

THE FRINGES OF THE FLEET

ascribe it to Joss that they have not piled up their ships a hundred times.

'I expect it must be because we're always dodging about over the same ground. One gets to smell it. We've bumped pretty hard, of course, but we haven't expended much up to date. You never know your luck on patrol, though.

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

Personally, though they have been true friends to me, I loathe destroyers, and all the raw, racking, ricochetting life that goes with them—the smell of the wet 'lammies' and damp wardroom cushions; the galley-chimney smoking out the bridge; the obstacle-strewn deck; and the pervading beastliness of oil, grit, and greasy iron. Even at moorings they shiver and sidle like half-backed horses. At sea they will neither rise up and fly clear like the hydroplanes, nor dive and be done with it like the submarines, but imitate the vices of both. A scientist of the lower deck describes them as: 'Half switchback, half water-chute, and Hell continuous.' Their only merit, from a landsman's point of view, is that they can crumple themselves up from stern to bridge and (I have seen it) still get home. But one does not breathe these compliments to their commanders. Other destroyers may be—they will point them out to you—