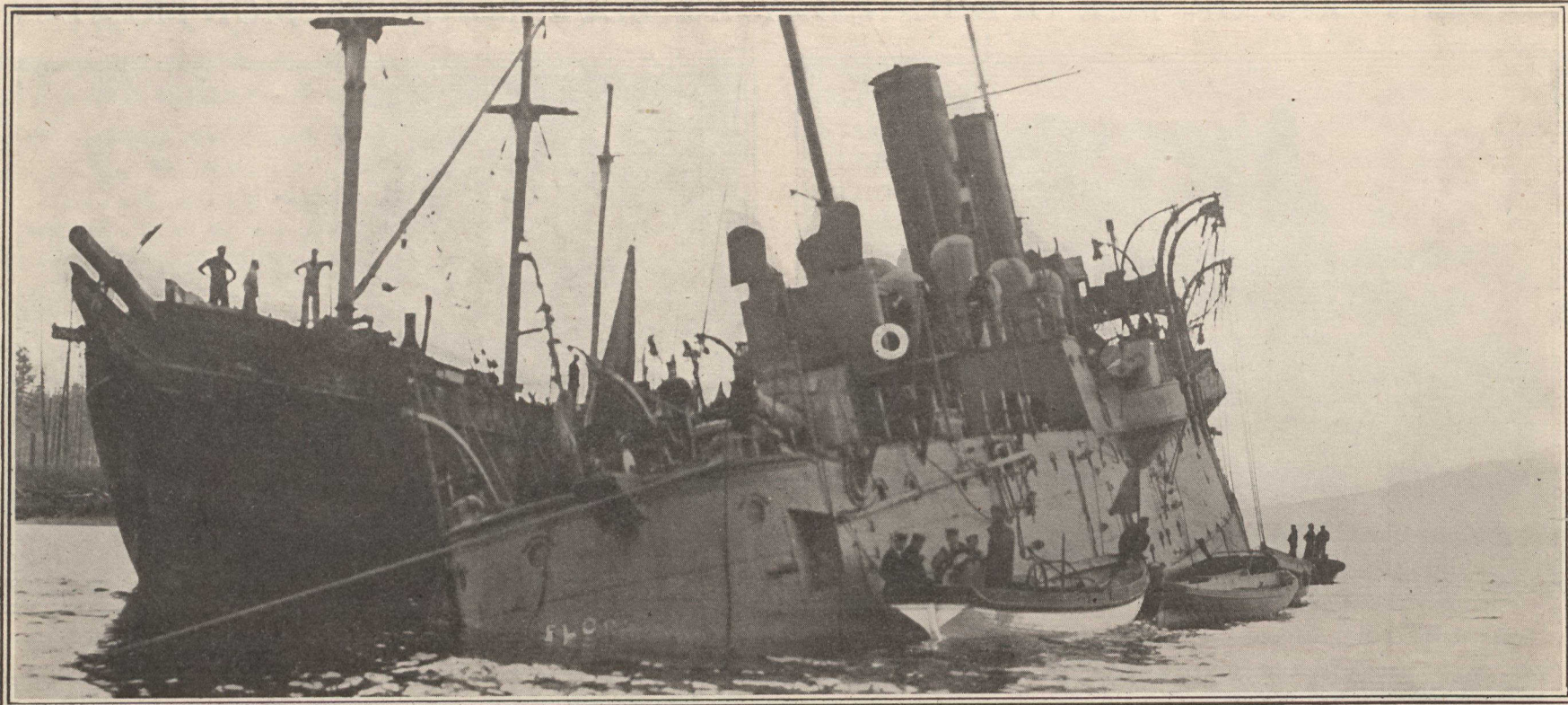




H.M.S. Flora, damaged off Comox, Vancouver Island, in 1906—Being raised by a Salvage Vessel.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JONES & CO., ESQUIMAULT

AN ABANDONED NAVAL STATION

By BONNYCASTLE DALE

According to a despatch sent out from Victoria, B.C., last week, Mr. Dale has solved the mystery which surrounds the disappearance of H. M. S. *Condor*, off Vancouver Island, in December, 1901. Mr. Dale has been exploring the coasts of Vancouver Island for nearly two years, and during that period has written many special articles for "The Canadian Courier." The real story of the *Condor* will not be told until the British Admiralty conducts an investigation, but the boat is supposed to lie a mile and a half off Long Beach, midway between the southern entrance to Berkeley Sound and the settlement of Clayoquot, on the west coast of the Island. The following article describes a visit to the place where H. M. S. *Flora* was wrecked on the east coast and the deserted rifle range at Comox and the one-time naval target on Denman's Island nearby.—Editor.

WE left the desolated Esquimault behind, with its big dry dock, its great storage sheds for fuel, its mighty harbour—the Royal Roads—empty, empty; all empty. In the glorious yesterday the British man-of-war, the swift cruiser, the gunboats, the destroyers tugged at anchor, awaiting a summons against any that would dare offend this distant member of the Empire—this Canada of ours. Now we have empty harbours, coaling stations, rifle ranges, deserted big gun ranges.

Come with Fritz and me away from Esquimault on Vancouver Island, away past the capital city of Victoria that rests like an English city, with the sea at her feet, away from these Straits of Juan de Fuca, away up through the thousand islands that dot the Straits and Gulf of Georgia, past the smelters, the cement works, the big sawmills that tell of towns and villages, past the coal mining town of Ladysmith and the growing town of Nanaimo. All the way north we see the high hills of Vancouver Island overlooking the towns that fringe its shores. We are off to Comox to see the celebrated big gun ranges of the British navy.

All the way is among islands, with the everlasting hills of the big Vancouver Island rearing their snow-crested heads to the westward. At last our good steamer has covered half of the entire length of the big Island—an island 285 miles long and 80 miles wide that has not been much more than half explored as yet. Ahead we see Denman's Island, and on this, its western side,

the long point of rocks and the reef upon which the unfortunate man-of-war *Flora* poked her nose about three years ago. Through the kindness of the owner of the salvage vessel, Mr. Bullen, I am enabled to show you just how this huge warship looked jammed upon this island shore. Luckily they got her into Esquimault and once there they made her as good as new; but she had some severe wounds as the picture indicates. Her keelpiece and plates were crumpled up like an old tin can—but there is a salvage company out here which picks up these leaking, torn hulls, pumps them out and tows them back—oftimes over a thousand miles—to the safety of the dry dock.

We stood at our good ship's rail looking at the northern point of Denman's Island. It lies in

Bayne's Sound, far up the Straits of Georgia. It terminates in a succession of long, low sand spits, divided in places by tide passages. The main sand spit has a clump of red firs on it. Even at this distance we could see where the tops had been torn off by the big projectiles of the fleet. Still on our west the heights of the big island frowned upon us. Mount Arrowsmith, its highest peak, is heavily snow-burdened. As the steamer forged along we could see the glacier that glitters far up the valley of the Comox.

We left the boat at the clean little village of Comox and Fritz and I were soon exploring the deserted rifle range on the sand hook that forms Comox Harbour. Looking from here towards the north one sees the huge sand cliffs that edge the western side of the Straits of Georgia, some two miles northeast of Comox. Looking south you can see the high northern sandy point of Denman's Island—now tree clothed. For ages the waves have undermined these, the sweeping and boring of the wind has poured the clean sand like a river into the sea, so that now we have a series of sand spits that extend clear across the seven miles that divides Comox from Denman's Island.

On this mile-and-a-half long, Comox sand-hook stand many excellent rifle ranges, pits, cement barriers, targets, positions, butts—all sand-swept and grass-grown. The butts are literally one mass of crumpled and smashed bullets and lead. The 100 to 600-yard ranges mark off the range in front of the bullet-proof cement circle. A semi-circular iron shield



H.M.S. Flora in Dry Dock at Esquimault, being repaired. Torn and crumpled Plates in foreground.