

CHAPTER XI

BRITISH NAVY V. GERMAN ARMY

THE latter part of October witnessed an almost superhuman attempt by the Germans to make themselves masters of the seaports of Northern France. Acting, it is said, on the personal and urgent orders of the Kaiser himself, his generals concentrated huge masses of men and an enormous force of artillery, and then began a forward movement which was intended to bring Dunkirk, Calais, Boulogne, and other points on the coast under German dominion.

The Allies were equally determined to circumvent this design. Reinforcements were hurried to the scene, and the German rush was stemmed. The fighting was extraordinarily fierce. Day after day the battle swayed to and fro. At one point the Germans would gain ground, at another they would be hurled back in confusion. But with dogged tenacity they continued to struggle towards their goal. The German people were told that this was a life and death grapple. Everything depended on the result, since it was absolutely vital to German plans that Calais should be captured. It has never been explained why this should be the case, and it is fairly well understood that the scheme was mainly specta-