

THE FRINGES OF THE FLEET

their tubes and nod to themselves. *Their faces have changed now.*) He hasn't spotted us yet. We'll ju-ust—(more helm and depth orders, but specially helm.)—'Wish we were working a beam-tube. Ne'er mind! Up! (A last string of orders.) Six hundred, and he doesn't see us! Fire!'

The dummy left; the second in command cocked one ear and looked relieved. Up we rose; the wet air and spray spattered through the hatch; the destroyer swung off to retrieve the dummy.

'Careless brutes destroyers are,' said one officer. 'That fellow nearly walked over us just now. Did you notice?'

The commander was playing his game out over again—stroke by stroke. 'With a beam-tube I'd ha' strafed him amidships,' he concluded.

'Why didn't you then?' I asked.

There were loads of shiny reasons, which reminded me that we were at war and armed for action, and that the interlude had been merely play. A companion rose alongside and wanted to know whether we had seen anything of her dummy.

'No. But we heard it,' was the short answer.

I was rather annoyed, because I had seen that particular daughter of destruction on the stocks only a short time ago, and here she was grown up and talking about her missing children!

In the harbour again, one found more submarines, all patterns and makes and sizes, with rumours of