

THE FRINGES OF THE FLEET

in the fairway, and a mined neutral, whose misfortune all bore with exemplary calm, was careened on a near by shoal.

'Suppose there are more mines knocking about?' I suggested.

'We'll hope there aren't,' was the soothing reply. 'Mines are all Joss. You either hit 'em or you don't. And if you do, they don't always go off. They scrape alongside.'

'What's the etiquette then?'

'Shut off both propellers and hope.'

We were dodging various craft down the harbour when a squadron of trawlers came out on our beam, at that extravagant rate of speed which unlimited Government coal always leads to. They were led by an ugly, upstanding, black-sided buccaneer with twelve-pounders.

'Ah! That's the King of the Trawlers. Isn't he carrying dog, too! Give him room!' one said.

We were all in the narrowed harbour mouth together.

'"There's my youngest daughter. Take a look at her!"' some one hummed as a punctilious navy cap slid by on a very near bridge.

'We'll fall in behind him. They're going over to the neutral. Then they'll sweep. By the bye, did you hear about one of the passengers in the neutral yesterday. He was taken off, of course, by a destroyer, and the only thing he said was: