

HOW BRITISH CAPTAIN AND HIS CREW RESCUED SHIP FROM GERMANS

"Southport" Was Caught at a South Pacific Island by the German Warship "Geier"

GERMANS DISABLED THE SHIP'S ENGINES

Thought They Had Her Safely Bottled Up But the Britons Repaired their Engines and Got Away With Ship

THE Imperial Merchant Service Guild have recently received the following details from their members, Captain A. Clopet, Chief Officer Mr. C. Dodd, and Second Officer Mr. V. Shears, of the S.S. "Southport" of Cardiff, which after being captured by the Germans they recaptured and brought safely into the port of Brisbane from a remote island in the South Pacific. The case is one more indicating the resource and intrepidity of our merchant seafarers:—

The S.S. "Southport" left Auckland on the 12th June last to load a cargo of phosphates for the Pacific Phosphate Company, calling at Ocean Island for orders. The voyage was uneventful and the steamer arrived at Ocean Island on the 23rd, and after receiving orders proceeded on the 24th for Nauru, and arrived at that

port the following day. The Manager of the Phosphate Company sent information to the Captain that loading had been delayed on account of boisterous weather, strong currents and the exposed position of the Island, and as there was a considerable amount of tonnage to be dealt with before the "Southport" she would not be needed for loading purposes for some time.

Wait for Orders

Under the circumstances, the Captain decided to put into the port of Tarawa, Gilbert Islands, where further orders would be conveyed to him by other steamers awaiting their turn to load at Nauru or Ocean Islands. Thus they could lay to an anchor and save coal and other expenses, in preference to keeping the open sea against the strong prevailing easterly currents.

The "Southport" returned to Nauru on July 28th, where the Captain found that during his four weeks absence only some 450 tons had been loaded, and that there remained a balance of about 13,000 tons to be shipped before the "Southport" would be required. In order to put in the time as economically as possible, the Captain then decided to hear up for Kusaie, the most easterly of the Caroline Group (Germany) where the conditions in every respect appeared to be better than at Tarawa. Arrangements were made with the Manager at Nauru for for-

warding loading orders by the S.S. "Germania," calling at Nauru and due at Kusaie on 28th August. The latter port was reached on August 4th.

Caused Much Surprise

The non-arrival of the "Germania" on her usual date caused great surprise, especially as her previous voyages had been marked by great regularity in this respect. As no news was forthcoming to throw any light on this matter it was decided to sail for Nauru on 6th September.

On the 4th, the Captain being ashore at the time, the German cruiser "Geier" and transport "Tsintau" of Bremen, arrived in the Harbor. Shortly afterwards a boat, manned by officers and sailors fully armed, put off and boarded the "Southport," and on the Captain subsequently arriving on board he was informed by the German officers that as war had broken out between England and Germany they demanded that the ship's papers should be handed over to them forthwith. All explanations as to the ship being chartered to load phosphates for Stettin were unavailing, the German officers' demands were acceded to and in a very short time engineers from the man of war arrived on board the "Southport" and commenced disabling the engines.

Disabled Her Engines

The four eccentrics of the medium pressure and high pressure engines and other parts connected therewith, and also the intermediate stop valve were removed. The following day the transport "Tsintau" came alongside and started transshipping coal into her bungalows until 6 a.m. on the 7th. On the same day a boat full of officers and men again boarded the "Southport" and mustering on the lower bridge a formal Act of Seizure was read over to the Captain of the "Southport" by the officer in charge appropriating the vessel to the Imperial German Government. At the same time the German Naval Ensign was hoisted, the German officers and men standing at the salute.

The Captain of the "Southport" was then instructed to take charge of the ship when he would be responsible for her to the Germans as well as for the discipline of the crew pending further action on the part of the Imperial German Government. It may be mentioned that it was only on second consideration that the Commander of the "Geier" decided not to sink the "Southport," as it had been brought to his notice that, owing to the non-arrival of the "Germania" with provisions, the "Southport" was running short of provisions and the crew were consequently faced with

starvation unless the situation was relieved.

Had None to Spare

The Commander of the "Geier" stated that it was impossible for him to send any provisions as they also had run short, but ultimately he sent four loaves of bread which falling anything more substantial were very welcome. At the same time he gave the Captain of the "Southport" an order on the King of Kusaie in the name of the Imperial German Government to supply the ship with such food as the Island produced. The "Geier" and "Tsintau" shortly afterwards took their departure, disappearing in a South-Easterly direction.

After their departure the Captain lost no time in consulting with the Chief Engineer as to the possibility of fixing up the engines in such a manner as to enable them to proceed to sea. The Chief Engineer expressed the opinion that this could be done and at once with his fellow engineers set about the work. On the 15th September the Chief Engineer reported to the Captain that the engines were ready, and steam having been got up it was decided to give the engines a trial spin that night. After two attempts the engines were started and stopped by the engineers after a few revolutions had been obtained and the Chief Engineer expressed himself as being satisfied with the result and that everything was as satisfactory as could be expected under the circumstances.

Council of War

The following afternoon the Captain held a council of war and requested the presence of the officers and engineers of the ship in his cabin in order to lay before them his scheme to recapture the steamer and bring her into an Australian port, Brisbane being the one selected if found practicable. One view submitted was that the vessel might remain in Kusaie until the end of hostilities when, in all probability an exchange of prisoners would take place between England and Germany.

To this the Captain pointed out that a considerable sum of money represented by the "Southport" was at stake, which at that moment was the property of the German Government, and if the attempt to bring the vessel to a safe Australian port was successful the capital represented in the ship would revert to the original flag. Thereupon the Captain's decision was unanimously agreed to by the officers present and on the following morning by all the members of the crew.

Serious Problem

The serious shortage of provisions now presented a very great difficulty. In anticipation of this the Captain had ordered some 400 lbs. of roots, which are used by the natives only when they are on the verge of starvation and in addition to this some 350 coconuts. These stores—if such they could be called—were ordered from and provided by the King of Kusaie, who was by this time aware that an attempt to escape was shortly to be made. These provisions were taken in a precautionary way, that is in the event of the voyage being a prolonged one, or if for any reason they had to take to the boats. As it was the voyage was made on short rations.

The skill of the engineers and the way they outwitted the Germans in connecting the engines up again is worthy of comment. The German engineers had left the two eccentric rods for the low pressure engine. One of these rods was placed in position on the ahead sheave of the high pressure engine, the other rod being utilised for ahead on the low pressure engine. Thus the engineers were able to work the engines on the compound principles, with the difference that they could only move in one direction, that

Reid's steamers Meigle and Argyle leave shortly for Basques to tow the S.S. Bruce along.



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is ahead, it being impossible to reverse the engines to go astern.

Hard to Restart

There was also great difficulty in re-starting the engines once they had been stopped as they were liable to get on the centre. Additional risk was experienced in getting under weigh as the Harbour of Kusaie is very small, there being hardly sufficient room for a steamer of this kind to swing. At the time of starting she was swung with her stern towards the entrance, and on one side they had the land and on the other a coral reef. The Captain had taken the precaution previous to heaving up anchor to buoy the channel.

When all was ready, with the assistance of warps the ship's stern was swung into the wind, and the anchor being hove just clear of the bottom her head started to pay off with the wind. Towards the entrance, as soon as she was squared up in the channel the telegraph was rung full ahead, and the last rope let go as soon as the

engine started. This was on the 18th September at 3.15 p.m. when they took their departure from Kusaie.

Uneventful Passage

The passage proved to be uneventful, but every precaution was taken and the lights were carefully screened up to 9 p.m. when all lights were put out for the remainder of the night. The Island of Christoval (Solomon Islands) was passed to the Westward on 23rd September and they arrived to the North East of Sandy Cape on 28th September when in reply to enquiries the S.S. "Westminster" reported the coast clear of the enemy's ships and a course was shaped for Brisbane where she arrived safely on 30th September.

So ends the story of this wonderful achievement told in the officer's plain sailorising language. Captain Clopet, his officers, engineers and men received an enthusiastic reception from the Australians who are always so quick to recognise such splendid work on the part of our seamen.

The following is an extract from the Brisbane "Telegraph":—

RECOGNISING PLUCK.

"His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor this morning received at Government House, Captain Clopet, the commander of the steamer "Southport," which recently arrived in Brisbane, after escaping from the clutches of the Germans at Kusaie. The Mayor (Alderman C. M. Jenkinson) escorted the gallant Captain to Fernberg. Mrs. Clopet accompanied her husband. Sir Arthur Morgan entertained his guests and expressed the admiration of British people for their skillful and plucky action."

His Excellency the Lieutenant-Governor has sent a full report of the case to the Secretary of State for the Colonies and also to the Governor-General. The Guild are informed in a later letter from Mr. Dodd, the Chief Officer, that the flag of the S.S. "Southport" was sold by public auction and the proceeds (£200) given to the Patriotic Fund.

(Under the distinguished patronage of His Excellency the Governor and Mon. Roche.)

CASINO THEATRE,

Wednesday, February 10th, 1915

Annual ENTERTAINMENT

In Aid of Mount Cashel

The Theatre has been generously given free of charge by Mr. Kielly, and the following ladies and gentlemen will take part, viz: Master S. Leary, Misses Jean Strang, Mary Ryan, Mary Morris, G. Strang, L. Anderson, S. Johnson, Messrs. McCarthy, Slattery, Ruggles, D'Neil, Cameron and Hutton. Dances and Gun Drill Exercises by Mt. Cashel Boys. Volunteer March and National Airs by C.C.C. Band.

Reserved Seats at Atlantic Bookstore.

Bargains in Dress Fabrics During Our Removal Sale

WHILE we were stock-taking we came across many ends of Dress Fabrics—such as Poplins, Serges, Alpacas, Faced-cloths, etc., and these we have marked at Special Sale Prices. Amongst the lot you'll find ends from 1½ yards to 7 yards; in material suitable for Women's and Children's wear and some especially serviceable for Girls' school dresses.

Call and examine them, you'll be sure to get an end to suit for almost any purpose and you'll get the benefit now of the REMOVAL SALE PRICES.

In Addition

TO these ends we are offering splendid value in a Double width finely woven, smoothed-faced, soft finished, pure woollen, dress material, handsomely worked with a silk art-spray, in one, two and three tones. Colors: Pink, Sky Blue, Dark Green, Light Green, Navy Blue, Saxe Blue, Brown, Cream and Black. Original price, a yard, 70c. Sale price, a yard, **40c.**

ALL our fancy black Double width dress goods. Originally 90c, a yard, are now Removal Sale Price, a yard, **60c.**

HEAVY WOOLLEN Dress Serges suitable for school dresses. Colors: Navy, Saxe, Brown, and Dark Green. Double width. Original price, 70c. Removal Sale Price, a yard, **55c.**

SPECIAL VALUE in a smooth-finished, finely woven, dress fabric, with a self colored, small, shadow-check combined with an effective stripe. Colors: Mid Brown, Cerise, Navy, Saxe, etc. Original price, 80c. Removal Sale Price, a yard, **60c.**

WE HAVE a Special Botany Delaine—made of purest long-fibre, Australian wool, combined with silk—in a black, also a Navy Ground which displays with rich effect the full-blown, Pink Rose design, that covers the surface—29 inches wide. Splendid for making a Kimono, Wrap, or Dressing Gown. Values, a yard, \$1.00. Removal Sale Price, a yard, **30c.**

THE WORKMEN have commenced work on our New Modern Store in the West and daily the time draws on to our GREAT REMOVAL DAY, therefore we again invite you to come while our sale continues and share the benefits of our liberally cut prices.

You'll find every item as represented. Come and judge for yourself.

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We have no large stock of those Engines and will not again handle 2 Cycle Engines, having decided to sell only 4 Cycle Engines after our present stock of Fraser's is sold. These Engines are new; not second hand Engines. Union members can secure them at last year's prices and terms. Send along your order promptly.

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