

THE FRINGES OF THE FLEET

men, new shaved and attired, from the gates of Death which had let them through for the fiftieth time, were all of the same fabric—incomprehensible, I should imagine, to the enemy. And the stuff held good throughout all the world—from the Dardanelles to the Baltic, where only a little while ago another batch of submarines had slipped in and begun to be busy. I had spent some of the afternoon in looking through reports of submarine work in the Sea of Marmora. They read like the diary of energetic weasels in an overcrowded chicken-run, and the results for each boat were tabulated something like a cricket score. There were no maiden overs. One came across jewels of price set in the flat official phraseology. For example, one man who was describing some steps he was taking to remedy certain defects, interjected casually: 'At this point I had to go under for a little, as a man in a boat was trying to grab my periscope with his hand.' No reference before or after to the said man or his fate. Again: "Came across a dhow with a Turkish skipper. He seemed so miserable that I let him go.' And elsewhere in those waters, a submarine overhauled a steamer full of Turkish passengers, some of whom, arguing on their allies' lines, promptly leaped overboard. Our boat fished them out and returned them, for she was not killing civilians. In another affair, which included several ships (now at the bottom)