

206 Heligoland to Keeling Island

it a succession of violent gales, and for many days our ships had a practically continuous buffeting. Patrol work carried on with such unceasing vigilance was performed at the cost of great personal discomfort, especially to those on board the lighter craft. Life aboard a destroyer is never a bed of roses. When the elements are unkind it tests the temper and endurance of the most experienced sailor. Happily, thanks to splendid seamanship and the excellent quality of British shipbuilding, the mosquito craft weathered the gales without serious mishap.

Simple facts such as these serve to remind us once more of the debt we owe to our sailors, who maintain their vigilant guard over the homes of the nation under circumstances of constant peril, not merely from the enemy's ships but from the elements themselves. This patrol work is perhaps the supreme test of seamanship, and the first few months of the war have shown unmistakably that the very qualities of unflinching determination and consummate skill which raised British seamen in the past to pre-eminence are just as much in evidence to-day among the officers and men of the Grand Fleet.