

difficulty in concluding, and decisively, that whatever may have been the object of the High Sea Fleet in leaving port, the condition in which it returned thither was the result of an engagement alien to its original purpose.

The course of the battle, whose periods and events are detailed in the Admirals' dispatches, was first unfolded in outline in an announcement issued by the British Admiralty at 9.50 p.m. on June 4, published in the press the following day: 'The Grand Fleet came in touch with the German High Sea Fleet at 3.30 on the afternoon of May 31. The leading ships of the two fleets carried on a vigorous fight, in which the battle cruisers, fast battleships,¹ and subsidiary craft all took an active part. The losses were severe on both sides; but when the main body of the British Fleet came into contact with the German High Sea Fleet, a very brief period sufficed to compel the latter, who had been severely punished, to seek refuge in their protected waters.' The terse statement is the epitome of Sir John Jellicoe's dispatch of June 24.

The German interpretation of the battle has not been marked by similar consistency. The German Admiralty's first announcement, on June 1, reported: 'During an enterprise directed northward our High Sea Fleet encountered on May 31 the main part of the English fighting Fleet, which was considerably superior to our own forces. During the afternoon a series of heavy engagements developed between Skagerak and Horn Reef, which were successful for us and which also continued during the whole of the night. . . . The High Sea Fleet returned to our ports during the day.' Apart from assertions of British losses, the announcement made no claim to

¹ i. e. the Fifth Battle Squadron; 4 ships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class attached to Sir David Beatty's command.