

THE FRINGES OF THE FLEET

light of the valour and forethought shown as of the ends they have gained for mankind. The Service takes all work for granted. It knew long ago that certain things would have to be done, and it did its best to be ready for them. When it disappeared over the sky-line for manoeuvres it was practising—always practising; trying its men and stuff and throwing out what could not take the strain. That is why, when war came, only a few names had to be changed, and those chiefly for the sake of the body, not of the spirit. And the Seniors who hold the key to our plans and know what will be done if things happen, and what links wear thin in the many chains, they are of one fibre and speech with the Juniors and the lower deck and all the rest who come out of the undemonstrative households ashore. 'Here is the situation as it exists now,' say the Seniors. 'This is what we do to meet it. Look and count and measure and judge for yourself, and then you will know.'

It is a safe offer. The civilian only sees that the sea is a vast place, divided between wisdom and chance. He only knows that the uttermost oceans have been swept clear, and the trade-routes purged, one by one, even as our armies were being convoyed along them; that there was no island nor key left unsearched on any waters that might hide an enemy's craft between the Arctic