

"The situation was saved by a brilliant and heroic act. It was decided, however great the sacrifice, that we should concentrate our shipping in the Atlantic, that there should be but one main highway for the Mercantile Marine, and but one house of call—the Atlantic Ocean and the American Continent. Our rate of loss in April, 1917, was 548,000 tons. In May, 1918, this average had fallen to 191,000 tons. At the close of the War it was almost negligible. This triumph was brought about by limiting the routes, as far as possible, to one, by patrolling that single route with ceaseless vigilance, and by establishing a most efficient system of convoy. From June, 1917, to the first three weeks of July, 1918, we had over sixty million gross tons of merchant shipping convoyed across the ocean, and the percentage of tonnage lost was a little over 1 per cent."

This rule of route as to Merchant shipping did not apply of course, to supplies and men for the other British war-fronts and it should be pointed out, also, as Mr. Begbie proves, that the British merchant seaman carried nearly 50 per cent. of the entire imports of France and Italy, besides 60 per cent. of the American troops. He worked night and day with a giant's will, a giant's strength; and night and day he faced the risk of sudden death at the hands of an invisible, brutal, and merciless foe. As an English poet (C. Fox Smith) put it:

All honour be to merchantmen,	In peril of unlighted coast
And ships of all degree,	And death-besprinkled foam,
In warlike dangers manifold	Who daily dare a hundred deaths
Who sail and keep the sea	To bring their cargoes home.

A liner out of Liverpool—a tanker from the Clyde;
 A hard-run tramp from anywhere—a tug from Merseyside;
 A cattle-boat from Birkenhead—a coaler from the Tyne;
 All honour be to merchantmen while any star shall shine.

Now that it is all over we are able to estimate how large a share of the victory was due to the men of our Merchant Service. They know by terrible experiences what a blessing the Freedom of the Seas is. Many of them died, if they did not fight to save it, and now that peace has come, none will rejoice with greater right in the security on the ocean that has been thus procured.

TORONTO, DEC. 27, 1918.

**Published under the Auspices of the
 Ontario Division, Navy League of Canada.**

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