

THE LOSS OF THE SUB- MARINE A1

IT is natural for all men, and right for Englishmen, to be especially moved by the sight or report of disaster when it takes place on the sea. The terror is greater and more inevitable; the hostility of the element never relents; what a human enemy would spare it will engulf without pity or distinction. Sympathy, too, is more strongly touched; it has been common enough for Englishmen to make a good end on land, but the history of our seamen has been a long and almost unbroken record of victory over death and the fear of death, and we had lately no need of further witness to assure us that Lieutenant Mansergh and his men were worthy of all honour and gratitude.

There are, however, public dangers inseparable from strong public feeling: two of the worst are the encouragement of sensationalism and the confusion of thought. The state of the public mind—if we may speak of such a thing—for some time after the loss of the Submarine A1 was a striking example of both of these. Of the sensationalism it is difficult to speak with patience; the disaster happened to be a particularly trying one to bear, owing to the length of time which elapsed before the vessel could be raised for examination; the case was not a very mysterious one, nor could speculation serve any useful purpose. Patience and self-command were imperatively called for. But the class of the mentally unemployed have a coarse