

204 Heligoland to Keeling Island

the fourth destroyer shared the fate of the others and the German division had been simply wiped out. From beginning to end the action had lasted scarcely ninety minutes, at the end of which the German Navy was poorer by the loss of four useful destroyers and about 250 officers and men, including the thirty-one survivors who were rescued after the action.

The British casualties, on the other hand, were remarkably slight. One officer and four men were wounded, while the damage to the ships was insignificant. A member of the crew of one of the destroyers engaged in the fight told his story with all the modesty of a true sailor :

"The 'Undaunted,' he said, 'led us into action. We closed round, and had a nice little game. One of our destroyers fired two shots at one of the enemy's ships, set her on fire, and then left her. Another destroyer engaged one of the enemy with the same result.

"The other two Germans showed a bit of a fight, but it was only a bit, and we could dodge their shots with ease. The whole fight lasted only a little over an hour. It was really pretty to watch our men fire. They got on the target every time, and you could see bits of the enemy's ships blown away as the shots struck. The prisoners picked up were wearing all kinds of clothing ; they appeared to have no regulation dress."

He went on to say that as soon as our squadron came within range the engagement developed into a running fight, in the course of which the superiority of the British ships, both in speed and in gunnery, was soon demonstrated. The