shook his head resolutely. "I am not a spy. I shall do nothing underhand. Let us fight fairly and openly, not hit below the belt. I have my duties on the submarine, and I don't want to set foot in England until the war is over. I should not be here now, but that I have come to take you away—to give you a passage back to Wilhelmshaven. Are you ready? The submarine is lying

submerged in the next bay, waiting for my signal."

"My dear Max," returned Hilliger, "I cannot go back with you. My place is here, in England, where I have been stationed. Since Fritz is dead, it is all the more important that I remain on this side. Our Zeppelins are preparing to come over, only waiting until I shall send a message to say that the wind and weather are suitable. When the time is favourable I must be on the spot with a car to guide them by its light to the places where they shall drop their bombs."

Max curled his lip contemptuously.

"And you call that war, I suppose," he sneered—"dropping fire-bombs on farmhouses and in kitchen-gardens! I could see some sense in it if we aimed at their aeroplane sheds, their dockyards, or their ammunition factories, or if we sank some of their Dreadnoughts and troopships. Why, if every house and inhabitant of Haddisport were destroyed, it wouldn't make a pin's difference in the progress of the war."

Herr Hilliger shrugged his shoulders and turned the subject by saying:

"I see, my dear Max, that you are wearing the Iron Cross. I congratulate you. I am proud. No doubt it is a reward for sinking those three British cruisers?"

Max nodded. "We shall sink others, too," he averred. "I shall not be satisfied until we have put a torpedo into one of their great battleships—one of their boasted Dreadnoughts."

He strode to the edge of the cliff and looked down into the water. The submarine was emptying her ballast tanks and was already in the awash condition. He moved his arms, signalling by semaphore to Lieutenant Körner standing on the conning-tower platform. Then, again embracing his father, he climbed down the difficult slope of the cliff to the collapsible boat, stepped into it, and pulled out to the submarine.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### MAX HILLIGER'S SATISFACTION.

Max Hilliger's declaration that he would not be satisfied until Lieutenant Hermann Körner and he had put a torpedo into a British battleship was not long in being fulfilled.

How they discovered that such a ship was to be found in a particular position on the North Sea at a particular time is a matter which cannot be explained.

It is certain that the Germans succeeded in discovering many of the movements and intended movements of the British Fleet which were believed to be secret, and of which even many highly-placed British naval officers were profoundly ignorant. Doubtless their spy system and their methods of communication were perfectly well organised and established long before the outbreak of war.

By whatsoever means he received his information, Lieutenant Körner expected the squadron to pass southward, and he prepared to carry out his instructions by bringing his submarine within striking distance at the anticipated moment.

It was a wild, dark winter's night, bitterly cold, with a fierce wind blowing from the north-east. Submarines are not commonly supposed to be of great use in the darkness; their periscopes are then blind. But Körner boldly kept the U50 on the surface, trusting to the high waves to hide her betraying conning-tower from watchful eyes and from the beams of searchlights.

But as an additional measure of protection and deception he had hoisted a pair of brown lugsails on her two temporary masts, so that from a distance she might have the appearance of an innocent fishing boat. This ruse was a development and improvement of Max Hilliger's idea of concealing a submarine within the body of a larger boat.

Hour after weary hour went by; but no light, no steamer's smoke; could be seen through the inky darkness. Still he waited, while the submarine rocked and tossed and rolled on the giant waves, and the wind shrieked angrily.

Towards midnight a tiny masthead light blinked fitfully through the curtain of driving sleet.

"They come!" said Körner from his post in the conning-tower. He had seen a green starboard light gleam wanly against an approaching vessel's black hull.

"It is only a fishing trawler making for home," Max Hilliger declared with a shiver. "Let us submerge and get out of the cold and wet."

"Not yet, not yet," returned Körner. "They will surely come. We are in their track. They cannot have turned back. Our own battleships could weather a worse storm than this, and so could they. Whatever else the cowardly English are afraid of, they are not afraid of the sea. I believe the blood in their veins is made of salt water. If you are cold, my friend, go below and warm yourself. Already it is a long time since you had supper."

Max crept below like a dog into its kennel and took some food and a drink of hot coffee in the warmth of the engine-room. The warmth made him sleepy, and he did not return to the conning-tower until he was called.

Körner and the quarter-master were at their posts. From their point of observation they had seen the black shapes of an advancing squadron of battleships, light cruisers, and torpedo-boat destroyers. They could be British only, since no

German warship larger than a destroyer was permitted to put to sea. No lights were displayed, but a reflected glow from the furnaces mingled with the smoke rising from the blackness of the funnels, and the wash of spray as the vessels cut through the water showed whiter than the whiteness of the breaking waves.

The German seamen were at their quarters, the officers at the control stations, the engineers at work with the petrol motors, the gunners at the air-compressors for charging the torpedo tubes. All was quiet but for the ceaseless rattle of cranks and pistons and the whining of well-oiled wheels. The submarine was manoeuvred round as if to cross the bows of the British ships.

A couple of the destroyers went past, then a light cruiser. Next came the towering bulk of a Dreadnought, looming out of the darkness. Sparks of fire floated amid the thick volume of coal smoke from her foremost funnel; a shaft of light came through an open doorway on her high bridge.

"I believe it's the *Triumphant*!" said Max Hilliger, at the lieutenant's elbow.

It was at a point forward of the bridge, on the starboard side, that the torpedo was aimed. There was no possibility of its missing so huge a target. But to make certain of hitting a vital part well below the armoured belt a second torpedo was to be fired, and then the submarine would submerge and make good her escape.

On board the *Triumphant* the larger number of her officers and crew of nearly eight hundred men were below asleep when the fearful crash came. Hammocks and bunks were jerked up by the shock. The torpedo had missed the magazine by a few feet, but it burst through the stout plates, entering the dynamo-room, and all electricity, both for lighting and for wireless instruments, was shut off. The great ship at once listed over, and the order was given: "All hands on the upper deck."

Two minutes after the first alarm, word was sent up from the engine-room to the captain on the bridge that flooding had begun in the boiler-room, and that no more steam could be got up. There could be no hope of running her towards land and beaching her. It was seen from the first that she could not be saved.

The engines were stopped and the engineers and stokers were ordered up on deck. They were scrambling up the ladders when the second torpedo struck her. Distress signals were fired, but her consorts were advised to stand off at a safe distance in case of a further attack.

For want of steam to work the hoists the boats had to be got clear by reeving a big rope round the deck and hauling upon it. With perfect discipline the men performed this difficult operation in total darkness while the sinking ship was being washed by mountainous waves.

All woodwork that could be seized upon and everything that would float was brought on deck for the men to cling to. They waited, hoping that the wa-

tertight compartments would keep her afloat until daylight; but at length the captain sang out:

"Into the water with you; she's going!"

Then it was a matter of every man for himself. Some reached the boats before the ship went down, some were drawn under by the suction; many were picked up by one of the cruisers; but of all the ship's company not more than two hundred came to land in safety, and even these, scantily clothed, had suffered terribly from exposure in the open boats.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE GUIDING LIGHT.

The municipal authorities in Haddisport had for a long time past displayed great vigilance in keeping the town dark at night. The street lamps were not lighted; shopkeepers incurred penalties if they failed to keep their premises so dimly lighted that you could not distinguish the difference between butter and cheese; the tramway cars were muffled in thick curtains; on the sea-front you were liable to reprimand if you struck a match to light your pipe.

Most of the houses were lighted by electricity, and it was recognised that in the event of an imminent raid upon the town by German airships the electricity should be turned off at the power-house, where a screeching hooter would be sounded to warn the inhabitants to take cover in their basements or their garden trenches.

Many of the occupants of houses facing the sea abandoned their front rooms after sunset. Even the thickest of curtains and blinds and the most cunning lamp-shades were not always proof against some chink or slit revealing the light within, and then there was sure to be an alarming visit from the sentries patrolling the beach or the policeman on his beat, or Sea Scouts on watch duty.

"I should say the Germans had something else to do than cross the North Sea in their Zeppelins to drop bombs on a harmless town like Haddisport," remarked Vera Redisham, one night at supper.

"They might do it for the sake of spreading panic," observed her mother.

"Or by way of preliminary experiment before making an air raid in force upon London," added Mark. "That's what they're planning, of course. They'd consider it as good as a naval victory if they could set London on fire. Hullo!

what's wrong with the electric light? I put new bulbs on only yesterday!"

The light flickered for a moment or two and then went out, plunging the room in darkness.

"The hooter's sounding!" cried Vera. "Listen!"

"We'd better all get down into the basement," recommended Mrs. Redisham. "You mustn't go outside, Mark."

She had hardly spoken when the whole house shook, the windows rattled, and the air was split by a resounding explosion.

"Ah!" shouted Mark. "Zeppelins! Zeppelins!"

Mrs. Redisham made her way down the stairs to the basement to get the servants into a place of safety.

A second bomb sounded, and then there came the firing of an anti-aircraft gun.

Mark ran up the staircase to the half landing where there was a window above the hall door, from which he could look out in the direction of the town. His sister Vera followed him.

"We're as safe here as anywhere else," she said in excuse for her presence. "Can you see anything?"

"I saw a flash just now," Mark answered. "I believe it was the Zeppelin's searchlight. Oo! did you hear that! It must have struck some building. What's that glow of light over there? They've set some place on fire!"

He afterwards learnt that an incendiary bomb, aimed at the naval signal station, had fallen in a timber yard and set the stacks of wood in flames.

Vera counted ten explosions in all. Then the bomb-dropping ceased.

"They haven't stopped long," she sighed in relief. "I do hope nobody has been hurt. What are you looking at? Can you see the airship?"

"Yes. It's like a big sausage high up in the air, just over St. Nicholas' Church. Have a look!"

Mark moved aside to make room for Vera.

"I see it! I see it!" she cried. "And, oh, Mark, it's chasing a motor-car!"

Mark peered out into the darkness and saw the brilliantly-lighted lamp of a motor flashing along the Buremouth road. The beam of the light was shed upward. The car was travelling at a tremendous pace.

"Chasing it?" said Mark. "I don't think it's a chase. That car is acting as a pilot—showing the airship which way to go, and where to drop its bombs! I

shouldn't wonder in the least if the man driving it were Heinrich Hilliger!"

## CHAPTER XXVII.
### SURVIVORS.

As the motor-car, with its flaring headlight, went out of sight beyond the projection of the window from which they had watched it, Mark and Vera Redisham ran farther up the staircase and along the passage to Rodney's room, on the north side of the house.

Mark crossed to the large door-window and flung it open. It led out to a roofed balcony overlooking the garden. Rodney had used this balcony as a study, from which he could watch the ships, pretending that it was an admiral's gallery at the stern of a line-of-battle ship. On summer nights he had had a hammock slung across from side to side and had slept in the open air.

Mark caught at the balcony rail now, and bent forward, looking up into the night sky, searching for the Zeppelin by the purring of its machinery.

"There it is! There it is!" he cried. And taking hold of Vera's arm he drew her to him and pointed.

Even though it was very high, the airship looked large. It was not travelling quickly; it seemed for a time to be hovering like a hawk. Against the blue darkness of the sky the two cars could be distinguished beneath the cigar-shaped structure. The rattling noise of the engines and the hum of the propellers could be clearly heard.

"It's queer to think that there are Germans in it," said Vera, "and that they're there with the intention of killing people! I suppose they're going to Buremouth now, after dropping their horrid fire-bombs on Haddisport."

"Look!" exclaimed Mark. "There's that motor-car again! I'm almost certain it's acting as a pilot. See how the headlight is turned upward into the sky, so that the airmen can see it! I ought to go downstairs and telephone to the Buremouth police. Hullo!"

He had seen and heard a second motor-car, dashing along the nearer Alderwick road, followed by a couple of motor-bicycles. Presently there was an upward spurt of fire from the car and the crackle of a machine-gun.

"They're firing up at the Zeppelin!" cried Vera. "Oh, I hope they'll hit it!"

A thin streak of brilliant light flashed downward from the airship. Some-

thing seemed to fall with a thud, a dull explosion, and immediately there was a blaze of fire in the midst of the withered gorse and brambles about a mile in front of the armoured motor-car.

"They've dropped an incendiary bomb," Mark explained, "but nowhere near the road. The car can get past."

The firing from the anti-aircraft gun continued; but soon the Zeppelin steered round and went westward over the land, and the armoured car dropped out of range. More bombs were launched; but they fell harmlessly in ploughed fields where there were no houses. The pilot car by this time had disappeared.

The military car was returning, led by the motor cyclists. Just as the latter emerged from the woodland on the near side of Alderwick village, the Zeppelin again turned towards the sea and sailed outward immediately above the machine-gun, which again opened fire with a prolonged stream of bullets.

"I believe our men have hit it!" Mark declared. "Look at that long jet of smoke! And the whole thing is wobbling like a winged pheasant."

Whether the airship was struck or not, neither Mark nor the men in the armoured car could tell with certainty. They watched the ponderous vessel flying out to sea until it faded from sight, mingling with the blackness of a heavy cloud in the far east. Going downstairs again, Mark telephoned to the naval base and got into communication with Mr. Bilverstone, from whom he learnt that the worst material damage done by the bombs was at a timberyard near the harbour. Some big stacks of timber had been set on fire, and a company of Territorials were helping the seamen of H.M.S. *Kingfisher* in the work of subduing the flames.

So far as Mr. Bilverstone had yet heard, no one had been seriously injured. Two horses had been killed at the railway goods station, and a great many window-panes had been smashed.

News had been received, however, that there had been a second Zeppelin. The pair of them had come across the North Sea in company until land had been sighted, when they had separated, one coming to Haddisport, the other making a much wider circuit, dropping both explosive and incendiary bombs on three coast towns in succession.

Late on the following afternoon, Mark Redisham and Darby Catchpole were at the naval base, waiting for instructions, when a flotilla of mine-sweepers came into the harbour. One of them was the *Mignonette*. As she came alongside the quay, Mark and Darby saw two very bedraggled young men in shabby naval uniform standing with the skipper abaft the wheel-house.

"They look like German prisoners," Mark said below his breath.

"They've been in the water," added Darby, "picked up from a sinking submarine, I dare say. There's Ned Quester. Let's ask him about them."

Ned was climbing along the port bulwark, dragging the end of a heavy

mooring-rope. Having secured it round a bollard, he turned and saw the two Sea Scouts.

"See those two chaps down there?" he began. "They're Deutschers. They look rather sad, don't they? We rescued them early this morning, this side of the Dogger. Just before dawn, we saw two rockets go up—a red and a blue. We made for the place, thinking it was a vessel in distress. So it was, but not the sort of vessel we expected. It looked like an immense dead whale, seen in the dim light. When we got nearer we were still puzzled by the shape of it, and could only guess that it was a wrecked airship."

"What?" cried Mark Redisham, "a Zeppelin?—the Zeppelin that was over Haddisport last night, dropping bombs? Then the anti-aircraft gun must have hit it, after all!"

"That's right," nodded Ned. "Major Proudfynski—that's the older of the two, who speaks English, of a sort—told us that they had done heaps of damage, and killed he didn't know how many people, and that a whole battery of artillery had fired up at them. Of course, we knew he was exaggerating. However, when we got out the boat and pulled alongside the thing, we knew it could only be a Zep that had come to grief. One of the propellers was above water. We could see some of the bent and tangled framework, supported by a section of the still inflated gas-bag. Afterwards we fired a shot into it, letting the gas escape, and then the wreckage went down. But before that, we'd seen these two chaps clinging to the framework, and we got them off and took them aboard the *Mignonette*. They were so exhausted by the exposure that they couldn't speak, and the younger one had to be worked at for a long time before he came to his senses."

"But there must have been a whole crowd of others," said Mark. "Those Zeps have a crew of thirty or forty at least."

"Yes, I know," returned Ned. "The rest were all drowned under the wreckage. These two had the sense to jump out when she was falling and get clear of the stays. They could swim. What puzzled our skipper was how they managed to send up the two rockets. But it seems the airship fell by the bow with her stern sticking up above water for a time, and the major got into one of the gondolas, where there was a box of rockets and things—matches, as well, I suppose."

Officers from the naval station had come to the edge of the wharf. One of them spoke to the Germans, asking them to come ashore.

"What are you going to do with us?" questioned the elder of the two.

"Oh, you'll be all right!" he was told. "You are prisoners; but that doesn't mean that you will be ill-treated."

"Prisoners?"

"Yes. You don't imagine that we are going to let you go back to Germany, do you? Not after what you did last night. You came across to England to pay us

a visit; why should you hurry away? We'll show you what it's like to live in a civilised country."

An escort of armed bluejackets had been drawn up on the quay. The two prisoners were conducted to the base, where they were questioned briefly before being given the honours of war and taken to the hotel. After they had had a good dinner they were sent, still under escort, by a special train, to a destination far removed from the unfriendly sea.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

### THE WAY TO CALAIS.

Darby Catchpole was with Mark Redisham now for a particular reason. He had lately joined the Royal Naval Reserve, and had been appointed a signal-boy for duty on one of the mine-sweepers. In order that he might gain some experience of the work, however, he was to go for a preliminary trip with Commodore Snowling on the *Dainty*, which was to steam out to sea at sundown.

"I only hope we shall be going somewhere in sight of our Dreadnoughts," he said to Mark, while they waited on the wharf for the skipper. "I should love to see a naval action."

"Not much chance of that," Mark told him. "We shall not see an enemy ship of any sort—except possibly a submarine. I dare say we shall only be on ordinary patrol duty, steaming to and fro along the coasts like soldiers on sentry-go. It isn't always exciting. We don't have an adventure every trip, unless you call it an adventure to have a green sea come over you, or to have your clothes frozen like iron plates on your back. Sometimes it's exceedingly uncomfortable and monotonous. I hope you've brought some books to read. Your kit bag looks pretty full."

"It's full of eatables, mostly," Darby answered. "Mother has the idea that mine-sweepers go out with no provisions aboard."

"Here comes our old man," Mark intimated, seeing Harry Snowling approaching from the direction of the naval base, where he had been to receive his sailing orders.

"He's got some new charts under his arm; so I suppose we're bound to some place where we've never been before. I hope it's not up north to the Orkneys or Shetlands. We had our share of storms and snow when we went through the

Pentland Firth."

The two Sea Scouts saluted their skipper as he came swinging along with an empty pipe in his mouth.

"Right you are, bors," he said cheerily. "Lay aboard and cast off."

When they had cleared the harbour and were out in the blue water, Mark took his trick at the steering-wheel. The course given him was E.S.E., but after a while it was changed to south-east, the change being indicated to the three trawlers that were following by signals from the syren.

"Dessay you're a-wonderin' where we're goin', bor?" said the skipper, glancing into Mark's face, which was lighted by the dim glow from the binnacle. "And so am I. But we're a-sailin' under sealed orders this trip, and shan't know till the stroke of midnight."

At midnight Mark and Darby were both in their bunks, and they saw the skipper come below, seat himself under the hanging lamp, break open a sealed envelope, and take out a slip of typewritten paper.

"Um!" murmured the skipper, "dunno as how they need have kep' it a secret. Seems to me they keeps things secret just for the fun of it, sometimes—same as our Sally. You c'n goo to sleep, bors," he added, glancing towards the bunks.

He stood up, and, quitting the cabin, went on deck, leaving the slip of paper on the flap-table, knowing that neither of the boys would look at it. He had implicit trust in them.

From the engine-room came the tinkle of the telegraph, the syren was blown, the engines stopped, and then there came the grunting of the winch and the noisy rattle of the anchor chain through the hawse hole.

"We're anchored for the night," said Mark, turning over on his pillow.

The *Dainty* was still at anchor in the early morning when the two Scouts jumped out of their bunks and climbed up on deck in their pyjamas, with towels round their necks. They opened the side gangway and put out the ladder, then stripped and dived off into the cold, clear waves, Darby leading. They swam round the nearest of the three other trawlers, shouted a "good-morning" to the watch, and had a race back, Mark being left far behind; for Darby Catchpole was by far the better swimmer.

While they were drying themselves, they looked round about them.

There were several vessels lying at anchor within sight. About a mile away was a magnificent American clipper, with four tall masts and an amazing web-work of standing and running rigging, and with the stars and stripes painted on her beautiful hull. A tug lay near her, getting up steam to tow her farther on her voyage to some North Sea port with her cargo of American timber. Farther away there were two British destroyers and a light cruiser.

Mark got into his pyjamas and went aft to get a pair of binoculars from the

wheel-house; but found the skipper using them.

"Look slippy and get your warm clothes on, bor," said Snowling. "I expect I shall want you, soon as it's light enough, to do a bit of signallin'."

Mark and Darby were both quickly dressed. They returned on deck munching some of Mrs. Catchpole's home-made currant cake. All four of the mine-sweepers were by this time getting up steam.

"Keep your eye on the light cruiser yonder," ordered the skipper, "and be ready to take down her semaphore message when she starts signallin'."

The two boys waited very patiently for about half an hour, when at length the semaphore on the cruiser's bridge began to move.

"What's he a-sayin'?" Harry Snowling asked.

"He says: 'How old are you?'" Mark answered. "Tell him ninety-nine," the skipper gravely pursued, giving his ship's number.

Mark spelt out the reply with his flags, knowing that the inquiry and the expected response were merely preliminary. There was a pause; then again the semaphore was worked, and Darby read the message:

> You will proceed at once to the position marked Z on your chart, and begin operations, working in parallels from N.E. to S.W. Please repeat.

Mark repeated the message, doing it much quicker then the semaphore had done. The skipper then signalled to his consorts to lift their anchors, and in a very little time the flotilla of mine-sweepers was steaming away between the Forelands and the Goodwins and across the Straits.

The position marked on the chart was to the southward of the British mine-field and off the Belgian coast.

Other trawlers joined in the work of sweeping for explosive mines which were believed to have been laid by the enemy from boats sent out secretly from Zeebrugge and Ostend. For a long time none were found, but as the searchers drew nearer to the Belgian coast one after another was brought up and exploded. On the second day three were exploded by the *Dainty* and her sweeping partner, the *Veronica*, and Darby Catchpole realised by experience that mine-sweeping was in actuality a sternly-strenuous, arduous, and exceedingly hazardous calling.

As they worked nearer and nearer to the Belgian coast, ominous sounds came to them across the intervening sea; sounds that told them of the ceaseless warfare on the land. The air was filled with the deep-throated booming of heavy guns, the bursting of high-explosive shells and of shrapnel.

With an almost superhuman effort, the Germans were attempting to make themselves masters of the coast and seaports of Northern France. They had

concentrated enormous forces of men and heavy artillery, and were making a tremendous forward movement with the intention of getting round the Allies' left flank and cutting off their communications with England and the Channel.

If, by taking Dunkirk, Calais, and Boulogne, they could command the Straits of Dover, an invasion of Great Britain would, they believed, be simple. They might lay a double field of mines across from shore to shore with a clear way between, through which their crowded transport barges could pass under cover of their batteries of enormous guns.

It was the narrowest part of the straits, between Calais and Dover, which they most earnestly coveted. Calais was their great objective, and they had begun to boast of the victory which they felt certain they must soon achieve. They were already in possession of the Belgian coast. Their trenches were dug close to the sea, supported by their big guns concealed among the sand dunes. From the sea itself there could be no danger, since the water was too shallow to admit of British battleships coming within range, and, besides, the sea was thickly sown with German explosive mines.

It was in counting upon the shallowness of the water off the coast that they made their great mistake. No Dreadnought could come within range, it is true; but there are other vessels than Dreadnoughts capable of carrying heavy guns, though perhaps the Germans had not thought to find them off Nieuport.

The crew of the mine-sweeper *Dainty* had had their curiosity aroused by the sight of three peculiar-looking steamers flying the White Ensign, which came to anchor near them one Saturday evening.

Darby Catchpole was particularly interested in them. They were small vessels, of hardly more than a thousand tons. Their low hulls and their upper works, including the funnel and ventilators, were oddly painted in grey and white to confuse the eye and add to their invisibility.

"They look like river craft," said Darby. "I shouldn't wonder if they drew no more than four feet of water, even with the weight of their guns."

He was right about their being river craft. They had been built for the Brazilian Government for use in shoal water. Their sides were heavily armoured. Each mounted an armament of two 6-inch guns, two howitzers, four 3-pounders, and six quick-firing guns, and she could discharge a ton and a half of metal every minute.

These were the ships—monitors they were called—with which the British Navy was prepared to prove that the waters off the Flemish coast were not too shallow to admit of heavy guns coming within range of the German trenches. With their shallow draught they could defy the enemy's submarines, whose torpedoes were set to run about twelve feet below the surface, and they could move to and fro, confusing the aim of the Germans' heavy artillery.

The monitors were supported by several old cruisers, gunboats, and destroyers, French as well as British, and, much to the surprise of Harry Snowling and his crew, the trawlers also were ordered to take their part in the operations. They formed the advance guard to search for hostile submarines or possible mines, and to spy out the positions of the German batteries by drawing their fire, while the Allies' aeroplanes made observations from the air.

Suddenly the three monitors, coming within range, opened fire with their 6-inch guns and howitzers, and it was then that the Germans had the surprise of their lives.

Steaming backward and forward parallel with the coast, the ships kept up a constant cannonade, dropping their lyddite shells with precision into the enemy's trenches, smashing their batteries and spreading havoc and destruction.

The Germans brought down their heaviest guns to the shore and returned the fire in an attempt to drive off the ships. But all their efforts against moving targets were in vain.

They sent out submarines from their hiding places in the Belgian canals; but these, too, were of no avail. The crushing cannonade from the British ships could not be silenced, and there was no alternative but for the Germans to abandon their positions and evacuate a large extent of the country, after suffering terrible losses in material and men.

In the course of this bombardment of the enemy's right flank, the British trawlers were active in sweeping for mines sown by the German submarines. This was perilous work, as it brought the little vessels into the zone of fire. Only one of them, however, was hit, and this happened to be the *Dainty*.

An enemy aeroplane had been flying over the ships, trying to drop bombs on them. Mark Redisham and Darby Catchpole were watching when they saw a French monoplane rise from the Allies' lines beyond a point of the land and give chase to the German Taube.

The two machines circled about like a pair of swallows, mounting and descending, swooping this way and that. The pursuit lasted fully half an hour when at length the Taube made a determined dash at the monoplane as if to ram it.

Very dexterously the French pilot swerved and ranged his machine up beside his adversary, the expanded wings almost touching. Four spurts of fire were seen. Then the monoplane ascended in a spiral, while the Taube began to drop, quivering like a wounded bird.

Plunging sideways, it turned over and fell down, down with a splash into the sea, midway between the *Dainty* and the land.

Skipper Snowling put on full steam and steered towards it, to rescue the pilot if he should still be alive.

Immediately one of the German heavy guns on the shore opened fire upon

the trawler. Snowling altered his course and bore outward. This saved his boat from the first shell, which fell astern; but a second, from a smaller gun, crashed into her frail hull, and that was the end of her.

In a cloud of smoke and escaping steam Darby and Mark found themselves struggling to swim clear of the wreckage. Neither of them was hurt. They both wore their safety collars and life-belts, and both were good swimmers. But what of their shipmates?

One of the deck hands came to the surface and Darby grabbed at his arm.

"All right, bor," the man cried, shaking the water from his hair. "Look arter yourself. Make for the monitor that's bearin' down on us."

Mark and Darby swam about for a while and soon discovered the skipper trying to raise the cook's head above water.

"He's done for," said Snowling. "We can only leave him, poor fellow. But Tom Beckett's behind you, see if you can help him and keep him afloat."

The monitor was close at hand now, firing her howitzers landward as she approached. She dropped a boat, and five of the *Dainty's* crew were picked up. Eight were either drowned or killed. The survivors were transferred to the *Veronica* and taken home to Haddisport, while the ships continued their bombardment of the enemy's batteries, although already there was reason to believe that the German plan of seizing Dunkirk and Calais had been successfully frustrated.

The Royal Navy had proved once again the truth of the old saying that it can go anywhere and do anything. But it was soon to prove in a yet more signal manner that Britain's sovereignty of the seas was no mere idle boast, but a glorious reality.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### MAX MEETS THE ADMIRAL.

"*Ach*, my dear Max, how it rejoices me once again to see you!"

Ever since the perilous moment on board the doomed German battleship in the Bight of Heligoland, when Max Hilliger had saved his uncle's life, Admiral von Hilliger had shown a peculiarly affectionate regard for his nephew. In his estimation Max was not only a relative to be proud of, but a hero worthy of high favour, an officer whose knowledge of seamanship, whose patriotism and resourcefulness made him of inestimable value in the Kaiser's naval service.

Had Max happened to be a few years older, he might have counted upon rapid promotion; he might even, in spite of his inexperience and lack of technical training, have been given the full command of a submarine, or been appointed as a Zeppelin officer, charged with the duty of voyaging in an airship across to England to drop incendiary bombs upon enemy towns.

But owing to his extreme youth he could not at present hold a higher rank than that of midshipman, even though his actual duties were those of a sub-lieutenant.

Still, as Max himself realised, it was better to be serving as a junior officer in a submarine and doing important work for the Fatherland than to be tramping the quarter-deck of an idle battleship with no immediate chance of fighting.

They had met now, quite unexpectedly, on the quay at Brunsbuttel, at the western outlet of the Kiel Canal. Max had just come ashore from the U50, which had entered from the sea and been moored alongside of other submarines within the massive lock gates. He had been marching along the stone parapet, feeling very important in his naval uniform, with its gold lace and brass buttons, and proudly conscious of the Iron Cross which dangled conspicuously from his expanded chest.

Seamen and marines saluted him ceremoniously as he strode proudly past them; he, himself, saluted all officers of higher rank than his own. As he turned sharply round the corner of the custom-house, he came almost full tilt against Admiral von Hilliger, resplendent in gold lace, medals, epaulettes, and cocked hat, and escorted by two flag officers.

Max clipped his heels together and saluted. The admiral flung out his arms.

"*Ach*, my dear Max," he cried, embracing the embarrassed midshipman, "how it rejoices me once again to see you! It is good we have met. In one hour I should have been gone across to Wilhelmshaven, and you would have missed me. Come! You will take midday eating with me. There is much that we have to say to each other."

Max followed him and the two officers through intricate passages between huge stacks of ammunition boxes and naval stores, and across an open pavement to the front of an hotel. Here the two officers stood aside, and Max went past them with his uncle up the steps and into a little room whose windows looked out upon the grey estuary of the Elbe and the distant fleet.

Admiral von Hilliger turned the key of the door, glanced behind a curtain, and even into a cupboard, to assure himself that he was alone with his nephew; then took his stand in front of the stove and lighted a very long cigar.

"During the seven minutes before lunch," he began, "we will talk business. What have you been doing in the past two weeks? How many more of the mischievous enemy's ships have you sunk with your brave submarine?"

Max did not answer immediately.

"Lieutenant Körner has prepared his report," he said presently. "I am his subordinate. It is not for me to account for what he has done. We have not been idle."

"But Lieutenant Körner is not here," pursued the admiral, "and I wish to know what ships have been sunk. How many of their dreadnoughts have you sent to the bottom of the German Ocean since last we met?"

"None, sir," Max answered. "Those which we have seen have been too well guarded for us to approach them within striking distance. We sank a Swedish steamer carrying timber to the Thames, a British collier coming out of the Tyne. We lay in wait three days to torpedo a Harwich passenger boat, which slipped past us, after all. Many steamers have escaped us by their higher speed and their manoeuvring. Even the English patrol-trawlers now carry guns; but we have accounted for four of them."

"Good," nodded the admiral. "I would have every one of their wretched fishing boats swept off the seas. They are our worst enemies. Do not be deceived by their seeming innocence, my dear Max. While they are fishing, they are also watching and carrying information. Sink them—sink them without warning, without mercy. Naturally you have not allowed any of their crews to escape?"

Max glanced into the admiral's red-bearded face.

"But yes," he admitted. "In each case we have given them time to take to their boats."

"Thunder and lightning!" exclaimed his uncle, stamping a heavy foot. "This will not do. You must not permit your ridiculous scruples of humanity to interfere with your duty—the duty of sinking every vessel you can find, with every one in her. Let none escape. Remember that every ship now sailing the seas is either an enemy or a friend of the enemy, whose purpose it is to help the hateful English and to do harm to our beloved Fatherland!"

He puffed desperately at his cigar as if with the intention of finishing it as speedily as possible.

"Listen, my dear Max," he went on. "In future you shall put aside all scruple. Give no warning of your intentions, give no time for escape; but with gun or torpedo, sink, sink, sink without a moment's mercy!"

Max had fixed his gaze into the glowing coals of the open stove. Suddenly he looked up once again into his uncle's face.

"But, suppose, sir, that there are women and children in the ship; are they, too, to be sacrificed?" he quietly asked.

Admiral von Hilliger gasped in astonishment at the suggestion.

"Women?" he cried. "Will you never understand that women can be as mischievous as men? Do you not realise that our enemies' children will grow

up to be enemy men and women? Bah! Do not make such a mistake. We are engaged in war, and war has its necessities. The British people know their own danger. If they go upon the seas, it is at their own risks. We cannot discriminate between the innocent and the guilty. All, indeed, are guilty if they so much as set foot upon a British ship."

He strode to and fro restlessly in front of the stove.

"And now," he pursued, after a pause, "what else have you done? What have you learnt of the enemy's navy? You have been along their coasts; you have entered their rivers and peeped into their harbours. Where are their battleships?"

"It would be easier to tell you where they are not," returned Max. "They are not assembled in the Straits of Dover, or off the Dogger Bank, or off Haddisport. We have not been able to find them. And yet, *mein Herr*, I will undertake to say that if our own Great High Sea Fleet were to sally out beyond the protection of our mine-fields it would not go far before a squadron of British Dreadnoughts flashed out to give battle."

Admiral von Hilliger laughed awkwardly.

"My dear Max," he said with forced lightness, "I perceive that you are still tainted with your false ideas of Britain's strength upon the seas. You must remember that our German fleet is as yet practically intact. We are as strong as we were at the beginning of the war, and as ready to meet the British whenever they choose to come out of their hiding-places. What you tell me is satisfactory, however. You assure me once again that the enemy are in close hiding and that they are afraid to come out and meet us in a pitched battle. Your remark that they will pounce upon us, once we leave the protection of our mine-fields, is very funny. Already they have proved many times that they prefer the security of their own harbours rather than the risk of facing our guns. We have given them chances; we will give them chances again. But not in the way they would wish. Listen, my dear Max, I will tell you something."

Max went nearer to him. The admiral cautiously lowered his voice.

"Our agents have been doing good work," he said. "Helped by your all-knowing father, they have given away information upon which the British Admiralty will act. The information, I need hardly tell you, is false and misleading. But what would you? War is war, and to deceive and mislead your enemy is one of the essentials of successful strategy. Is it not true? Well, then, we have to-day issued a secret report that a squadron of our battleships has crept out, and is now cruising off the coast of Norway. The Norwegian people have helped us by declaring that already they have heard the thunder of our naval guns at sea. An hour ago, we received word that the British Fleet has gone off in force towards Norway."

"Yes," Max nodded. "It has gone out on what we call a wild-goose chase,

you mean? But in what way shall we benefit?"

Admiral von Hilliger puffed more vigorously than ever at his cigar.

"Is it not obvious to you, my dear?" he questioned. "By alluring them out of their harbours, we make our path clear. We take our great ships across to England and do our worst. It is all arranged. We start to-day—this evening. To-morrow morning, while their gunboats are vainly searching for a phantom fleet in Norwegian waters, our invincible battleships will be engaged in firing their shells into the fortified seaports of Newcastle and Hull."

Max Hilliger allowed himself to smile.

"It is a mere detail that neither Hull nor Newcastle happens to be a fortified town," he ventured. "But there will be no military advantage in such a bombardment. The sinking of one battle cruiser would be to us worth the destruction of half a dozen towns. What good did we do by smashing a few windows in Haddisport? We gained nothing to balance the waste of ammunition and the loss of one of our own ships that ran up against one of our own floating mines! Believe me, my uncle, the English people are not easily frightened. It will take more than an hour's bombardment of their seaside villas to put them in a state of panic."

"In that case," returned the admiral, "we shall take yet stronger measures to convince them of our frightfulness. This time, we shall take with us our most powerful battleships. We shall show them that it is we and not they who hold command of the seas."

He flung his unfinished cigar into the stove and drew his nephew to the window.

"Look once out there," he said, pointing across the sea to where the Kaiser's fleet could be dimly seen on the far horizon. "If the contemptible English could but open their eyes upon those ships, do you suppose that they would any longer dare to boast of their own paltry navy? *Ach*, my dear Max, wait! To-morrow you shall see!"

## CHAPTER XXX.

### DREADNOUGHT AGAINST DREADNOUGHT.

In the afternoon of that same bleak January day the U50 was warped out of the Kiel Canal. Her petrol tanks had been filled, she had taken in fresh water and stores, and now she was bound for Heligoland, there to receive a new supply

of torpedoes and explosive bombs before resuming her work of preying upon merchant shipping in the British Seas.

From the cliffs of the fortified island, Max Hilliger watched the squadron of German battleships going out. There were four great Dreadnought cruisers—*Brandenburg*, *Lessing*, *Mozart*, and *Goethe*—with six light cruisers of the *Kotzbue* class, and a flotilla of torpedo-boat destroyers. As they threaded their way through the secret lanes of the mine-field, he could hear their bands playing patriotic German music. He watched them until they disappeared into the night darkness.

They were timed so that by steaming across the North Sea at twenty-five knot speed they would be within gun-range of the English coast at earliest dawn.

Until shortly after midnight, when, with all lights out, they were crossing the Dogger Bank, the German commanders had no suspicion that their movements had been observed. Even with the most careful watch they failed to detect the low black shapes of a patrol of British destroyers rushing westward in advance of them.

At half-past seven on that wintry Sunday morning, the destroyers were already in communication with a great squadron of British Dreadnoughts and cruisers assembled, with steam up, hardly a score of miles ahead of them to the north-west. Signals were flashed back to the flotilla to give chase to the enemy, and, while keeping him in sight, report his movements.

Rodney Redisham was in his bunk in the light cruiser *Dauntless* when the bugle sounded "General Quarters." He dressed quickly in his warmest winter clothing and went up on deck. There was a film of mist across the sea. The air was very cold, and a powder of rime frost lay white upon the rails, the gun covers, and all upper works.

"The enemy is out!" one of his fellow midshipmen gleefully told him. "I believe we have nabbed him, this time."

Every man of the ship's company was alert and inwardly excited at the prospect of an engagement. The decks were cleared for action, guns were loaded; everything was got ready. Rodney climbed up to the forward fire-control platform.

From this position he could see the whole of the British battle squadron as the ships took their places in the line of pursuit, led by the vice-admiral's big flagship, the *Saturn*. She was closely followed by the *Avenger*, the *Patroclus*, the *Tremendous*, and the *Auckland*—five formidable floating fortresses, each carrying eight 13.5-inch guns. Supporting these Dreadnoughts were the *Sarpedon*, the *Athene*, the *Rutland*, and other light cruisers, escorted by destroyers. They were steering to the south-east, working up their speed to a uniform twenty-five knots.

Word soon came back from the advance scouts that the enemy had turned

tail. The Germans had rightly judged that a small flotilla of destroyers would not alone and unsupported give chase to a squadron of great battleships, but that they were the screen of a larger force.

Admiral von Hilliger had boasted that he was thirsty to come to grips with the British fleet, but he was less eager now that his valour was put to the test. He could bring out a squadron to bombard undefended towns, but, menaced by an enemy who could hit back, he realised that his game was up. And so, turning tail, he ran off on a bee line for the shelter of Heligoland and its protecting mine-fields.

The black smoke from his squadron's funnels was seen blurring the clean line of the horizon. There were about a hundred and twenty miles of open sea between him and safety, and behind him, like a pack of vengeful wolves at his heels, rushed an enemy squadron swifter and more formidable than his own.

And now the British ships, forming into line abreast and avoiding the immediate wake of the Germans, piled up yet more steam, tearing through the water with their bows smothered in white spray as their whirling turbines worked up their speed to the twenty-eight knot gait of which the slowest vessel was capable.

Long before they came within sight of their quarry, every man was at his battle station. All were behind armour: the fire-control parties at their instruments, the gun-layers with their guns ready to train upon the first visible target, the hydraulic engines in the turrets pumping and grunting.

The chase across the Dogger Bank was a long one; but the greater speed of the British ships steadily lessened the dividing distance, the confused cloud of smoke gradually separated into distinct plumes, masts and funnels took shape, and at length the enemy's hulls loomed into view and the guns began to speak.

The ranges were sent down from the fire-control platforms, the dials indicated what projectiles were to be used. It was each ship to its kind, Dreadnought against Dreadnought, cruiser against cruiser, destroyer against destroyer.

The *Saturn*, leading the British line, opened fire upon the *Goethe*, the slowest and rearmost, as well as the biggest of the German battleships. With a crimson flash and a dense burst of smoke from their muzzles, the two great guns in the flagship's forward turret thundered forth, and two monster lyddite shells seemed to tear the very air into ribbons as they went screeching through the mist with their message of challenge.

Following the flagship came the mighty *Avenger*, with the *Patroclus* close on her heels, the *Tremendous* next, and then the *Auckland*.

Very soon the *Saturn* overhauled the slow *Goethe*, and in passing gave her a broadside, which carried away her bridge and caused frightful damage on board. But the *Saturn's* chosen quarry was far ahead, and she sped on with ever-increasing speed with the object of bringing to action the fastest ships of the fugitive enemy.

Already it was obvious that the *Goethe* was doomed. Each of the British battleships as she passed gave her a broadside, leaving her to be finally dealt with by the light cruisers.

The chase had continued for over two hours. Far in advance, the British Dreadnoughts were engaged in a fierce running fight with the German battleships, pounding them incessantly.

The fire of the *Brandenburg* and the *Lessing* grew weaker and weaker. Masses of flames were sweeping their decks, their upper works were a confusion of wreckage. All that their commanders could hope for now was to reach the sanctuary of the German mine-field before their relentless foes should overtake and totally destroy them.

The third vessel in the German line, the *Mozart*, suffered even more severely. She had come under the long-range fire of each of the British battleships in turn. One after another her guns had been smashed out of action until she was silenced and could do no more than steam desperately for shelter, with the whole of her after-deck ablaze. Boats were launched, and many of her people jumped overboard to escape the awful inferno.

In the meantime, the British flagship was running perilously near to the German mine-field. At any moment there might be a terrific explosion under her keel. Yet still she went on. So thick was the air around her with black oil-smoke and the dense fumes from her guns that she sent out her signals by flashlight.

One of the *Mozart's* crowded lifeboats fell into her track. Her course was promptly altered, and there was the curious spectacle of a great battleship, while firing death and destruction into an enemy, steering aside to avoid running down one of that enemy's boats.

To the risk of hitting an explosive mine was added the danger from several submarines which had come out from Heligoland to cover the retreat of the battleships. The U50 was amongst them, and Max Hilliger, helping Lieutenant Körner, very nearly succeeded in planting a torpedo in the *Saturn's* hull.

The pursuit could not be continued with safety, and accordingly the three damaged Dreadnoughts were allowed to escape beyond range, while the *Saturn* turned her attention to the enemy cruisers in their wake, working round to head them off and drive them down upon the English light cruisers hotly pursuing them.

It was while the British flagship was thus engaged that a shell from the *Wurzburg* struck her below the water-line, so damaging one of her feed tanks that her speed was reduced and she was obliged to call for assistance. The *Patroclus* at once took her in tow, and her withdrawal from the battle enabled the German light cruisers to escape.

There was no ship in the whole of the British squadron which was not at

some time engaged with an opponent; but not one German vessel gave as much as she received. Most of them were seriously crippled, and many of them had the greatest difficulty in limping home.

The fate of the *Goethe* was sealed from the first. Although she was the biggest of the German ships, she was at the same time the slowest, and she had been left behind to bear her own burden unhelped.

The guns of ship after ship had been turned upon her with terrible effect. Shells had been poured upon her from all quarters, spreading devastation on board and death amongst her crew. It was only the great strength of her armoured belt which enabled her for so long to withstand the battering she received from the British heavy guns, and still to keep afloat.

Her upper works were smashed out of all semblance to the fittings of a ship. Amidships, she was a raging furnace; yet she still floated on an even keel, sinking very slowly, while from her bent and shattered mast her flag bravely fluttered.

The *Dauntless* approached her, circling round. From his post in the fire-control, Rodney Redisham could see the men crowded on the doomed battleship's after-decks. They were waiting for the expected end, all wearing lifebelts. Then, as the *Dauntless* came abreast of her, a torpedo was fired. It crashed through the thick plates amidships.

The *Goethe* shuddered, and heeled over until her decks were almost awash. There was a sudden roar as she turned on her side. Then with a plunge she went to the bottom.

This was the end of the great battle, and the British light cruisers and destroyers devoted themselves to the work of picking up survivors.

They were thus occupied when a huge airship and a number of aeroplanes came out from Heligoland. Avoiding the battleships and cruisers, which might have turned their guns upon them, the aircraft made for the destroyers and attacked them by dropping bombs into their midst. The work of rescue could not be continued under such an attack, and the destroyers scattered, each with its party of rescued Germans.

None of the British ships had been damaged beyond repair, and the number of casualties was very small. An officer and fourteen men had been killed, and three officers and about thirty men were wounded. Greater speed, greater weight and range of guns, and better marksmanship had told in favour of the British.

The Germans, indeed, had received a very sound and thorough whipping in punishment for their attempt to rush over to England and bombard undefended towns. But more than all they received a proof of Great Britain's invincible power upon the seas.

It was not until many days afterwards that Max Hilliger again met his uncle in one of the corridors of the German naval headquarters in Wilhelmshaven.

"Well, my dear Max," began the admiral, "and what is now your opinion of your friends the English? We gave them a pretty run for their money, eh?"

Max nodded, not being quite sure of his uncle's humour.

"And they appear to have caught you, *mein Herr*," he responded. "Our ships have not such speed as theirs. That is a grave disadvantage."

Admiral von Hilliger shrugged his shoulders.

"In future we shall use oil fuel," he said. "The necessary alteration in our machinery will be quite easy."

"Then there is their superiority in guns, sir," ventured Max. "Their guns not only throw a heavier shell than ours, but they are also of much longer range. I am told that the *Goethe* was smashed almost to pieces before she could so much as touch one of the British Dreadnoughts."

"That fault can be remedied," declared the admiral. "Already we are having larger guns made. And, remember, we are having many new ships built. They will have guns such as the English have never dreamt of."

"And in the meantime," said Max, "I suppose our great fleet will lie idle in the Kiel Canal?"

"In the meantime," rejoined the admiral, "we have our Zeppelins and our submarines. Make no mistake, my dear Max, Great Britain's attempt to blockade our ports will not affect us in the least. We, on the contrary, can starve Great Britain. We shall throw a ring of submarines all round their wretched islands, so that no single ship can enter or leave their seaports."

Max smiled.

"They will be equal with us, even then," he boldly declared. "With submarines you cannot hope to hold command of the seas. Besides, to prey upon merchant shipping—neutral ships as well as British—is not war, it is rank piracy."

Admiral von Hilliger laughed.

"Piracy?" he repeated. "In that case, you shall yourself be one of our pirate chiefs. You shall fly the Jolly Roger. But I do not care what you call yourself so long as you make yourself a terror of the seas. It is what His Majesty the Kaiser wishes you to be. He wishes you to sink their hateful Dreadnoughts, their troopships, their fishing boats, their cargo steamers, and even their passenger liners, wherever they can be found."

Max looked up into his uncle's puffy blue eyes.

"Their passenger liners?" he repeated in amazement. "Do you say that such is the Kaiser's wish? But that would be murder!"

"Hush! my dear Max," cried the admiral. "We must not call it by so unpleasant a name as that. The whole thing is very different if we call it simply submarine warfare."

"And suppose I refuse?" demanded Max.

Again Admiral von Hilliger shrugged his shoulders.

"Then you will be arrested for mutiny," he declared coldly. "And the penalty for mutiny is death. Do you understand? The penalty is an ignominious death."

Max was silent for some moments. At last he said:

"I prefer to suffer the penalty."

But already the admiral had turned away, not hearing the words.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### SUBMARINES AT WORK.

"Glad to see as you're able to get about again, sir."

Constable Challis, patrolling the esplanade, had come to a halt beside an invalid's bath-chair in which old Mr. Croucher sat, gripping an unopened newspaper in his thin, white fingers. The bath-chair had been drawn up against the rail so that the invalid might have an uninterrupted view of the sea. Not far from it a boy in Sea Scout's uniform stood watching a company of Territorials busily digging trenches on the lower level of the denes.

"It must be quite a couple of months since you was out here last," continued the policeman.

"It is just two months and three days," returned Mr. Croucher, leaning back with a weary sigh. "It was on the morning after the first Zeppelin raid, you remember. Yes, I am much better; but this last attack has been quite the worst I have known—rheumatism, Challis, rheumatism. I should hardly have come out even on a fine morning like this, only that Seth Newruck, here, kindly offered to wheel my bath-chair, my man having enlisted."

He paused as if exhausted by so long a speech.

"I see changes, Challis," he resumed. "Many changes. Most of the villas are tenantless. People are at last realising the danger of an invasion. Even Mrs. Daplin-Gennery has taken flight. Where has she gone, Challis?"

"Buxton, sir," the constable answered.

"Ah, well inland! The enemy will not reach so far as that until England is conquered."

"Which isn't at all likely," added Challis.

"I don't feel so sure about that," retorted Mr. Croucher. "Everything seems to point to the probability that the Germans will land sooner or later. Look at

what the War Office are doing here! Look at that long line of trenches and the breastworks. Look at all these soldiers!"

"Yes, sir," nodded the constable, "we're beginnin' to look quite military, aren't we?"

"Military? I call it desperately warlike," declared the invalid. "Those trenches are not being so carefully dug merely to give training to the Territorials. They are being made for military use. Such elaborate defences would be a waste of time and material if there were not grave danger. It is clear that the authorities expect them to land just here."

Constable Challis leant his folded arms on the rail.

"You may take it from me, sir," he said, reassuringly, "that it's only a reasonable precaution. The same sort of defence work is going on at other places—at Buremouth and Eastwold."

But Mr. Croucher shook his head obstinately.

"Not to the same extent, Challis," he insisted. "I am told that there are twenty thousand soldiers assembled within easy reach of Haddisport. That is not simple precaution. It is preparation—preparation for an armed resistance. And look at these stockades and redoubts, or whatever they call them—battlements—fortifications! Look at the loopholes for heavy guns, and the sandbags! I suppose the guns themselves are lying ready somewhere close at hand, with the shells to fire them with."

"Yes, sir," Challis nodded. "They are all handy in the grounds of Sunnydene. Tons of 'em."

"Dear me, dear me!" said Mr. Croucher in consternation.

Seth Newruck had turned the bath-chair so that its occupant could have a fuller view of the embrasures and their connecting palisades of corrugated iron. "It isn't so very long ago, sir," Seth reminded him mischievously, "since you argued that there ought to be heavy guns stationed all along the East Coast. And now that they are putting up a few fortifications, you take alarm."

"Alarm?" repeated Mr. Croucher. "But isn't it enough to cause alarm? Why, it's just as good as an advertisement of the fact that the enemy's transports and cruisers may be expected any day, any hour!"

"What amuses me," added Constable Challis, "is that all those packin' cases which they have filled with sea sand, makin' them like blocks of granite, are really fish boxes belongin' to the Germans themselves. Before the war they were the property of a firm of German fish curers. You can read the name of 'Hilliger and Co.' on every one of 'em!"

"Hilliger? Ah!" cried Mr. Croucher, "That man Hilliger, I am convinced, has been working towards this war for years past. He ought never to have been allowed to carry on his business in Haddisport. It was only a blind—a blind to

cover his underhand work of spying and intrigue. Where is he now, Challis—do you know?"

"Over in his own country, I suppose," answered the constable. "But here's young Mark Redisham comin' along. He knows a lot more about these things than I do."

Mark Redisham had paused to look out upon the sea at a patrol trawler in which he appeared to be greatly interested. When he came nearer and saw Seth Newruck and the two men he saluted and again paused.

"The enemy seem to have been pretty close," he observed, speaking especially to his fellow scout.

"Yes," returned Seth. "It looks as if there were a submarine somewhere near."

"And it has been doing some damage," rejoined Mark.

"Eh? What's that?" interrogated Mr. Croucher. "A German submarine? Where? How do you know?"

Mark explained, indicating the trawler.

"Well, sir," he said. "She's flying the signal to say so. That red flag with the ball beneath it means that there's a submarine in the neighbourhood. But as well as that, she has more men in her than her own crew. I expect she has rescued them from some ship that the submarine has torpedoed."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mr. Croucher. "We shall have no ships left soon if this sort of thing goes on much longer! Can't the navy put a stop to it? Even the enemy's battleships are doing less harm than their submarines. It's simply terrible!"

"Between ourselves," remarked Constable Challis, "it's nothing but silly spite and disappointment that makes them sink our ships. They can't touch our cruisers now, so they sneak about sendin' our merchant vessels to the bottom. Yesterday I came upon some boys tryin' to get at a bird's nest. When they saw they couldn't manage it, they began to throw stones at it. That's the way the Germans do. Silly spite; that's all."

Mark Redisham went down the town, keeping step with a battalion of Territorials marching behind their band. When he arrived at the harbour the trawler which he had watched from the cliff was coming in. She had picked up sixteen men drifting in open boats. Their ship, the *Priscilla*, a cargo steamer bound for one of the northern ports, had been sunk by an enemy submarine.

Early in the morning the *Priscilla* had been going under easy steam when a submarine had come to the surface a little distance away on the starboard side, hoisting the German flag and signalling to the steamer to stop.

Instead of obeying, the English captain put on full speed and steered a zigzag course with such skill that the submarine soon dropped astern, unable to

keep pace with him or to aim at him with her torpedoes or even her deck guns.

The captain was congratulating himself and his engineer on their lucky escape when suddenly a second submarine popped up right in front of his vessel's bows. This time he was obliged to stop his engines, for he saw a gun rise from its chamber on the submarine's deck. Two officers stood on the platform of the conning-tower.

One of them called out in perfect English, asking where the steamer was bound for, what was her cargo, and where was the British fleet?

"I'm sorry to cause inconvenience," the German added, "but you must remember this is war. I shall have to sink you. I will give you ten minutes to get clear of the steamer. Get as many of your belongings together as you can and take to your boats."

While the crew were hastily putting their clothing and personal possessions into their kit bags, and launching the two boats, the captain was ordered to produce his ship's papers. He observed as the submarine drew alongside that both officers wore the Iron Cross, and that one of them was hardly more than a boy.

"You can take some food and water with you," said the younger, "and if you steer north-west you will probably come upon some fishing boats that may help you."

The crew had rowed a short distance away from their steamer when they saw a couple of German sailors go on board of her with what looked like explosive bombs. A few minutes afterwards they returned empty-handed, the submarine backed away. There was a loud explosion on board the *Priscilla* and she rapidly sank.

The submarine then went off at high speed, and as she did so a couple of dummy funnels were raised on her deck, false bulwarks at bow and stern were rigged up, and with a pair of masts and with smoke curling from the funnels she had all the appearance of a heavily laden steamer.

"You didn't happen to notice her number, did you, captain?" Arnold Bilverstone inquired, when the master of the *Priscilla* was narrating his experience to the officers in the naval base at Haddisport.

"Well, it was painted over," the captain explained, "and an eye was painted in its stead. But under the paint I could make out the raised figures U50."

"Then the younger of those two officers was Max Hilliger," decided Mark Redisham; and Mr. Bilverstone agreed.

Later on that same day, or rather in the evening, Mark Redisham was again at the naval base. Just at about dusk a wireless message was received, intimating that two enemy submarines were in the neighbourhood.

The air was calm and clear and the sea smooth. Half a dozen of the most

powerful telescopes and marine glasses were engaged by as many expert watchers in sweeping the sea, while at the end of the pier a naval gun was charged and a crew of experienced marksmen were at the breech ready to train it on the instant if the Germans' periscopes should be sighted.

Mark Redisham was the first to discover a ripple on the water some three miles away, but it was one of the officers who determined that the ripple was caused by the movement of a half-submerged submarine. It was apparently making towards Alderwick Roads, where half a dozen patrol trawlers lay at anchor.

The light was gradually fading, but the moving target was still visible. The gun was laid. For months back, at intervals, it had been brought into practice upon a mark less easily seen than the one upon which it was pointed at this moment, and the gunner who now controlled its aim had never been known to fail.

The lever was pressed. The shell shrieked forth. Then there was a terrific explosion which shook the windows of the town as the submarine was struck and sent to its doom.

An electric launch was sent out to pick up possible survivors, but all that could be seen was a slimy film of oil on the water's surface.

From the pier as the boat went out, the periscopes of the second submarine were sighted, but before the gun could be trained it had disappeared.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### U50'S WORST CRIME.

"This second submarine was the U50.

"It's that naval gun on Haddisport pier that I warned you of," said Max Hilliger, as the vessel submerged and her electric motors were turned on. "We ought not to have come in so close. I believe those mine-sweepers in the Roads must have discovered us. Most of them are fitted with wireless masts. No, it's no use trying to rescue our friends. They couldn't have escaped after an explosion like that. We had better remain submerged and get away from the coast as quickly as we can."

Lieutenant Körner was inconsolable over the loss of the other submarine. They had been working in partnership for several days past, sinking fishing boats more especially and using explosive bombs rather than wasting expensive torpe-

does.

This use of bombs had necessitated the stopping of their intended victims. Having stopped and boarded them, there had always come the difficulty of dealing with their crews.

If you send a torpedo into an enemy ship from a discreet distance there is no question of sparing life. A submarine could not in any case encumber herself with prisoners. But when you have to speak to the vessel's skipper and have been polite to him, the matter is different. Even a German commander can hardly refuse to give him and his ship's company a chance of saving their lives.

Max Hilliger was greatly in favour of using bombs. He did not advance any serious scruples against the destruction of property; but he had been educated in England, he still retained a sense of honour and fairness, and he drew the line at taking the lives of innocent and unoffending seamen.

This was the rock upon which he and Lieutenant Hermann Körner split. Körner was not burdened with any of his subordinate's English ideas of humanity. He hated the English, and everything British. Like most Germans, he had persuaded himself that the war had been begun entirely by Great Britain; that Germany had never wanted to go to war. He resolutely closed his mind to the fact that his country had for many years been preparing for war, and seeking for a cause to pick a quarrel with Great Britain so that, being fully prepared, she might fall upon her and smash her.

Above all, he hated Great Britain because of her supremacy upon the seas. She had put a stop to German commerce and held Germany's great navy in a firm grip; therefore he considered that it was his highest patriotic duty to go about stealthily in his submarine destroying British shipping regardless of whether the ships he sank were armed for defence or were peaceful, unoffending fishing smacks.

He would have preferred it if all the vessels which came within reach of his torpedoes were ships of war; so that by sinking them he might lessen the overpowering strength of the British Navy.

But he had discovered long ago that the British naval officers and seamen were even more clever in protecting themselves from sudden attack than the Germans were in taking them by surprise.

Many times the U50 had been taken with other German submarines and torpedo boats to lie concealed in the narrow seas in the hope of being able to sink some of our transports carrying troops and munitions across to France; but they had always been frustrated or outwitted.

Lieutenant Körner found that it was much more easy to lurk submerged in the tideways of commerce and to attack undefended merchant ships or fishing boats. Had not Max Hilliger sometimes opposed him, he would never have

allowed a crew to escape. Max, however, held to one unvarying argument.

"What we are ordered to do," he declared, "is to help to overcome the enemy by starvation—preventing their ships from carrying food and other merchandise into their seaports. And if we sink the ships and their cargoes there is no further advantage to be gained by taking also the lives of their crews. Give their men at least a chance to escape in their boats."

Sometimes when the vessel attacked was of little importance, and especially if she happened to be a neutral, Körner yielded and gave the crew time to abandon their doomed ship. But if the vessel were fitted with wireless masts, if she appeared to be armed, or if she offered any resistance, he showed no mercy, but came within gun range and opened fire upon her. It was only the very large ships against which he fired a torpedo. It is of one such exploit that I am now going to tell you.

Leaving the neighbourhood of Haddisport, the U50 crossed the North Sea and made her secret way down the Dutch coast to Flanders. Avoiding the British mine-field and keeping carefully out of the way of the British naval patrols, she was taken into the German submarine harbour at Zeebrugge, where she remained for some days, having her instruments cleaned and tested, her torpedo chambers replenished, and taking in stores for a long voyage.

Lieutenant Körner behaved rather mysteriously towards Max Hilliger during this time. He had many consultations with staff officers and with the commanders of other submarines, and refused to inform Max what was in the wind. All that he would admit was the fact that they were going out under sealed orders, which were not to be opened until they should reach a point somewhere to the westward of Land's End.

The point indicated on their chart was in the midst of the Scilly Islands. Here, on a certain very dark night, the U50 lay motionless in a calm channel, with only the upper part of her conning-tower above the surface, hardly distinguishable from the surrounding rocks. Hermann Körner was on watch with a pair of powerful binoculars.

"You appear to be expecting something," remarked Max Hilliger from below. "There can be no enemy ships in a dangerous corner like this."

"It is for that reason that I am watching," returned Körner. "Since there can be no enemy near, it is safe for us to enter into communication with our friends."

"Spies, I suppose," conjectured Max, peering upward through the darkness.

"Ah!" exclaimed Körner. "At last; I was searching in the wrong direction."

He drew an electric torch from his pocket and began to flash it. It was a wan, green light, which could not have been seen from a great distance. Körner returned the torch to his pocket, closed the trap door of the conning-tower, and descended into the cabin, humming the air of a German folk-song.

"Well?" said Max.

"It is all right," nodded Körner. "You can enjoy a good sleep, my friend. You will need it; because for some days and nights to come it is probable we shall both require to have very good eyesight."

Max turned into his bunk, but did not at once fall asleep. The intense silence and darkness kept him wakeful. He would much rather have been listening to the busy humming of the electric engines. At about midnight he turned on his pillow and spoke.

"Hermann!" he called.

There was no answer. He lay listening, and from one of the distant compartments there came to him the faint tap-tapping sound of the wireless instrument. It was too faint for him to hear distinctly enough to follow the message; and just as he was beginning to catch a word here and there, it stopped, and there was a long interval of silence, during which he fell asleep, not to be awakened again until late on the following morning. The petrol engines were at work, a dim gleam of daylight came in through the thick glass of an uncovered skylight. A servant was busy laying breakfast on the little table in the middle of the cabin.

"We are under weigh, then?" cried Max, speaking to the man in German.

"*Ja, mein Herr.* Since eight o'clock."

Max glanced up at the tell-tale compass above the table, and saw that the course was due west.

"It is the direction of America, *mein Herr*," said the servant, following his glance.

Max dressed and went out on deck. The dummy funnels and the false bulwarks were raised. There was a ragged red ensign flying from the mast. No land was in sight, and the sea was clear of shipping; but in the wake he presently discovered the swiftly moving periscopes of two other submarines. Lieutenant Körner was on deck, but there were seamen about, and Max suppressed his desire to go up to him and question him.

When they were alone together at breakfast, however, he leant across the table and said:

"Is there any particular reason why I should not know something of our destination, Herr Körner? I see that there are two others of our undersea boats in our company. Our purpose, whatever it is, must therefore be of importance."

"If it succeeds," returned Körner, breaking the top of an egg, "it will be the biggest, most important thing we have ever done, or are ever likely to do. It will send a thrill of astonishment over the whole world. It will prove that the Kaiser's brave submarines are more powerful weapons than any dreadnought that ever was built."

"You amaze me," said Max. "I do not understand. I cannot guess. We are

making a course westward, leaving England behind. We appear to be going out into the Atlantic Ocean. It is not there that we shall find any British battleships."

Lieutenant Körner laughed.

"Let us hope not," he rejoined. "No, my dear friend. Believe me, it is not battleships that we seek."

"What then?" cried Max, nervously clutching at the edge of the table. "You do not mean—you cannot mean—that it is your intention to try to sink an Atlantic liner!"

"Well guessed!" laughed Körner. "We shall torpedo her—a great liner—the greatest liner—the *Ruritania*."

Max Hilliger leapt from his chair.

"What?" he cried. "Impossible! You cannot be serious."

"I was never more serious in my life," Körner assured him. "I tell you we are going to lie in her track—we and our two companion submarines. We shall station ourselves at three different points, one of which she must surely pass. And then, when she comes in sight, we shall creep nearer, unseen, unsuspected, and wait until she draws within range, when we shall take careful aim, making no mistake; and send our torpedoes into her. You see, it is war, my dear child; it is war."

Max Hilliger had turned suddenly pale; his eyes were staring wildly, his hands trembled.

"War?" he repeated. "Do you call it an act of war to sink a great steamship like that—a ship carrying no protective armour, no defensive guns, a ship crowded with innocent passengers, not all English, many of them Americans no doubt, probably scores of women and children. War? War? That is not war, Hermann Körner. It would have no excuse, no justification. It would be crime, I tell you—a horrible, fiendish crime. It would be murder."

Lieutenant Körner looked up at him with his egg-spoon poised.

"Calm yourself, my friend," he urged. "Call it what you will, that has nothing to do with you or with me. It is our part to do our duty by obeying our orders. And we have orders to sink this *Ruritania*. We shall obey."

Max shrugged his shoulders and sat down again, but not to eat.

"Oh, well!" he said presently. "After all, I need not distress myself perhaps. Her owners, her captain, her passengers have been warned. We shall not even see her. She will steam by another way, and even then be escorted by British cruisers. Otherwise—if I thought there was the merest chance of your doing this horrible thing—I should ask you to put me ashore on the nearest land, or I should pray that we ourselves should be sent to the bottom of the sea."

All the rest of that day and through the next night, while the U50 went on her way to take up her appointed position on the steamship route, Max Hilliger

thought and brooded, wondering by what possible means he could avert the contemplated crime, even by the sacrifice of his own life.

He wondered if he could open some valve so that the submarine should never again rise to the surface; if he could secretly smash or disable some important piece of mechanism, or jam the torpedo tubes. But all the time he knew that if he should attempt such a thing there still remained the other two submarines, either of which might succeed where Hermann Körner had failed.

At length the appointed position was reached. The commander occupied himself in making calculations of time and distance. Again and again he examined his instruments and controls, again and again he went through a rehearsal of every act and movement which would be put into practice when, if at all, the fatal moment arrived. Had Max Hilliger tried to disable any of the mechanism he could not have succeeded, so carefully was everything watched, so constantly was he himself kept under observation.

He contrived as often as he could to be in the conning-tower; but Körner and the quarter-master were usually at the periscopes, and Max could only watch the two men, hoping, always hoping, that they would discover no sign of the expected liner. By their hardly suppressed excitement he knew that should she be keeping to her usual course and time, she was already due.

Suddenly Lieutenant Körner ordered "diving stations." The tanks were filled—the vessel was submerged, and she sped through the dark depths at the fullest speed of her electric motors for about a quarter of an hour, when she again rose. Telegraph signals were rung. The torpedo tubes were charged.

"Is it the *Ruritania*?" Max panted. He saw that the moment had come.

"Yes. Quick! Get down into the torpedo chamber."

Instead of obeying the command, Max Hilliger snatched his loaded automatic pistol from his belt and leapt like a maddened animal at the commander.

"Stop!" he shouted. "Stop! Touch that lever and I will shoot you!" He flung himself forward, but a blow from the quarter-master's fist struck him in the face and he wheeled round, lost his balance, and fell. The pistol dropped from his grasp. His brain reeled, yet half consciously he heard the command given: "Fire!" He felt the vessel give a jump as the torpedo left its tube. From somewhere far away he heard a deep, dull explosion. Then, as a second torpedo was discharged, he came to his fuller senses.

"It is done!" cried Lieutenant Körner with an exultant laugh as he drew back from his periscope.

Max Hilliger had risen to his knees. He had seized his fallen pistol and now he levelled the weapon at the commander.

"God forgive me," he murmured. "But it is less than you deserve."

And with that he pressed the trigger, firing point blank at a spot beside the

Iron Cross on his companion's breast.

Hermann Körner flung up his arms, tumbled backward, and lay upon the grating very still.

Dropping his weapon, Max stepped over him and made his way to the periscope. Trembling from head to foot, he yet controlled himself sufficiently to bend over the instrument to adjust its disturbed focus. Reflected in the mirror he saw the image of an immense Atlantic liner with four red funnels, and many decks crowded with people. Her whole vast fabric was heeling over. She seemed to have been struck by the torpedo somewhere amidships.

"How awful!" he exclaimed.

He turned to look once again at the commander lying dead at his feet.

"God forgive me," he repeated. "But it is less than you deserve."

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### MAX RENOUNCES THE FATHERLAND.

Max Hilliger was now alone in the submarine's conning-tower and in charge of its controls. He was shaking violently as he began to realise the horror of what he had done.

He had deliberately fired a bullet into the heart of his superior officer, who had also been his companion and his friend. It was a terrible thing to have done; yet he believed that the act was justified. He only regretted that he had not committed it sooner, before Hermann Körner had had time to give the fatal command for the discharging of the torpedo.

Had he done so, had he fired his shot at the right instant, how many hundreds of precious lives he might have saved! He would have had no haunting regrets in taking one man's life, if by taking it he had been able to prevent a far greater crime.

What he had seen in the mirror of the periscope was far more awful than the sight of Hermann Körner's dead body. That the great liner was doomed he could have no possible doubt. He had heard the explosion as the torpedo struck its intended mark. He had seen the immense vessel heeling over, the passengers thronging her decks and scrambling for the boats.

There were no other ships in sight to rush to the rescue. He, Max Hilliger, himself, could do nothing to help. Even if the U50 had been capable of picking

up survivors, he was well aware that, in spite of their peril, there was not a soul in that sinking leviathan who would accept help from a German submarine.

Steadying himself, he took Lieutenant Körner's place and gave the command for the U50 to dive. Below in the engine-room they seemed not to have heard the sharp report of his automatic pistol, or, if they had heard it, they probably attributed the sound to some ordinary and innocent cause. But at length the quarter-master, who had been occupied in the torpedo chamber, climbed up the communication hatch to inquire into the result of the attempt upon the great liner.

"What luck, Herr Körner?" he cried excitedly. "We have struck her—yes?" He crawled into the conning-tower and at the top of the ladder stumbled over the body of the dead commander. "*Ach!*" he ejaculated in consternation. "What is this? What is this?"

The submarine was going down at a sharp angle, propelled by her electric motors. Max Hilliger remained at his post to give the signal when she should be deep enough, and to control the steering gear.

By the light from an electric bulb the quartermaster saw the commander's body lying grimly motionless at his feet. At first he believed it was Max Hilliger, but he was quickly undeceived. Hilliger was still at work among the instruments and switches where a few minutes earlier Hermann Körner had been. And now Hermann Körner lay dead!

"There has been an accident?" the quartermaster questioned in agitation. "How did it happen, Herr Hilliger?"

Max Hilliger rang the telegraph indicator to the engine-room, he adjusted the rudders, and turned round to answer nervously and in a trembling voice:

"No. It was not an accident. I have killed him. I need not tell you why. You know. You heard me warn him that if he touched that lever I would shoot him. You had better send up one of the other officers to take command and make me your prisoner. I will suffer the punishment for what I have done."

The quarter-master glanced swiftly at the dead officer and then back again at Hilliger. "You killed him!" he cried in amazement. "You!"

He was staring at the Iron Cross on the midshipman's breast. Max was conscious of the fixed gaze, and his hand went up to the decoration. He gripped it in his fingers, and tearing it off, threw the medal contemptuously from him.

"But he was your friend," continued the quartermaster. "He was your superior officer. He was doing his duty to the Fatherland. He was obeying his orders!"

"He was not bound to obey an order to take the lives of hundreds of innocent people—peaceful, unarmed travellers," Max objected warmly.

"But you did not prevent him," rejoined the quarter-master. "The torpedo

was discharged. I, myself, discharged it."

"Yes, unfortunately it was discharged." Max nodded gravely. "It was discharged, and it struck the target at which it was aimed. Even at this moment that great ship is sinking and her passengers and crew are struggling to save themselves."

"That is good," said the quarter-master with a chuckle of satisfaction. "It is a blow from which our English enemies will not soon recover. The whole world will now know that our enterprising submarines are more powerful than all Great Britain's boasted battleships." He returned to the engine-room and told his expectant companions that the mighty Atlantic liner had been sent to the bottom. They cheered noisily and started singing, and their singing and cheering only ceased when they learned that their commander was dead.

Many of them deserted their stations to make a rush at Max Hilliger. They called him an assassin, a traitor. They declared that he was at heart a contemptible Englishman, and that he ought never to have been allowed to enter the Kaiser's navy.

But while they clamoured for his life they realised that in their present situation they could not well do without him. There was only one other of their officers capable of assuming the command and navigating them home—a sub-lieutenant named Adolf von Wiebe. It was necessary, therefore, that Max Hilliger should continue to act as an officer, taking watch and watch about with Lieutenant von Wiebe, until they should join the main fleet beyond Heligoland, and hand him over for punishment.

"In the meantime," said Lieutenant von Wiebe, "you will consider yourself under arrest."

"Naturally," returned Max. "And you need not suppose that I wish to escape the penalty for what I have done. I told Hermann Körner that if he fired that torpedo I would shoot him. Instead of warning him I ought to have shot him as soon as I knew that the liner had come in sight. It was he who was the murderer, not I."

"He did his duty," argued Wiebe. "He obeyed his instructions. It was to sink that liner that we came out here into the open sea. The whole thing was planned and arranged weeks ago. The owners of the ship were warned. The passengers were told before they left America that they would sail in that steamer at their own risk. The captain could have escaped us if he had taken a different course. Why did not the British Navy protect her by sending a cruiser convoy with her?"

"Because," Max reported, "the British Navy trusted that Germany had still a little honour and humanity left, and that no German submarine commander would be so brutal and cowardly as to fire a torpedo into an unarmed passenger steamer, carrying neutral Americans and women and little children. But that is

where Great Britain and all other civilised nations have made the mistake. They have given Germany more credit than she deserved. She has no honour and no humanity, but only deceit and falsehood and cruelty."

"Be careful what you are saying," cautioned Lieutenant von Wiebe. "Remember that we are at war, and that our whole existence as a nation depends upon our conquest of Great Britain."

"War?" rejoined Max. "But war has its laws as well as peace. We Germans have broken those laws. Our enemies—Russia, France, and Great Britain—are playing the game fairly and honestly; but we are not. You know this as well as I do, only you shut your eyes to it all. From the very start, when we invaded Belgium, we've been worse than savages, robbing and murdering peaceful citizens, destroying their beautiful cathedrals, wrecking their homes. We've gone out of our way to bombard unfortified towns; we've hit below the belt. When we couldn't break through our enemies' lines, we have forced them back by using poison gas; when we've been too cowardly to engage their battleships in open fight we have sunk their merchant vessels and helpless fishing boats. And now there is this greatest crime of all—the sinking of the *Ruritania*. I tell you, Adolf, I am sick of it all, and I hope, as I firmly believe, that Germany will be beaten."

Adolf von Wiebe forced himself to laugh.

"You are hoping for the impossible," he said. "Germany can never be beaten. Do you think that we have been preparing for this war all these years only to be defeated in the end? Why, this very sinking of the liner—one of the biggest ships that ever sailed the seas—is a proof of our power. As for Great Britain—she is not worth talking about. You, who have lived in England, should know better than to imagine that she could have a ghost of a chance against so mighty an empire as ours! Sooner than you suppose, Great Britain will have ceased to exist."

"It is because I have lived in England that I am so sure that she will be victorious," persisted Max. "And if I could escape——"

"Escape? Escape from a submarine? Oh, no, I shall see to it that you don't escape, my fine fellow! You are as safe here as if you were imprisoned in a fortress. And since you cannot escape, there is no need to put you in irons. I will allow you to continue with your duties, and, notwithstanding your silly prejudices and scruples, I shall trust you not to put any obstacles in our way when it is a question of sinking a few more ships. We still have some torpedoes left, and I intend to use them."

"We shall need more petrol," Max told him sullenly.

"That will be forthcoming," returned Lieutenant von Wiebe. "A supply ship will meet us."

"Where?" Max asked.

"Never mind where. It is perhaps as well that you should be kept in igno-

rance of the situation."

Max could only very vaguely guess at the course which the U50 was now taking. He was not allowed to handle the charts or to know more than the general direction as indicated by the compass, which usually pointed northward.

As previously arranged, the submarine's two consorts separated from her when the *Ruritania* had been dealt with. Their instructions were that they were to proceed across the Bay of Biscay and through the Straits of Gibraltar into the Mediterranean to attack British and French warships operating in the Dardanelles; but the U50 had not been fitted for so long a voyage.

As much as possible she was kept submerged, or with only her periscopes above the surface. No ships were chased or attacked. It seemed to Max that it was the purpose of Lieutenant von Wiebe to get as far away as possible from the scene of the foundering of the *Ruritania*, and to avoid all accidents which might bring him under suspicion of having been concerned in that disaster.

Once, when the submarine was passing abreast of a wild, rocky coast, Max was at the periscope. In the mirror he saw reflected the grey shape of a small British cruiser lying at anchor within easy torpedo range.

In ordinary circumstances he would have rejoiced at the opportunity of doing damage to an enemy ship; he would instantly have commanded the crew to their firing stations and manoeuvred to take aim.

But now he told himself that, as he was practically a condemned prisoner, a mutineer who had disavowed his loyalty to Germany, it was no longer a part of his duty even to report the fact that the cruiser was within striking distance. So he kept silent, and the U50 proceeded on her secret way, and Max Hilliger was never suspected of his duplicity.

On the following morning he heard the chief engineer announcing to the commander that they were becoming perilously short of petrol. Lieutenant von Wiebe showed no concern.

"Within two hours," he said, "we shall be in touch with the supply ship. We will creep into one of these bays and get into communication with our wireless."

And in the stated time the Marconi aerials were at work.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### THE SUPPLY SHIP.

The British cruiser which Max Hilliger had seen through the periscope of the U50 was H.M.S. *Dauntless*. She had been on coast patrol duty for some days in northern waters, watching for neutral ships and boarding them to examine their papers and inquire into the nature of their cargoes.

Most of them had given a satisfactory account of themselves, and had been allowed to pass on to their intended destinations. But one of them, an old green-painted barque flying the Swedish flag, had at once aroused suspicion by the fact that she was fitted with wireless aerials.

A shot was fired across her bow, and she shortened sail. Captain Damant sent a boat aboard of her in charge of a second lieutenant, who was accompanied by Midshipman Rodney Redisham.

Rodney Redisham read the name *Olaf Triggvason* on the vessel's side, but he did not take any great interest in her while he waited for the lieutenant's return into the boat. The examination seemed to take an unusually long time, and he wondered if anything contraband had been discovered.

Presently the lieutenant appeared in the open gangway, and began to signal back by semaphore to the *Dauntless*. Rodney understood the message that was sent. It was that a quantity of naphtha and benzine had been discovered in the barque's cargo; that the captain was a German, and that his secret purpose was to supply a German submarine, which he confessed that he expected.

An answer came back from the cruiser:

"Stay where you are, and we will come alongside."

The *Dauntless* steamed slowly up, and the German captain was taken on board of her as a prisoner, to be interrogated by Captain Damant. Shortly afterwards the whole of the crew were taken off and sent below into the seamen's quarters.

The proceedings were quite unusual, and Rodney Redisham did not understand them. Enlightenment came to him, however, when, instead of the barque's own crew, the same number of British seamen dressed up in the foreigners' clothes were put on board the *Olaf*. He himself was ordered to exchange his midshipman's uniform for canvas breeches and an engineer's jumper. Two lieutenants were similarly disguised, and put in command of the barque.

Rodney began to experience the excitement of a prospective adventure. The excitement was increased when three machine guns were transferred from the *Dauntless* to the decks of the *Olaf Triggvason*.

When all was ready the cruiser steamed away and the barque's sails were braced. Her German captain, under pressure, had given the bearings of the spot near which he had been instructed to lie in wait for the submarine, and for this spot the course was set.

It was in a secluded bay between two barren headlands, far away from any

habitation. Outside this bay the vessel tacked to and fro and back and forth; but there was no sign of any submarine.

At the end of the first day the senior lieutenant shook his head and declared his belief that the German captain had deceived them. He anchored, knowing that no submarine would expect to find the ship in darkness. But at dawn he again set sail, and cruised within a radius of about a dozen miles. Returning towards the headlands at noon he was about to tack out again when his Marconi operator called him below. Some ship was trying to open communications.

The lieutenant went to the instrument-room, and a message came to him in international code asking the name of his ship. He purposely delayed his answer until the question had been repeated several times, then, giving the name of the ship, he added a guarded question in German.

There was no response for a long time; but he waited patiently, and at length a series of searching questions came to him as though they were from a British warship, demanding to know his exact position and destination and the nature of his cargo.

He knew perfectly well that there was no British warship, excepting the *Dauntless*, within twenty miles of him, but he answered with all the cunning which would enable his questioner to understand that the way was clear. Already he was convinced that he was speaking with the commander of a German submarine, and at length came the message:

"All right. I am the U50. I am short of oil. Stay where you are, and I will come alongside you within an hour."

That hour gave the lieutenant ample time in which to prepare a surprise for his expected visitor, to keep his men out of sight beside their concealed guns, and to place the ship in such a position that the guns would cover the submarine when it should rise to the surface and come alongside. He kept the Swedish flag flying, but had a British ensign ready to take its place at the appropriate moment.

Rodney Redisham, leaning lazily over the rail at the break of the poop, was the first to discover the movement of the submarine's periscope along the sea's ruffled surface. It was approaching on the starboard side. He reported to the lieutenant, and the helm was put over, so that the barque fell off the wind and lay with her sails swaying empty. The side gangway was opened. Then the submarine, drawing nearer, rose to the surface until her whole length was visible from stem to stern.

Lieutenant von Wiebe and the quarter-master stepped out on the conning-tower platform, and a gang of seamen emerged from the forward hatchway to be ready to take in the new supply of oil.

As they drew closer, steering to come alongside, Wiebe shouted a greeting to the *Olaf Triggvason*, and a couple of English sailors, looking very like Germans,

climbing up the main shrouds, waved their arms and cried aloud:

"Hoch! Hoch!"

Slowing down, the submarine drifted nearer, until only a few yards of clear, green water separated her from the barque. More of her crew clambered out upon her long, narrow deck, with Max Hilliger in their midst.

Max had discarded his naval uniform. He was barefooted and bareheaded, and wore only a pair of greasy serge trousers and a grey flannel shirt.

Suddenly the Swedish flag was hauled down from the barque's mizzen, and the British ensign was run up in its place. From the opening of the gangway the shining barrel of a machine-gun was thrust out, two machine-guns appeared between gaps in the poop rail, and along the starboard bulwarks half a dozen British bluejackets levelled their rifles at the German commander and his men. The senior lieutenant, no longer disguised, but in the honourable uniform of a British officer, stood forward at the gangway.

"You will surrender, or I shall sink you," he commanded calmly, as if he were merely giving instructions as to how the submarine should come closer alongside.

Adolf von Wiebe shrank back like an animal at bay, and glanced agitatedly from side to side for a means of escape. But there was none. He could not submerge; he could not take flight. It was useless to think of fighting, and the three quick-firing guns, as well as half a dozen rifles, were levelled menacingly at his ship and his men and himself. It is clear that he had no alternative but to yield.

He shrugged his shoulders in abject despair.

"*Ja wohl*," he responded, with a forced laugh. "You 'ave shove me in ver' difficult corner, *mein Herr*. It is no good. Ze game is hup. I surrender. I mek ze salute."

Drawing his bare feet together and standing very upright, he raised his hand to his cap in formal German fashion, and his crew, one and all, followed his example.

"And now, vot next, if you please?" he asked.

"You will bring your crew on board here," he was told. "Within an hour a British cruiser will be with us to take possession of your submarine."

Ropes were thrown across, and when a gang plank was in place the thirty German prisoners marched disconsolately on board the barque.

The last in the file was Max Hilliger. As he passed by Rodney Redisham he gave a start of recognition.

"Hullo!" he cried, lifting his hand to his forehead. "I'm glad to see an English face again—one that I know. You have outwitted us this time very cleverly, but quite honestly. The English are always honest. They always play the game." And, lowering his voice, he added, "I wish I could say the same of the Germans."

"But you oughtn't to be disloyal to your own people," said Redisham.

"I can't help it," returned Max, standing in front of the midshipman. "I've been mistaken in them all along, and I've had enough of them. You see, I went to school in England, and that has made a heap of difference."

"Yes, and you became a Sea Scout," nodded Redisham, slowly putting out his hand.

Max Hilliger looked down at it, and shook his head.

"That's just like you," he said, "offering to shake hands with a beaten enemy. You're very good, but I can't do it. I am not worthy to take the hand of an English gentleman. My own isn't clean enough."

He was remembering what had happened in the conning-tower of the submarine. He was remembering how he had taken part in many an act of piracy against British ships, and his heart was heavy with remorse. He turned away, and walked aft. Rodney Redisham watched him, and wondered if his apparent humility were genuine.

Max Hilliger made his way to the poop, climbed the companion ladder, and continued his way to the taffrail. For a moment it seemed to Redisham that he was about to fling himself overboard, and so escape the payment as a prisoner of war.

Max turned and strode back to the binnacle, stood beside it, and then lifted his eyes to the ensign fluttering proudly in the breeze. He glanced round to assure himself that he was not being watched, and then, alone and, as he believed, unseen, he raised his hand to the salute.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### PRISONERS OF WAR.

"Hurry up, Newruck, or we shall not get out of harbour until this ship comes in. Bring along that hamper."

Scoutmaster Arnold Bilverstone was taking the Lion Patrol out for a two days' cruise in their cutter. They had intended to be away for a week, but Mark Redisham and Darby Catchpole could not spare so much time. They had both been appointed to a new trawler to go on active service. They were not supposed to talk about it, but the whole patrol knew that the destination of their two lucky companions was the Dardanelles, where they were to engage in the

work of sweeping for German and Turkish mines.

Naturally they were very much envied. They would cross the Bay of Biscay, and see the Rock of Gibraltar. They would steam the whole length of the Mediterranean, and perhaps even go as far as Constantinople. There were glorious possibilities in the adventure, but more than all was the chance they would have of really helping in the war and watching the *Queen Elizabeth* firing her great fifteen-inch guns into the Turkish forts.

Compared with such prospects, a trip in the *Be Prepared* was a very small affair indeed.

"I'm afraid we are too late already, sir," said Darby Catchpole, looking out through the harbour mouth to where a panting tug boat was bringing in a strange-looking, green-painted barque.

Mark Redisham followed his glance.

"She's a foreigner," he decided, "and yet she's flying the British flag! How's that? Hullo! look, Mr. Bilverstone! There's a naval officer on her poop deck, and there are some of our bluejackets among her crew."

Mr. Bilverstone was so much interested in the vessel that he stepped out on to the quay and strode along towards the end of the pier. Presently he signalled to the Scouts to join him.

"I expect she's been captured," he said, as the barque came nearer. "Perhaps she has been caught carrying contraband of war."

The tug glided in between the piers, and as the barque followed at the end of the towing warp Mark read the name *Olaf Triggvason* on her green-painted side. Looking down on her main deck he saw a crowd of foreign sailors lying or seated on the hatch cover, guarded by armed bluejackets. Some of them looked like officers; others were dressed as naval seamen.

"Prisoners of war," said Mr. Bilverstone.

Then he leant forward more eagerly. One of the prisoners, the youngest and most ragged of the lot, had stood up on the hatch cover. He looked across at the group on the quay, and smiled wanly as he raised his hand to the Scout's salute.

"Why, it's Max Hilliger!" cried Darby Catchpole. "And the others must be his shipmates off the submarine! Let us wait and see them brought ashore."

The *Olaf Triggvason* was warped alongside the pier before being taken through the bridge into the inner harbour. Officers from the naval base went aboard. As soon as it became known in the port that a captive ship had been brought in many of the townspeople thronged to the pier, but Police-constable Challis drove them back, and a barrier was drawn across.

In the meantime, Midshipman Rodney Redisham had stepped ashore from the barque to greet his brother Mark.

"So you've sunk a submarine?" said Mark.

"We may have captured one," returned Rodney.

"It was the U50 of course," pursued Mark. "You've got Max Hilliger a prisoner. It's a good thing to have put an end to the U50. She's done a lot of damage one way and another."

"Most of the German submarine commanders have tried to do that," said Rodney. "I suppose it was their duty. You can't blame the officers. They've got to obey their sailing orders."

"What, even when they're told to sink such a ship as the *Ruritania*?" questioned Darby Catchpole.

"Oh, but Max Hilliger was never concerned with a crime like that!" declared Mark Redisham.

"I should hope not," added his brother. "From what I know of him I believe he'd sooner go on strike than have a hand in sinking any but enemy ships of war. But, of course, we've never asked them any questions."

He paused for a moment, and then added:

"I've had several talks with Max Hilliger, and he isn't a bad sort of chap at heart. He's a German, but I believe he'd much rather fight for our King than for the Kaiser."

"Strictly between ourselves," interposed Constable Challis, "I don't think he'll have a chance of fightin' for either."

"Ah, they're being brought ashore now!" said Mr. Bilverstone. "I expect they're going off by the 3-20 train to one of the concentration camps. Attention, Scouts!"

The troop stood in line, and as the prisoners marched by, Max Hilliger walked with his head bowed and his hand raised to his cap. Suddenly he stopped and looked round at his former companions.

"It's jolly good of you chaps not to mock and jeer at me," he said bravely; "but I may tell you that I am glad to be here—back again in England. And—and," he stammered, "God save the King."

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