

200 Heligoland to Keeling Island

the Baltic. To concentrate at one point would be to denude the other of effective defence and lay it open to attack. In the Baltic the Russian Fleet was still "in being" and very much on the alert, as the sinking of the German cruiser "Magdeburg" had testified. Though small in numbers, this Fleet was powerful enough to make itself felt, and there is reason to believe that the Germans found it necessary to keep eight or ten of their older battleships in the Baltic to "contain" the Russian squadron. Had the latter been able to defeat the German Fleet in those waters and to secure command of the Eastern area of the Baltic for a few days, the Russians would probably have seized the opportunity to land an army on the German coast, little more than 100 miles north of Berlin itself. Such a move must have played havoc with the whole German scheme of land strategy, and might well have proved decisive. Germany dared not run any such risk, and consequently had no option but to keep a considerable portion of her effective fighting fleet constantly in the Baltic. By so much, therefore, was her fleet in the North Sea weakened, and considering the marked numerical superiority of our own force, under Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, the German Admiral had ample excuse for declining to accept our challenge until he was able to put every available unit in his battle line.

From time to time, however, German vessels, particularly submarines, ventured out into the North Sea for an airing, and our ships were constantly on the watch for a chance of picking up