

4            To Kiel in the "Hercules"

even throb of the engines, the swift run of the foam along the sides, and the sharp sting of the air on my cheek told that there had been little if any abatement of the steady speed of seventeen knots at which *Hercules* had been steaming since she passed May Island the previous day at noon. The *Regensburg*, the chief yeoman of signals told me, had made a W.T. to say that she had been compelled by the fog to slow down again, and this, he figured, might make it between three and four o'clock before we picked her up. "There's no use waiting for the Huns, sir," he said, with a tired smile. "The hanging back habit, which they were four years in cultivating, seems to have grown on them so that they're hanging back even yet. Best go down and wait where it's warm, and I'll send a boy to call you when we know for certain when she'll turn up."

My foot was on the ladder, when the sight of a seagull dancing a giddy *pas seul* on the titillating horn of a mine bobbing off astern recalled a story an Italian destroyer skipper had once told me, of how he had seen an Albanian sea eagle blow itself up as a consequence of executing a precisely similar manoeuvre. I lingered to get the chief yeoman's opinion of what I had hitherto considered a highly apocryphal yarn, and when he was called away to take down a signal to pass back to the