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## BRITISH FISHERMEN NAVY'S EYES AND EARS

By RALPH E. CROPLEY, in *The New York Evening Post*.

My first experience with the fishermen of England during the war was when the ill-fated *Tuscania*, on which I was crossing, approached the danger zone. We were a hundred miles or so off soundings, and it surprised me, when, coming on deck one morning, to find way out there several trawlers, which, in times of peace, I had seen jugging the coast as they dragged their trawls. They are queer little boats, these English trawlers, with their high bows, on which is now mounted a tiny gun, seemingly only servicable enough to harpoon a whale. They are all best with a high stack—no doubt a badge of their society, and one would think a good wallowing sea would sweep their superstructure clean away.

As the *Tuscania* made her hard advance over a nasty wintry sea, sometimes I thought a hand was raising from the bottom of the ocean and tossing the trawlers skyward—the next minute dragging them under in the hollow of the waves, till I could but see the tops of their funnels or the tips of their masts. The way those tiny packets were being treated reminded me of a cat torturing a mouse before she killed it. Up they'd come, shaking the water off like a terrier, and then plunge headlong into the next comber. With the aid of a glass I could see a mummy at the wheel, swathed in oilers on which the spray froze as it fell. I could imagine, as I learned later in many similar cases, that the blue nose of that mummy was tipped off by an icicle.

It was a fascinating picture, and my heart thanked God for the stamina of these trawler men who have stuck it out and saved so many of us civilians from the death which the U-boats have wished upon us. And well have I cause to thank God for them, as some of them saved the *Tuscania* off the coast of Ireland the next day, as unarmed she staggered about in the delirium of a zigzag trying to outmaneuver the German bent on her destruction. The tiny trawler guns spluttered and roared and found an echo in my heart. Although the following tale of the trapping of a U-boat is not the incident which occurred when I was on the *Tuscania*, still it's about what happened then, as I learned later:

**MINES ONLY "FRITZ'S EGGS"**

Four trawlers got between the submarine and her merchant-ship prey, and their gunfire forced the Hun to submerge, releasing a couple of mines as he did so. The trawler men called these mines "Fritz's eggs," and ignored them. With dexterity they engaged the U-boat as it lay on the bottom, by means of cables, which were tediously passed under it, until they had it snared like an animal. The German, of course, tried to free himself and released more mines, but it was to no avail.

Now the trawler men had no love for Fritz for the lack of sportsmanship he had constantly exhibited, yet that was no reason why they in turn should not play the game of life and death fairly, or be unnecessarily cruel. They hung on to him and let him fight to free himself from their net, and when he knew he was caught and could not get away they gave him ample time to come to the surface and save the lives of his crew. This the German commander did who was after the *Tuscania*. A small can of T. N. T. was slipped on one of the taut wires which held him and allowed to slide down to the submarine hull. A key was depressed, and a gray, oily mound of water followed a muffled explosion. It was an awful death for human beings; yet they would have sent to their death women and children on passenger liners if they but had the chance.

Submarines by the score came out from Germany and never returned. Others sallied forth perplexed against a mystery, and these, too, never returned, or returned in mysteriously diminishing numbers. Day and night, summer and winter, till the American destroyers came into the game, the mystery had been the lines of innocent-looking fishing smacks strung out from coast to coast across the Channel and Irish Sea, fishing for U-boats and sweeping for mines. And what Fritz has done to them—bringing his frightfulness to sea as he has exhibited it ashore, I'm afraid will never be duly appreciated. He has taken men on board the submarines with him and made them risk death at the hands of their friends. He has vented his senseless fury on unarmed fishing boats.

The case of the unarmed Granton trawler *Breadalbane* is a good example. She was quietly fishing one morning in June, 1917, when a submarine without warning opened a terrific fire on her. In a few minutes her funnel, engine-casing, and bridge were smashed, and a hail of

shrapnel fell on the unfortunate crew, who rushed to the deckhouse and tried to protect themselves. They had no means of fighting back, and the captain decided to haul down his flag as a sign of surrender. The only response to this was a yell of derision from the Hun, and a few moments later they let the *Breadalbane* have another broadside. For ten minutes more the U-boat fired shells all over the tiny ship, while her crew were making frantic efforts to get their lifeboat launched. The captain's head was blown off by a shell, and a moment later, as the engine was about to climb over the side, he was blown in halves. The dazed survivors pulled away from their doomed ship and towards the German, thinking that they were to be taken prisoners, but the Hun shouted at them that if they came nearer he would blow them out of the water. Then he submerged, and a patrol boat attracted by the firing came on the scene.

**SET ADRIFT WITHOUT GARS**

Then there is the case of the tiny *Achilles Adam* which wasn't either fishing for food or for Fritz, simply crossing from France to England. A U-boat shelled her when she was well out to sea and at the fourth shot the *Adam* dove to. A rain of shells continued to fall about her as her crew endeavored to lower a lifeboat. One boat was struck and destroyed and a man killed and several more casualties occurred before the crew were finally afloat. Fritz ordered the boat alongside of him. Four Germans entered it and were rowed to the *Adam* which they destroyed with a bomb. Returning to the submarine the Hun broke the lifeboat oars, destroyed the tin of biscuits and the keg of water that the crew had and set the crew adrift in a sea which was rapidly becoming nasty. With no oars or means of helping themselves—no food or water—no sail cloth to keep off the surface spray which the wind whipped along with the cut of a knife, the *Adam*'s crew drifted about in the North Sea all day and all night. Four men died of exposure and the injuries they had received and the others were on the point of collapse when rescued by a passing sailing ship.

I have taken these incidents of the *Breadalbane* and the *Achilles Adam* from official records. If they show what the peaceful fishermen have had to experience from the senseless fury of an insane beast, it is not hard to imagine what their fellows in the Naval Reserve have had to experience, even to being tied to a station on the deck of a submarine, saturated with kerosene and set on fire, as an article of mine in the *Atlantic Monthly* has shown.

Without these men of the trawling fleet and their brethren of the merchant marine, both in and out of the Naval Reserve, long ago Germany would have won this war. That's why she tries to terrorize them with her murderous acts. It is only by the untiring efforts of these men of the sea that the soldiers have gotten to the trenches and been kept supplied with munitions and food. These men are the eyes and ears of the Navy; they've had more than their share of the burden and horror of war; they've done work which gold or honors cannot pay for and never have thought of themselves—only the great cause which to them, with the light of pure gold in their eyes which a gleam of wind wouldn't blink—means the end of cruelty—the punishment of those responsible for the crucifying of little children.

**TOOK HARD TRAINING GLADLY**

As simple fishermen in times of peace the trawler men never would have kept the seas in the weather they've been out in the last four years. They are of the type of man who is an individualist in the matter of personal freedom. "Hard old nuts" as the Naval officers call them. Yet these simple fisherfolk realized immediately that the success of their work in the war depended entirely on their being moulded into a unit, and gladly underwent training which is so monotonous and galling to the individualist.

Day and night the Hun has laid his eggs—for the bottoms of passenger ships and hospital ships as well, to strike; mines with cunning devices, which kept them below the sweeping tackle for several days after being laid, making it necessary to sweep the same area daily to rid the seas of these horned devils of hell with which Germany has broken international law and the laws of God and common decency. There hasn't been a day but some trawler in the mine-sweeping fleet has been blown up. Yet there has always been another to take her place immediately.

Wherever there was a ship in distress the trawlers somehow seemed to have appeared as if by magic. Though strange to the waters of the Mediterranean, they've patrolled and fished for tin-fishes and scooped the wounded. Though in comparison to the liner they are about as big as a peanut, still they are right there with the goods, and if it hadn't been for them the *Arabia* might have been sunk

without leaving a trace. One trawler rescued 166 of her passengers, mostly women and children, and though she was dangerously overloaded, yet in 36 hours she made Malta, after a trip which subjected her entire complement of human beings to intense misery.

The stuff these men are made of is well exemplified in the cases of the *Nelson* and the *Violet-May*. The *Nelson* was a little fishing smack commanded by Thomas Crisp, R. N. R., and his son Thomas William Crisp, R. N. R., as second mate. In the House of Commons Lloyd George, illustrating how British fishermen have faced the perils of the war, said the father had been awarded the Victoria Cross and the son the Distinguished Service Medal. The following official account of the action in which the *Nelson* was lost and the father died, giving orders up to the last minute, was kindly furnished me by Mrs. Theodore Roosevelt:

**"CLEAR FOR ACTION! SUBMARINE!"**

On an August afternoon, at about a quarter to three, the trawl was shot from the smack *Nelson* and the smack was put on the port tack. The skipper was below packing fish; one hand was on the deck cleaning fish for the next morning's breakfast; and then the skipper came on deck, saw an object on the horizon, examined it closely, and sent for his glasses. Almost directly he sang out "Clear for action! Submarine!" And he had scarcely spoken when a shot fell a hundred yards away from the port bow. The motor man got to his motor, the deckhand dropped his fish and went to the ammunition room, the other hands at the skipper's orders: "Let go your gear, let go the warp, put a dam at the end of it!" Meanwhile the gunlayer held his fire till the skipper said, "It is no use waiting any longer, we will let them have it."

Away in the distance the submarine sent shell after shell at the smack, and about the fourth shot the shell went through the port bow just below the water line, and then the skipper shoved her around. There was no confusion on board, not even when the seventh shell struck the skipper, passed through his side, through the deck, and cut through the side of the ship. The second hand at once took charge of the tiller and the firing continued. All the time water was pouring into the ship and she was sinking. One man, the gunlayer, went to the skipper to see if he could render first aid, but it was obvious that he was mortally wounded. "It's all right, boy, do your best," said the skipper, and then, to the second hand, "Send a message off." This was the message: "*Nelson* being attacked by submarine. Skipper killed. Send assistance at once."

And all this time the smack was sinking and only five rounds of ammunition were left, and the second hand went to the skipper lying there on the deck and heard him say: "Abandon ship. Throw books overboard." He was asked then if they would lift him into the boat, but his answer was, "Tom, I'm done, throw me overboard." He was too badly injured to be moved and they left him there on his deck and took to the lifeboat, and about a quarter of an hour afterwards the *Nelson* went down by the head.

It was just drawing into dusk then and the crew of the boat pulled all night. Towards morning the wind freshened and blew them out of their course. They pulled all that day and had a pair of trousers and a large piece of oilskin fastened to two oars to attract attention. Once a vessel was sighted and once a group of mine-sweepers, but they passed out of sight. At night the weather became finer and through that night they pulled until daybreak, when at 10:30 A. M. they found a buoy and made fast to it. By afternoon they were sighted and rescued. The second hand, who took charge of the tiller after the skipper had been shot down, was his son, and so the great tradition goes on.

As for the case of the *Violet-May*, the following news item appeared in American newspapers last February. I give first the German version of the battle and then the English:

Berlin, February 16.—On the night of February 14 our torpedo boats, under the command of Capt. Heinecke made a surprise attack on strong forces guarding the English Channel between Calais and Dover on the north and Cape Gris-Nez and Folkstone on the south. A large guard-ship, numerous armed fishing steamers, and several motor vessels were forced to give battle, the largest part of them being destroyed. Our torpedo boats suffered no losses or damage. All returned.

London, February 15.—Eight British craft, which were hunting submarines, have been sunk by a flotilla of enemy destroyers, it is announced officially. After having sunk these vessels, seven of which were "drifters" and one a trawler, the enemy destroyers returned rapidly northward before they could be engaged.

The weather was thick and the night very dark when the German destroyers made a raid on the little ex-fishing boats

engaged in sweeping up Fritz's eggs and other delectable jobs which the Hun's barbaric warfare has created. The seven drifters were unarmed—the eighth, the trawler, referred to in the German report as "a large guardship," carried a single small gun on her fore-castle. It was rough and the mine-sweeping tackle kept the "drifters" like a half-tide rock, ever clear of the surging seas. Even if they had not been so handicapped, these little vessels had no chance of escape once the German destroyers were among them.

**THE CREW OF THE VIOLET MAY**

As usual, the fishermen exhibited to the world the staff they are made of. They had the same coolness and courage that their fellow mine-sweepers, anywhere about the British isles, have shown in innumerable circumstances of danger and difficulty. The *Violet May*, one of the unarmed drifters, was shelled at close quarters by two destroyers whose heavy shells killed or wounded all of the crew except two and set the *Violet May* on fire. These two—men of the engine-room force—Ewing and Noble, succeeded in launching a boat and finding that the mate and a deckhand still lived, though mortally wounded, lowered them into the boat and pushed off. The remainder of the crew, inextricably entangled in the blazing wreckage, lay dead. The two men paddled clear, waited till the enemy had passed on, and then approached their little ship again. The fire had hold of her forward steam was pouring from her wrecked engine-room, and German shells were still bursting over her decks.

"Ah doot she's sinkin'," said Ewing, stoutly.

Noble said nothing; he was not given overmuch to speech, but he made the painter fast to the *Violet May* and proceeded to climb aboard again, followed by Ewing, and between them they fought and overcame the fire.

"Dinna leave me, Jamie!" said the mate, piteously. "Dinna leave me in the little boat!"

"Na, na," was the reply, "we'll na leave ye."

And presently they brought their wounded back on board and took their place again. The mate was laid on his bunk and Ewing fetched shirts from his bag and tore them up into bandages.

"An' them his dress shirts," murmured Noble. It was his first and last contribution to the narrative.

They took turn and turn about to tend the wounded and plug the shot holes and quench the smouldering embers of the fire.

"Tis na guid," said the mate at last. "Dinna fash about me, lads—ah'll gang nae mair on patrol," and so died.

But Ewing and Noble saved their little ship, and she came into port to testify to the courage of the British fishermen in war.

Because courage and resource and determination are everywhere on the sea exhibited in the Naval Reserve or merchant service, a single glorious deed of two "drifter" men is nowhere elevated above the rest. One story differs from another but in detail, the valor, not at all. All have done their duty with skill and devotion, and all are heroes to whom the public has not as yet done justice.

It may be added that mine fishing is an art, about which it is useless for the curious to display any eagerness, for till the end of the war the knowledge of how it is done is a closed book. For dealing with the submarines the fishermen have their own methods, sometimes more primitive and courageous than effective, as when the master of a sailing vessel, imagining himself a destroyer, tried to ram a U-boat. Yet one gunless trawler by persistent harassing pursuit so terrified a German commander who was attacking a merchant ship, that he let his prey escape.

As one naval captain has put it in speaking of the British fishermen:

"They're it—absolutely it. No weather's too bad for 'em. They're our eyes and our ears. They know every blessed wave in the Channel, not merely as passing acquaintances, but they address 'em by their Christian name. They'll do anything and go anywhere and chance the luck. They're just simple fishermen, but they run the whole show and they run it magnificently—guns, semaphores, wireless, everything! They live on kippers and tea, and I don't believe they ever go to sleep."

This opinion I have had expressed to me by many naval officers. If they who, in times of peace are inclined to be elusive and superior, say these things of the fishermen, then further comment is unnecessary.

New Office Assistant—"Five shilling worth of halpenny stamps, please, and I hope they'll taste nicer than the last lot I bought here. They were a funny flavor."—*Passing Show*.

## NEWS OF THE SEA

Halifax, N. S., Aug. 5.—After a three hours' battle with a German submarine about thirty miles west of Halifax today, the oil tanker *Lux Blanca*, was torpedoed and sunk, and two of the crew killed. The oil tanker left port at 8 o'clock this morning, and three hours later the battle opened with the U-boat. Both ships opened fire and the shelling kept up for over two hours. The submarine had the longest range guns, and her shots had a more telling effect. Failing to sink the tanker by gun fire, the submarine launched a torpedo, which ripped open the stern of the steamer and she soon disappeared into the depths.

The captain and crew took to the boats, two of which have brought in here, and the occupants of the third boat have been rescued and are on their way here. An other steamer, which was about five miles distant when the fight opened, returned to port.

Washington, Aug. 5.—The American tank steamer *O. S. Jennings*, was sunk by a German submarine yesterday about 100 miles off the Virginia coast and thirty survivors of the vessel's crew have been brought to Norfolk by a naval vessel, the Naval Department was today informed. The captain and one boat containing 13 members of the crew are missing. Wireless calls from the steamer, saying that she was being shelled by a submarine were received yesterday between eleven o'clock and noon. Naval vessels were sent at once to the location indicated but arrived only in time to pick up survivors, the vessel having gone down. The *Jennings*, which was built in 1917, was of 7,890 net tons and belonged to the Standard Oil Company.

Washington, Aug. 5.—The captain and thirteen members of the crew of the American tank steamer *O. B. Jennings*, sunk Sunday by a German submarine off the Virginia coast, have arrived safely at Norfolk, Va., the Naval Department announced to-night. The fourteen men, with the thirty previously reported as having landed accounts for all the members of the tanker's crew.

Halifax, N. S., Aug. 4.—Saturday afternoon there were further developments in the activities of German U-boats off the Bay of Fundy, which have been continuing for four days, when three fishing schooners bound from Boston to the Banks were blown up and sunk forty miles west of Seal Island. These schooners were the *Muriel*, the *Rob Roy*, and the *Rob Roy*, and the *Annie M. Perry*, their crews, set adrift in dories, all managed to reach the Nova Scotian coast, and are at present in Yarmouth. The submarine lay in sight of Seal Island until Sunday morning when it submerged.

This triple sinking follows immediately after the burning of the *Dornfontein* on Friday afternoon by probably the same submarine which seems to direct its attention to the destruction of the smaller fishing vessels.

The *Muriel*, with Captain Eldridge Goodman, left Gloucester on Friday for the Banks. Saturday shortly before noon, when she was lying forty miles west of Seal Island, the submarine was fired across her stern, and she was hoisted to, half an hour later the submarine came within an hundred yards of the schooner and ordered the crew into the dories; some of them were taken aboard the submarine. Its captain sent several sailors to the *Muriel* who placed a bomb amidships underneath her keel. Fifteen minutes later there was only wreckage floating upon the water. The crew of the *Muriel* were placed in their boats and reached Yarmouth shortly after daylight yesterday. Thirteen of their number belong to towns along the southern shore of Nova Scotia.

At 3 o'clock of the same afternoon, the submarine ran down the *Annie M. Perry*, Capt. James Goodman, and blew her up in the same way as the *Muriel*. The crew took to their dories and reached Wood's Harbor yesterday morning.

Two hours later the U-boat, at a distance of five miles, fired a warning shot across the bows of the *Rob Roy*, Capt. Freeman Cromwell. When the enemy craft drew near the crew of the *Rob Roy* were told to hurry into their boats. Then their vessel was blown up. About eleven of them spent the night on Seal Island, the remainder reached Clark's Harbor. They are all in Yarmouth at present.

According to the men, the submarine is 200 feet long. It is neat and clean, painted black along the top. It is equipped with four guns, two fore and two aft. As it lay off Seal Island it was brilliantly illuminated by a light which seemed to be suspended from the masthead.

The captain boasted of his accomplishment to the crew of the *Muriel*. He said that on Friday he had sunk six schooners, and that he had orders to destroy all that he met. The direction which the sub-

marine took on leaving Seal Island could not be ascertained.

A Canadian Atlantic Port, Aug. 6.—The crew of the British schooner *Clady J. Holland* have landed, reporting that their vessel was sunk by an enemy submarine yesterday morning fifteen miles southeast of Ironbound Island, La. Hav.

A Canadian Atlantic Port, Aug. 5.—The auxiliary fishing vessel, *McLaughlin*, owned by Swimm Brothers of Lockeport, arrived here last evening and reported that she had been chased by an enemy submarine, but that she had made good her escape, thanks to the appearance of a large steamer, which diverted the attention of the U-boat. The captain of the *McLaughlin* reports that he last saw the submarine chasing the steamer, but that he could not see what the final outcome was.

## ST. GEORGE, N. B.

Miss Agnes Crickard, who taught school for several years in Woodstock, has accepted a school in the west and leaves shortly for her new field. Miss Lelia Armstrong, who substituted in the school here a part of the term, is also going west to teach.

The "B" on the oats has appeared in this section. Oats planted on the interval ground, the property of the late Senator Gilmour, have developed the "B" so that the letter is plain to the eye.

Friends of Mr. Harry McAdam are glad to know that he is improved in health.

Mrs. Chas. Casey, of East Boston, is the guest of her grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Jos. Bullock. Her daughter, Grace, is with her.

Wm. Finnigan and Miss Nellie Finnigan came from Quebec to attend the funeral of the late Mrs. L. Cook.

Mrs. James McLean, of Lawrence, Mass., is a guest of relatives.

Bliss McGirr, of Boston, is visiting his brother Edward.

Elery Johnson, of the Bank of N. S., St. John, is enjoying his vacation at home.

Miss Mary McMullon is visiting the Border Towns.

Misses Winnifred and Bessie Maxwell, of Boston, are spending a holiday with their parents, Mr. and Mrs. David Maxwell.

Miss Laura Connors, of St. John, was the guest last week of Miss Alma Chaffey. Mrs. B. Murray and daughter, Susie, are visiting Mr. Jos. Murray in St. John.

Mrs. George Frauley is spending a few days at "Casa Lagune," Lake Utopia, her guests include, Misses Royce Goss, Alma Coffey, Nan Southland, Laura Meating, and Edna O'Brien.

Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Hanson, of Moncton, are guests of Mr. Hanson's mother.

Capt. Jessie Milliken has a large party of St. John people at "Camp Utopia," Lake Utopia.

Mr. and Mrs. Edward Taylor, of St. John West, are guests of Dr. H. L. Taylor. Mr. and Mrs. M. N. Cockburn and daughter, Kaye, of St. Andrews, were visitors in town over the week-end.

Rev. Mr. Sherman, of Toronto, is spending a holiday in town, and is the guest of Mrs. A. Gilmour.

Haymakers are busy these days making hay between showers. The crop is reported good in some sections, poor in others. New potatoes are on the market at a price that puts New York in the shade.

Jim Oliver, of Pocologan, was a member of the crew of the schooner *Dornfontein* burned by a German submarine on Friday last. Mr. Oliver is well-known in this part of the County, having worked for several years at Black's Harbor. He is the father of a large family.

Large parties were entertained over the week-end by Mrs. T. R. Kent, Mrs. W. Messenite, Mrs. Chas. Craig, and Mrs. Wm. Mersereau at their cottages, Lake Utopia.

Misses Anna and Mary Lynch are spending a holiday with their aunt, Miss Ellen Curran, at Utopia.

Miss Julia Murray has returned from Black's Harbor, where she was the guest of the Misses Connors.

Ptes. Eugene Hennessey and Ray Gearson, of the Depot Battalion, Sussex, are home on furlough.

Miss Theodora O'Brien has recovered from a recent illness.

## FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF DECLARATION OF WAR

Special services were held in all the Churches on Sunday, August 4, in reference to the fifth anniversary of Great Britain's declaration of war against Germany. Large congregations attended, and the services were very impressive. We regret that limitation of space prevents us from giving a full report of each service. Next week we shall print the address of Very Rev. Dean C. M. Sills, delivered at the morning service in All Saints Church.