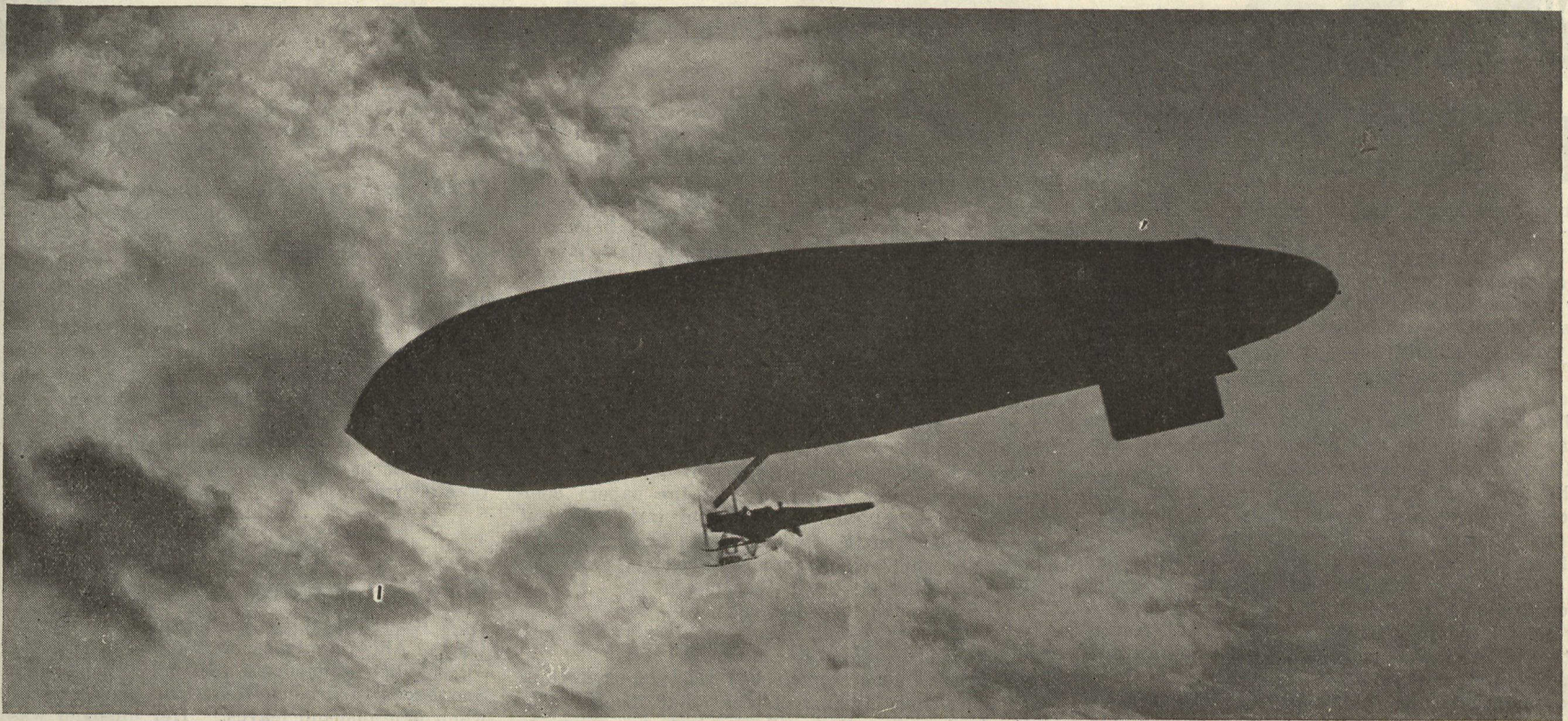


# England Confessed That Every Man That Day Had Done His Duty



The dramatic and remarkable photograph of a British naval airship silhouetted against the sunset, in all the glory of poetic action. This particular airship may not have noticed the approach of the German fleet that got such a bad smashing from part of our fleet on May 31.

of Zanzibar. After the audacious dash of Admiral Beatty early in 1915, there was no possibility of the British fleet making any attacks in those waters. The two mouths of the Kiel Canal, so ingeniously thought out by Bismarck when he forcibly annexed Schleswig-Holstein from Denmark, were strategically very important to Germany. Separated by a huge arc of the North Sea it was impossible to watch both equally well. In a time of fog a squadron might easily slip out through lanes between German mines for a swift raid on the English coast—and they sometimes did, mainly to their sorrow. The British fleet was free to patrol all that stretch of water, but it never could tell when it would have a chance to strike a blow at the enemy. Winston Churchill said after the Scarborough raid that the German fleet “must be dug out of the Kiel Canal like rats from their holes.” He was thinking of a land attack on the Canal. But he had far too much to do trying to smash through the Dardanelles with some of England’s mightiest warships. And all the while the combined British and French fleets in the Mediterranean were engaged on that hopeless job, the remainder of the British fleet policed the North Sea.

Waiting—for the day. Every little while the King, or Kipling, or a bishop, or some scribe, paid a visit to the fleet—somewhere; nobody was ever allowed to know where. Descriptions of the great Fleet appeared in various English and some American papers. The location was never revealed. It was never twice the same place. We almost lost trace of Jellicoe. A casual picture of him such as that published on this page got into print. Nobody, not even Lord Northcliffe, could ever tell just where the camera was when it took the picture.

**T**HEN the submarine war began. Germany’s fleet must do something. The top-seas fleet was becoming a national joke. The “unterseeboote” became a grim reality. The trails of those murderous craft ran round three sides of Europe and round most of the British coast. Von Tirpitz began to chuckle. He had good reason. It took the British Admiralty many months to begin to check the submarines. How difficult a task that was and how formidable a weapon Germany had in the subs is well described by “A Naval Correspondent” writing in the May, 1916, issue of the National Review. He says:

The German submarines employed to attack the Grand Fleet were singularly unsuccessful. But their attacks imposed upon the Fleet certain conditions and the employment of certain tactics which had their effect on the war. The German submarine war upon commerce was proclaimed in February of last year, and began before the specified date of March 1. It inflicted loss which was absolutely serious, relatively insignificant. The consummate address and indomitable tenacity of the Navy practically defeated the submarines in six months. During the next six months the losses were much fewer; but in the meantime Germany was preparing men and vessels for a new campaign, which began in March last.

This, then, is the new element of naval warfare: invisible piracy: annihilation by an unseen foe. It is useless to rail at Germany because she breaks all rules, violates all treaties and derides humanity. Germany considers war to be annihilation, and there’s an end on’t. We are to face the situation as it is.

That situation consists in the fact that naval Power, owning an inferior Fleet which is shut up in its ports, can occupy the junctions of the trade routes, and by so doing can exercise a partial blockade. It is prevented from being a complete blockade by two factors. One is the comparatively small number of submarines; the other is the active offence conducted against them. Even under these conditions, the percentage of loss inflicted is roughly equivalent to the percentage of loss inflicted upon British commerce by cruisers and privateers during the Napoleonic wars. The conclusions adduced from statistics by Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, in a recent letter contributed by him to the Times, are erroneous, inasmuch as the losses inflicted by submarines fall almost entirely upon the proportion of tonnage which is not requisitioned by the Government, and not upon the whole available tonnage. Government tonnage is usually escorted or convoyed; and an escort of men-of-war is a protection, though not an absolute protection.

Therefore we arrive at this remarkable conclusion: that, although the virtual command of the sea, in the old sense of the phrase, is being so exercised by the

Fleet that no above-water enemy ship, with such infrequent exceptions as the Moewe, can touch sea-borne trade, the losses inflicted upon commerce are much the same as though that command of the sea were not being exercised.

In other words, the Fleet has not got the command of the sea.

We had submarines of our own. They have done some of the most daring exploits to the credit of that kind of craft in any waters from the Bosphorus to the Baltic. But we never knew how far the submarine menace was checked or how many more subs Germany was building. We believed once that we had disposed of sixty one way and another. And yet the submarine continued to be a real menace. Germany’s faith in the submarine was impossible to fathom. Only Germany knew how near that kind of warfare was to becoming a fiasco because for nine-tenths of its work it was not warfare at all.

Had the submarine begun to play out? Did the renewal of the unterseeboote activities after the last of the American notes spell the beginning of the end of the submarine as an arm of sea war? We cannot tell. But at any rate the great high seas fleet still remained in superb idleness and in hiding; almost as idle as the German ocean liners cooped up in American harbours. Why not let loose this mighty fleet as German armies were being let loose at Verdun and elsewhere?

Plainly there was but one way to do it—to take chances of getting past the British fleet in the North Sea and to make another but this time a still greater raid upon the British coast. This would be a good companion piece to the attack upon Verdun and the furious onslaughts of the Austrians concentrated upon the Italian front.

To postpone Der Tag was no longer possible. The day must be—soon. So the great fleet put out. What happened to it has been told in the despatches. Where it is now and what it amounts to is known pretty well. What it cost England and the Empire in that twelve hours of indescribable combat is easily reckoned up. But we know that with all the loss to us, the loss to Germany’s fleet in proportion to its size is tremendously greater, and that the German fleet is now in a worse way than ever as a fighting machine against the invincible British navy.

Better than all we know that against a daring, murderously scientific enemy British seamen and British commanders lived up to the noblest traditions handed down by the mighty Nelson. For nearly two years England has been expecting every man on that fleet in the North Sea to do his duty—whenever the day should come. England now confesses that when the day did come on May 31, 1916, every man did his duty—and that the British fleet still makes it possible for every son of the Empire to sing as never before,

“Rule Britannia!  
Britannia rule the waves!  
Britons never, never, never shall be slaves.”

## THE SPIRIT OF NELSON.



Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, whose fleet swept the seas looking for German war-craft and finding not one; and Rear-Admiral Sir David Beatty, hero of Heligoland, whose cruiser fleet did its whole duty on the German high seas fleet—without calling on our first line of battleships.