

# Falkland Fight Most Decisive of Naval Battles.

## Fourth Anniversary Recalls Nelson's Feat of Admiral Sturdee.

December 8 was the anniversary of the naval battle off the Falkland Islands, in which the British squadron under Rear Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee destroyed the German squadron under Von Spee, and amply avenged the sinking of Admiral Cradock's ships off Coronel on Nov. 1, 1914. Cradock's fight against hopeless odds filled the empire with gloom, but five weeks later Von Spee, expecting to find the Canopus an easy prey at Port Stanley in the Falklands, discovered there a superior force and realized too late that he had fallen into a trap. The following account of the battle of the Falkland Islands is taken from A History of the British Navy During the War, adapted from Colonel John Buchanan's history of the war, by H. C. O'Neill, and published by Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd.

The news of the loss of Cradock's ships woke the British Admiralty up to the necessity of dealing finally with Admiral Von Spee. Lord Fisher had succeeded Prince Louis of Battenburg as first sea lord, and one of the earliest acts of his administration was the

dispatch of Rear-Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, who had been chief of the war staff at the admiralty, with a squadron to the South Atlantic. He had with him the Invincible and the Infexible, the two first battle cruisers built by Britain. These vessels had a tonnage of 17,250, a normal speed of twenty-five knots, which could be increased under pressure to twenty-eight, and were each armed with eight 12-inch guns so placed that all eight could be fired on either broadside. Their armor was 7-inch plates. He also had three armored cruisers, the Carnarvon, 10,850 tons, 22.3 knots, and an armament of four 7.5-inch and six 6-inch guns; the Kent and the Cornwall, each of 9,800 tons, 23 knots, and an armament of fourteen 6-inch and eight 12-pounder guns. At sea he was joined by the light cruiser Bristol, which belonged to the west Atlantic station, and was of the same class as the Glasgow, and he was accompanied by the armed liner Macedonia. Somewhere in the South Atlantic he picked up the Glasgow, which had made her way through the

Magellan straits.

A trap was cunningly laid for the victorious Von Spee. If all tales be true, a device was employed which forms an excellent example of the "double bluff." A wireless message was sent to the Canopus bidding her proceed to Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, where, she was informed, she would be perfectly safe, since the new guns for the forts had already arrived. This message was intercepted by the Germans, as it was meant to be, and, as was also intended, they regarded it as a ruse designed to mislead them as to the security of the Canopus. They believed that all talk of forts and guns was nonsense, as it was, and that the Canopus lay in Port Stanley as an easy prey. Admiral Von Spee, therefore, resolved to make a prize of her, and at the same time to capture the wireless station at Port Stanley, which would give him a real strategic advantage. After the battle of Coronel, he had lingered for some time on the coast of Chile, probably waiting for his colliers, but on Nov. 15 he left the island of Juan Fernandez and headed for Cape Horn. The Japanese fleet was beginning to make things awkward for him in the Pacific. His intention, after he had disposed of the Canopus, was to sail across the Atlantic to the South African coast, where he might have caught the Union force which had landed at Ladertitz Bay, and interfered with disastrous effects, in the local war.

Admiral Sturdee's expedition was kept a complete secret, a wonderful achievement when we remember that our ports were full of German spies and that naval information had a knack of finding its way very speedily to the enemy. On the morning of 7th

December the British squadron arrived at Port Stanley, which lies at the eastern corner of the East Island. The Falklands, with their bare brown moors shining with quartz, their endless lochans, their prevailing mists, their grey stone houses, and their population of Scots shepherds, look like a group of the Orkneys or Outer He-

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In coaling. The Canopus, the Glasgow, and the Bristol were in the harbor, while the Invincible, the Infexible, the Carnarvon, Kent and Cornwall lay in the outer gulf.

About daybreak on the morning of the 8th, Admiral Von Spee arrived from the direction of Cape Horn. He had sent one of his light cruisers ahead to scout, and this vessel reported the presence of two British ships, probably the Macedonia and the Kent, which would be the first vessel visible to a ship rounding the islands. Upon this Von Spee gave the order to prepare for battle, expecting to find out the remnants of Cradock's squadron. The Germans advanced in line, the Gneisenau leading, followed by the Nürnberg, the Scharnhorst, the Dresden, and the Leipzig, and steered northeast towards the entrance of the port.

At 8 o'clock the signal station announced the presence of the enemy. It was a clear fresh morning, with a bright sun, and light breezes from the northwest. All our vessels had finished coaling, except the battle cruisers, which had begun only half an hour before. Orders were at once given to get up steam for full speed. The battle cruisers raised steam with oil fuel, and made so dense a smoke that the German lookouts did not detect them. The Germans fired a shell at the wireless station about 9, and the Canopus had a shot at the Scharnhorst over the neck of land, directed by signal officers on shore. At 9:30 on Spee came abreast of the harbor mouth and was able to see the strength of the British squadron. He at once altered his course and put to sea, while Admiral Sturdee's command streamed out in pursuit.

The Line of Battle.

First went the Kent and then the Glasgow, followed by the Carnarvon, the battle cruisers, and the Cornwall. The Germans had two transports with them, the Baden and the Santa Isabel, and these fell back to the south of the island, with the Bristol and the Macedonia in pursuit. The Canopus remained in the harbor. At about 10 o'clock the two forces were some twelve miles apart. Von Spee steering about due east. The Invincible and the Infexible quickly drew ahead but had to slacken speed to twenty knots to allow the cruisers to keep up with them. At 11 o'clock about eleven miles separated the two forces. At five minutes to one we had drawn closer, and opened fire upon the Leipzig, which was the last of the German line.

Von Spee, seeing that flight was impossible, prepared to give battle. So far as the battle cruisers were concerned, it was a foregone conclusion, for they had the greater speed and the longer range. His three light cruisers turned and made off to the south, followed by the Kent, the Glasgow, and the Cornwall, while the Invincible, the Infexible and the Carnarvon engaged the Scharnhorst and the Gneisenau. About 2 o'clock our battle cruisers had the range of the German flagship, and a terrific artillery duel began. The smoke was getting in our way, and Admiral Sturdee used his superior speed to get to the other side of the enemy. We simply pounded the Scharnhorst to pieces, and just after 4 o'clock she listed to port and then turned bottom upwards with her propeller still going round. The battle cruisers and the Carnarvon then concentrated on the Gneisenau, which was steering off to the southeast, and at 6 o'clock she too listed and went under.

Meanwhile the Kent, Glasgow, and Cornwall were hot in pursuit of the three light cruisers, and here was a more equally matched battle. The Dresden, which was farthest to the east, managed to escape. The other two had slightly the advantage of speed of the British ships, but our engineers and stokers worked magnificently, and managed to get twenty-five knots out of the Kent. It was now a thick misty day, with a drizzle of rain, and each duel had consequently the air of a separate battle. The news of the sinking of the Scharnhorst and the Gneisenau put new spirit into our men, and at 7:27 p.m. the Nürnberg, which had been set on fire by the Kent, went down with her guns still firing. The Leipzig, which had to face the Glasgow and the Cornwall, kept afloat till 9 p.m., when she, too, heeled over and sank. As the wet night closed in the battle died away. Only the Dresden, battered and fleeing far out in the southern waters, remained of the proud squadron which at dawn had sailed to what it believed to be an easy victory. The defeat of Cradock in the murky sunset off Coronel had been amply avenged.

Honor For Fight Divided.

The Battle of the Falkland Islands was a brilliant piece of strategy, for a plan, initiated more than a month before and involving a journey across the world, was executed with complete secrecy and precision. The honors must be divided between Sir Doveton Sturdee and the Admiralty at home, which conceived the enterprise. Technically, the sole British was the escape of the Dresden, which could scarcely have been prevented, for the Carnarvon, owing to her inadequate speed, could not join her sister ships in the pursuit of the lighter German vessels, and the Glasgow, the only ship which might have overhauled her, was busy with the Leipzig. The fight had a vital bearing on the post-

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tion of Germany. It annihilated one squadron left to her outside North Sea, and it removed a formidable menace to our trade routes. After December 8 the Dresden and the Karlsruhe were the sole enemy cruisers left at large, for the British navy very fortunately disappeared. These, with the armed merchantmen, the Kronprinz Wilhelm and the Prince Eitel Friedrich, were the only privateers still at work on the high seas.

The British losses were small considering the magnitude of the victory. The Invincible was hit by eight shells, but had no casualties. The Infexible was hit three times, and had one man killed. The cruisers suffered more heavily, the Kent, for example, having four men killed and two wounded, and the Glasgow nine killed and four wounded. Unlike the Germans at Coronel, every effort was made by our ships to save life. The only sign of a lost vessel was at the slightly discolored water. The wreckage floated up with no clinging to it, and boats were lowered and sailors let down the ship's lines to try to rescue the survivors who floated past. The water was cold—about 40 degrees—and probably many of the swimmers grew weak and went under. Albatrosses attacked some of those clinging to the wreckage, pecking at their eyes and forcing them to let go. Albatrosses must have saved a couple hundred men, including the captain of the Gneisenau. Admiral von Spee went down, with two of his sons.

An Officer's Story.

From a graphic description of action by an officer of the Kent, Commander Eric Wharton, we take an extract: "It is near dusk now, 7:30, and have been two hours in action. comes everyone from below, in casemates and turrets, to stare and rejoice, but they are all immediately hustled away to do what can be done to save life. All our boats are manned, and none of them can be paired for an hour. We do not want can with lifeboats, and I'm sorry to say, it's a lousy sea, and draughty cold. All this was beastly. There were so many of them in sight, and we could do so little till our boats were patched. At last we could lose one cutter and the galley, and then life saving was no easy job." (Continued on 11th page)

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