

THE FRINGES OF THE FLEET

thing that went wrong, from a motor cylinder to a torpedo. Then somebody touched on the mercantile marine and its habits.

Said one philosopher: 'They can't be expected to take any more risks than they do. I wouldn't, if I was a skipper. I'd loose off at any blessed periscope I saw.'

'That's all very fine. You wait till you've had a patriotic tramp trying to strafe you at your own back-door,' said another.

Some one told a tale of a man with a voice, notable even in a Service where men are not trained to whisper. He was coming back, empty-handed, dirty, tired, and best left alone. From the peace of the German side he had entered our hectic home-waters, where the usual tramp shelled, and by miraculous luck, crumpled his periscope. Another man might have dived, but Boanerges kept on rising. Majestic and wrathful he rose personally through his main hatch, and at 2000 yards (have I said it was a still day?) addressed the tramp. Even at that distance she gathered it was a Naval officer with a grievance, and by the time he ran alongside she was in a state of coma, but managed to stammer: 'Well, sir, at least you'll admit that our shooting was pretty good.'

'And that,' said my informant, 'put the lid on!' Boanerges went down lest he should be tempted to murder, and the tramp affirms she heard him