

PATROLS

her run true, or you will have to learn her helm all over again. And it is vital that you should know exactly what your ship is going to do three seconds before she does it. Similarly with men. If any one, from Lieutenant-Commander to stoker, changes his personal trick or habit—even the manner in which he clutches his chin or caresses his nose at a crisis—the matter must be carefully considered in this world where each is trustee for his neighbour's life and, vastly more important, the corporate honour.

'What are the destroyers doing just now?' I asked.

'Oh—running about—much the same as usual.'

The Navy hasn't the least objection to telling one everything that it is doing. Unfortunately, it speaks its own language, which is incomprehensible to the civilian. But you will find it all in 'The Channel Pilot' and 'The Riddle of the Sands.'

It is a foul coast, hairy with currents and rips, and mottled with shoals and rocks. Practically the same men hold on here in the same ships, with much the same crews, for months and months. A most senior officer told me that they were 'good boys'—on reflection, 'quite good boys'—but neither he nor the flags on his chart explained how they managed their lightless, unmarked navigations through black night, blinding rain, and the crazy, rebounding North Sea gales. They themselves