

## CHAPTER XXV

### THE SEA FIGHT OFF THE FALKLANDS

The Battle of Coronel—Dissatisfaction in England—Delirious rejoicings in Berlin—"Der Tag" at last—Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock at the *Delhi* rescue—The *Delhi* and *Calcutta* (Kali's Ghat)—A sinister coincidence—His ill-equipped squadron—First news of the Coronel disaster—Admiralty refuses to credit it—Where was *Canopus*?—Bravery of German sailors—Bravery not incompatible with inhumanity—Immediate action of British Admiralty—Secret departure of Sir F. Doveton Sturdee's squadron—The German spies baffled—The trap that was laid for Von Spee—Sturdee's arrival at Port Stanley—Von Spee's delay en route—He arrives forty-eight hours too late—How his arrival was notified to the British Admiral—How the presence of the British cruisers was masked—The first shots fired—The surprise that awaited Von Spee at the harbour mouth—Admiral Von Spee promptly takes to flight—Admiral Sturdee as promptly goes in pursuit—Curt announcement of the battle and its result—British and German losses compared—The great humanity of the British sailors—Details of the fighting—The encounter between the battle cruisers—The destruction of *Scharnhorst* and the death of Von Spee—*Gneisenau's* sinking described—"A complete wreck, blazing fore and aft"—The rescue of the survivors—Icy cold water and the "vultures of the sea"—The encounters between the light cruisers—*Glasgow* and *Cornwall* against *Leipzig*—The end of *Leipzig* described—How *Dresden* managed to escape—Her subsequent fate—*Kent* pursues *Nuernberg*—How *Kent* made up for her shortage of fuel—*Kent's* narrow escape of total destruction—The end of *Nuernberg*—"British luck was in"—Fury in Germany—What the defeat meant to her—Her method of retaliation—Baby-killing on the East Coast—Other even more pitiful reprisals.

IN November of the year 1914 dissatisfaction was being generally expressed amongst the public, who were unacquainted with Admiralty secrets, at the performances, or rather the non-performances of our fleet. We had been submitted off Coronel, on the coast of Chili, to a severe and humiliating defeat. We had lost not only several important units of our naval fighting force—some not unimportant battleships—but also a large number of men, including, in the person of Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, an invaluable officer, a most capable man, who was universally admired and liked. The rejoicings in the Vaterland were great and boisterous. The "Tag," it was proclaimed, had come at last; in the beerhouses von Tirpitz was being compared to Nelson, and it was pointed out that when the British fleet did venture forth from its hiding-places and give battle to the Germans, defeat and destruction were all that it had to expect.

The study of the story of this battle of Coronel will satisfy any unbiassed person that although certainly there was cause for

satisfaction amongst the Germans at their victory, their rejoicings over our defeat were far more enthusiastic than the facts warranted, and that there was not the least pretext afforded for the general conclusion drawn in the German papers and amongst the public that this battle and its result showed the incontestable superiority of the German fleet. That fact was to be impressed on the Vaterland very shortly afterwards, and in a most striking manner.

Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock had recently distinguished himself, after his eminent services in the Soudan and at the relief of Peking, by his fine work in saving life off the coast of Africa when the unfortunate *Delhi* came to grief, a disaster which, it will be remembered, resulted in the eventual death of the Duke of Fife. The *Delhi* shipwreck had a peculiar interest from the fact that it occurred very shortly after the King of England had declared Kali's Ghat (otherwise Calcutta) no longer the capital of the Indian Empire, and had appointed Delhi to that honourable position. It was commonly remarked amongst Hindoos that in this striking way Kali, the wife of Siva and the goddess of death and slaughter, had avenged Calcutta on the former residence of the Grand Mogul, the Djemma-side town, disgraced by Nana Sahib.

That is superstition, of course, but coincidence is here also remarkable and affords food for reflection. The fact remains that Cradock, who had been active in the *Delhi* rescue, was to find an untimely and unfortunate end. That he was badly equipped for the task which had been set him, to protect the trade routes on the southern coast of South America, is a circumstance which alone palliates the defeat which put a period to his honourable and useful career. A *Good Hope* man wrote towards the end of October :

We think the Admiralty have forgotten their trade-route squadron 10,000 miles from London town. Five German cruisers against us. What's the betting on the field? Pray to your Penates we may prevent them concentrating.

The unfortunate gentleman who wrote these brave and fearless lines was to find his death, with hundreds of shipmates, in the Pacific waters seven days later.

As for Admiral von Spee, the German Pacific Squadron was undoubtedly well equipped.

Cradock and his brother officers knew themselves outclassed, outspeeded, and outgunned in these waters, but if anxiety ever touched their valiant hearts they looked eastwards towards Whitehall. The Admiralty could or would not send according to

its powers. A gentleman who also went down wrote early in October :

From now to the end of the month is the critical time, as it will decide whether we shall have to fight a superior German force coming from the Pacific before we can get reinforcements from home or the Mediterranean. We feel that the Admiralty ought to have a better force here and take advantage of our three-to-two superiority. But we shall fight cheerfully whatever odds we have to face.

The Admiralty did not seem to be troubling greatly, and when the news of the Coronel disaster reached an astounded and dismayed Britain, all that gentlemen at Whitehall could find to say was :

The Admiralty cannot accept these facts as accurate at the present time, for the battleship *Canopus*, which had been sent specially to strengthen Admiral Cradock's squadron and would give him a decided superiority, is not mentioned by them, and further, although five German ships are concentrated in Chilean waters, only three have come into Valparaiso harbour. It is possible, therefore, that when full accounts of the action are received they may considerably modify the German version.

The Admiralty did not know that the "obsolescent" *Canopus* was not with Cradock in the fight. *Canopus* was a slow boat; when new (fourteen years previously) she could do, at a pinch, 18.5 knots an hour. *Canopus* at the time of the Coronel fight was 200 miles off, well out of reach of Von Spee's 8.2 inch guns. *Good Hope* is described as "one of the worst and most expensive ships ever built for the navy in modern times, greatly under-gunned, and a huge target." *Monmouth*, a huge vessel also, was armed with pop-gun 6-inch guns.

It should also be remembered that the German sailors, however much it may please the ignorant to cry them down, are, like their brothers-in-arms of the land forces, exceedingly brave men. Cruel and callous they may be, disregarding humanitarian considerations, but their personal courage can no more be disputed than that of the barbarous Huns to whom we now compare them. Their contempt of death appears to be as absolute as our own. It is possible that that is because they know that if they flinch or waver they will meet death at the hands of their superior officers, but be that as it may, the fact remains that they are brave and fearless men. The tiger is an abominably cruel, basely ferocious brute, but it has indomitable courage. Cruelty and bravery too often go together. Cruelty presupposes a lack of imagination, and a lack of imagination is the surest guarantee against pusillanimity. There was a captain of a Transatlantic liner, a German Naval

Reserve man, who in a blizzard stayed on the bridge night and day for seventy-two hours. It was another Naval Reserve German captain who, off the coast of Sardinia, dived from the bridge into the sea to rescue a wretched steerage passenger woman who was attempting to commit suicide. One knows of dozens of similar cases.

It was reported that on the night of that November day which saw the defeat of Admiral Cradock there was much rejoicing with Hochs! and abundant champagne on board *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst*. Retribution was, however, already shaping herself.

At once on receipt of the news of the Coronel disaster, the Admiralty, which had now passed from the hands of Prince Louis of Battenberg into those of Lord Fisher, decided that Admiral von Spee was at once and finally to be disposed of. The triumphant German Admiral had by that time shifted out of Chilean waters and towards November 15 was making for Cape Horn. He had been informed that our Japanese Allies were looking for him, and were determined to clear him out of the Pacific. On his way to the Horn his wireless picked up a British Admiralty message addressed to *Canopus*, which was to the effect that that ship was to proceed to Port Stanley in the Falkland Islands, where, she was informed, she would be perfectly safe from the German fleet, as the new guns had arrived and the harbour was fully protected. The Germans at once suspected a ruse and read the message to mean that Port Stanley was not fortified, that the British message was pure bluff intended to deceive them, and decided that if they proceeded to Port Stanley they would find in *Canopus* an easy victim and so round off in a complete and orbicular manner the British disaster. In the meanwhile, however, in complete secrecy and with the utmost dispatch, Rear-Admiral Sir Frederick Doveton Sturdee, formerly chief of the War Staff at the Admiralty, had been sent off to the South Atlantic with a squadron. This consisted of *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, both battle-cruisers of 17,259 tonnage, a speed of 25 knots, which could be raised to 28, and carrying eight 12-inch guns, so disposed that the whole eight could be used on one broadside. These two vessels were the first battle-cruisers built in England which carried 7-inch armour plates. Besides these two ships he had with him three armoured cruisers, *Carnarvon*, 10,850 tons, 23 knots, four 7.5-inch and six 6-inch guns, *Kent* and *Cornwall*, each of 9,800 tons, 23 knots, and fourteen 6-inch and eight 12-pounder guns. *Bristol*, a light cruiser similar to *Glasgow*, joined him at sea, and later on *Glasgow*, which had come through the Magellan Straits after her escape from Von Spee, was also picked up.

The trap laid for the German Admiral was completely successful. The German spies in England were entirely in ignorance of Sir Doveton Sturdee's departure, and it pleases one to imagine what observations must have been addressed to these gentry by their employers when it was discovered how they had failed to notify Kiel and Berlin of the most important movement that had yet been made by the British fleet.

The Battle of Coronel having taken place on November 1, the fleet of retribution, under Sturdee, arrived at Port Stanley on December 7, the trap baited for the triumphant Von Spee with sluggish *Canopus*. Port Stanley was then on the look-out for the German fleet, for the Governor of the Falklands had been warned that he must expect a raid, as it was known that Von Spee desired to lay his hands on the wireless station there. Apart from that he desired to finish off with *Canopus*, and after that it was his intention to cross the Atlantic and give a hand to the land forces of the Fatherland at Lüderitz Bay. He arrived with his squadron off Port Stanley twenty-four hours after Sturdee had got there. Sturdee was coaling at the time; *Canopus*, *Glasgow*, and *Bristol* were in the inner harbour, to which a deep-cut gulf leads from the outer sea. In this outer gulf were lying *Invincible*, *Inflexible*, *Carnarvon*, *Kent*, and *Cornwall*.

Later it was reported that the first sight of the approaching German fleet was obtained by a lady, a resident on the heights above Port Stanley, and that she promptly dispatched a message to the British Admiral, who acted upon the information thus supplied. The lady's statement and portrait have been published, and if the facts are as stated, she undoubtedly rendered a considerable service to her country. At the same time it is obvious that Von Spee was completely in the dark as to the presence of Sturdee and his fleet. Over the low-lying shores of Port Stanley harbour he could descry, as he rounded the islands, *Macedonia* and *Kent*, and he probably expected and hoped to find *Canopus* and *Glasgow*, the latter in a crippled condition, under the fictitious shelter of the non-existent great new guns on Port Stanley Fort. He at once decided to give battle, and approached in the direction of the lighthouse—which stands at the entrance to the gulf—sailing due north, in the following order: *Scharnhorst*, *Nuernberg*, *Gneisenau*, *Dresden*, and *Leipzig*, accompanied by transports *Baden* and *Santa Isabel*.

The presence of the enemy having been communicated to Admiral Sturdee at 8 a.m., orders were immediately given to mask the presence of the battle-cruisers by the consumption of oil-fuel, which, while raising steam, filled the whole harbour with

a thick black smoke, effectively hiding from any enemy outlook the number and nature of the ships in the harbour. Hostilities began at nine o'clock, when the Germans fired a shot at the wireless station. *Canopus* then gave the enemy a taste of its quality and fired at *Scharnhorst* over the intervening spit of land. Half-an-hour later Von Spee's squadron appeared before the harbour mouth, and the German Admiral had the unpleasant surprise of seeing what was waiting for him. He immediately gave orders to about ship and to steam away at full speed in a N.E. by E. direction. As promptly did Admiral Sturdee give orders to the British ships to follow in pursuit.

For the rest, here, in Sturdee's own words, is an account of that memorable engagement, the first news of which reached England in the form of the following curt announcement :

At 7.30 a.m. on December 8 the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Nuernberg*, *Leipzig*, and *Dresden* were sighted near the Falkland Islands by a British squadron under Vice-Admiral Sir Frederick Doveton Sturdee. An action followed, in the course of which the *Scharnhorst*, flying the flag of Admiral Graf von Spee, the *Gneisenau*, and the *Leipzig* were sunk. The *Dresden* and the *Nuernberg* made off during the action, and are being pursued. Two colliers were also captured. The Vice-Admiral reports that the British casualties were very few in number. Some survivors have been rescued from the *Gneisenau* and *Leipzig*.

With regard to the British casualties, according to *The Fleet Annual* only seven men, of whom four were privates, one a stoker, and two A.B.s, perished in an engagement which accounted for so many hundreds of Germans and would have accounted for many more had it not been for British humanity. A striking picture is that from a photograph taken by a naval officer who was engaged in the battle, which shows us boats from the *Inflexible* and *Invincible* picking up survivors from *Gneisenau*. It appears that when this ship went down there were 200 unwounded survivors who were struggling in the waters, but of these many died from the shock and exposure to the cold water before they could be reached by the British boats. Sturdee relates that—



Prisoners of war from the *Gneisenau* report that by the time the ammunition was expended some 600 men had been killed and wounded. The surviving officers and men were all ordered on deck and told to provide themselves with hammocks and any articles that could support them in the water. Every effort was made to save life as quickly as possible, both by boats and from the ships; lifebuoys were thrown and ropes lowered, but only a proportion could be rescued. The *Invincible* alone rescued 108 men, fourteen of whom were found to be dead after being brought on board.

Of the crew of the *Leipzig*, which sank in a mass of flames, seven officers and eleven men were rescued at great risk to the rescuers, and from the sinking *Nuernberg* twelve men were saved, but of these only seven survived their immersion. One desires to give a prominent place in this narrative to such acts of chivalry and kindness as these on the part of the British sailors, so different from the conduct of the Germans on similar occasions, in the faint hope that possibly some day the latter may awaken to some sense of shame for their misdeeds and some impulse to reform.

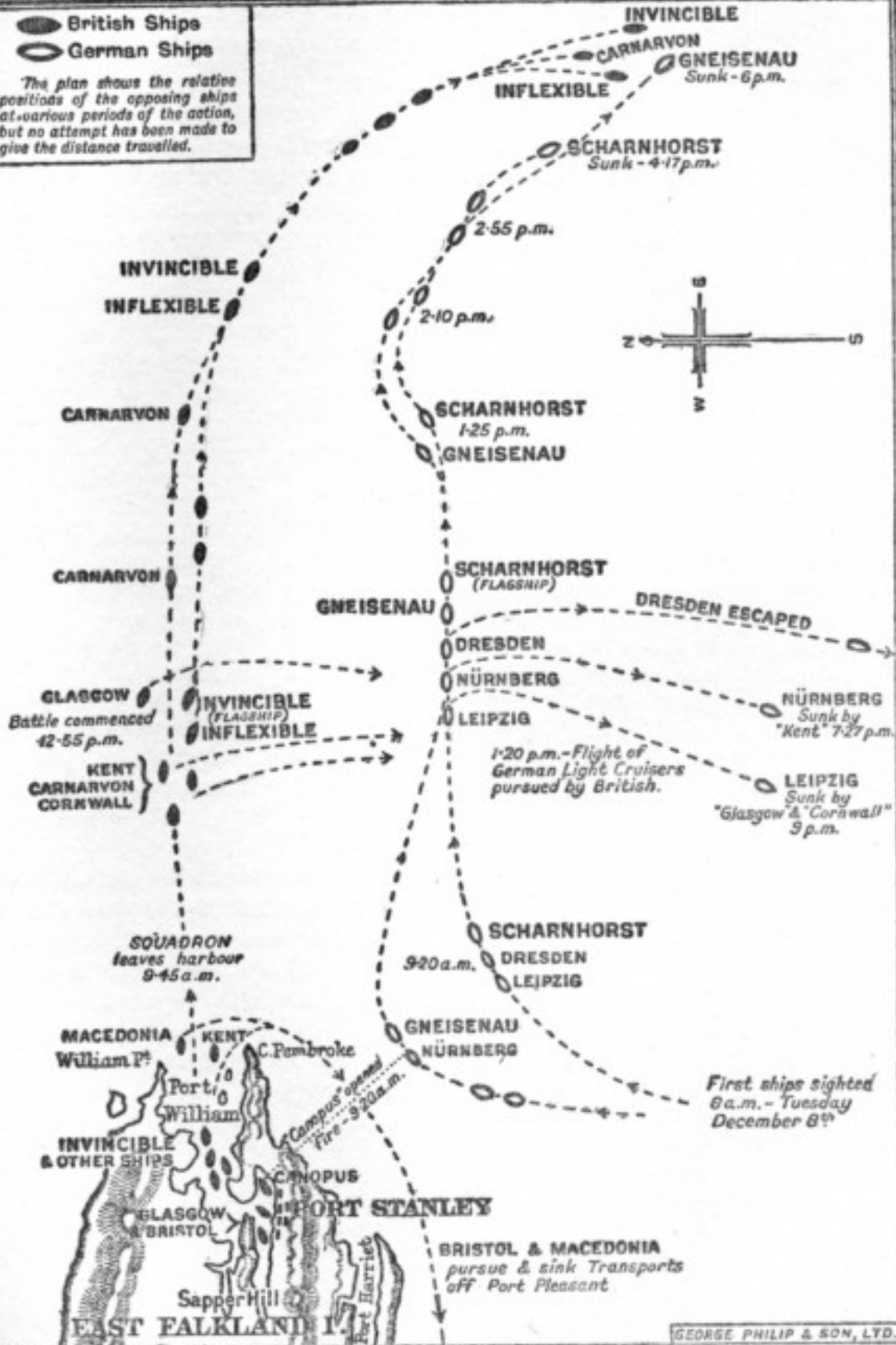
Von Spee having shown his heels, at 9.45, the British squadron steamed out of the harbour in pursuit. *Carnarvon*, on which Rear-Admiral Archibald P. Stoddart flew his flag, came first, followed by *Inflexible*, *Invincible*, and *Cornwall*. *Kent* and *Glasgow* had been sent on five minutes earlier to observe the enemy's movements. The morning was a beautiful one, with a calm sea, a bright sun, and a slight breeze from N.E.

Thirty-five minutes later the chase began in real earnest. *Inflexible* and *Invincible* passed into the van, and the pursuit continued at full speed till 11.15, when speed was eased to 20 knots, in order, as Sturdee writes in his dispatch, to enable the other slower cruisers to get into position. It has since been pointed out that it was owing to this slackening of speed at that point that the victory was not as complete as it would otherwise have been, inasmuch as it was thanks to this that *Dresden* temporarily escaped. This escape was at the time when Admiral Sturdee's dispatch was published described as a "regrettable incident," and the same writer points out that this escape had two unfortunate results. For one thing, several ships were occupied in searching for her—ships which might otherwise have been profitably employed; and for another thing, it indirectly led to the loss of a fine Japanese cruiser. "It seems quite likely," is the comment of the naval correspondent of the *Times*, "that Admiral Sturdee has since regretted those brilliant hours in the forenoon when he slowed down to enable the other cruisers to get into station." It was hardly to be expected of the Admiral that he could foresee that a few hours later, owing to the upspringing of a mist and the sky becoming overclouded, the "visibility" would be much reduced.

The battle proper began at 12.20, *Inflexible*, *Invincible*, and *Glasgow* taking part in it, *Bristol* and *Macedonia* pursuing the transports whom we saw accompanying the German fleet to port as it sailed up to the harbour mouth. The signal to "open fire and engage the enemy" was given at 12.47. *Inflexible* fired the opening shot, which was directed against the light cruiser *Leipzig*.

-  British Ships
-  German Ships

The plan shows the relative positions of the opposing ships at various periods of the action, but no attempt has been made to give the distance travelled.



MAP ILLUSTRATING THE NAVAL FIGHT IN THE SOUTH ATLANTIC



then about 16,500 yards away. *Invincible* followed suit against the same ship. Twenty minutes later *Leipzig* turned tail and made off to the south-west accompanied by *Nuernberg* and *Dresden* and hotly pursued by *Kent*, *Glasgow*, and *Cornwall*. *Invincible* and *Inflexible* now turned their guns on *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*, which ran away, the speed being estimated at 24 knots. At this period the distance between the British and the German armoured cruisers was 13,500 yards. Twenty minutes later the Germans had put another 3,000 yards between themselves and the British. A second chase ensued, the Germans making to the south-east, but at a quarter to three the British battle-cruisers were able to open fire again, and at five to three *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* were firing back. They seem never to have had a chance from the very outset. Presently *Scharnhorst* catches fire forward and her firing slackens, *Gneisenau* is "badly hit by *Inflexible*." At half-past three *Scharnhorst* is in a very bad way. Sturdee thus describes it :

At 3.30 p.m. the *Scharnhorst* led round about 10 points to starboard ; just previously her fire had slackened perceptibly, and one shell had shot away her third funnel. . . . The effect of the fire on the *Scharnhorst* became more and more apparent in consequence of smoke from fires and escaping steam ; at times a shell would cause a large hole to appear in her side, through which could be seen a dull red glow of flame. At 4.4 p.m. the *Scharnhorst*, whose flag remained flying to the last, suddenly listed heavily to port, and within a minute it became clear that she was a doomed ship ; for the list increased very rapidly until she lay on her beam ends, and at 4.17 p.m. she disappeared.

*Gneisenau* manfully continued the fight against the two British cruisers, now alone. She fought on for about an hour, her last effective effort being at 5.15 p.m., when one of her shells struck the *Invincible*. In the meanwhile her forward funnel had been shot away, her firing had greatly diminished, and it was obvious that she was in serious straits.

*Gneisenau's* death-agony is described as follows by Admiral Sturdee :

At 5.30 she turned towards the flag-ship with a heavy list to starboard and appeared stopped, with steam pouring from her escape pipes and smoke from shell and fires rising everywhere. About this time I ordered the signa "Cease Fire," but before it was hoisted the *Gneisenau* opened fire again and continued to fire from time to time with a single gun.

Well may officers present speak of the Germans as having fought like heroes.

Sturdee continues :

At 5.40 p.m. the three ships closed in on the *Gneisenau* and, at this time, the flag flying at her fore-truck was apparently hauled down, but the flag at the peak continued flying. At 5.50 p.m. "Cease Fire" was made.

The end came ten minutes later.

At 6 p.m. the *Gneisenau* heeled over very suddenly, showing the men gathered on her decks and then walking on her side as she lay for a minute on her beam-ends before sinking.

Before she sank *Gneisenau* was a complete wreck. One of her officers reported—according to one authority—that before the end his ship had no upper deck left, every man there having been killed, and one turret blown bodily overboard by a 12-inch lyddite shell. *Invincible* was hit eighteen times, but had no casualties. *Inflexible* was only hit three times, but lost one life. The end of *Gneisenau* seems to have been accompanied by every detail of horror. The vultures of the sea, *i.e.* the albatrosses, attacked the drowning German sailors, seeking to peck out their eyes. The cold killed many men before the British could reach them. It is a curious illustration of one side of the German character that these sufferings of the German sailors are being held in grudge against us, who did all that men could do to rescue our defeated enemies. At Coronel the Germans calmly let the British drown; not one rope was thrown out, not a boat was lowered. And while the exultation was great at the death of Sir Christopher Cradock in Germany, the death under precisely similar circumstances of Count von Spee aroused the greatest indignation against the British. It was stated that he was trapped to his death by a ruse, and that his death was the result of a murder. The fact that the British cruisers outranged the German cruisers and that the speed of the former was greater is also held up as a proof of our want of fair-play.

We left the light German cruisers fleeing to the south-east, *Dresden* leading, and *Leipzig* and *Nuernberg* following in line. In hot pursuit of these came *Glasgow*, *Cornwall*, and *Kent*, *Glasgow* fast outstripping her sister ships. *Carnarvon*, a slower boat, stood by the armoured cruisers in their fight with *Gneisenau* and *Scharnhorst*. The chase of the light cruisers began at 1 p.m., and it was not until two hours later that the *Glasgow* got sufficiently close to the *Leipzig* to open fire. The range was 12,000 yards. About an hour later *Cornwall* had come up within range of *Leipzig*, and at once opened fire upon her. The battle lasted for three hours. At a little past seven o'clock *Leipzig* was on fire fore and aft, and the British cruisers ceased firing. Two hours later *Leipzig* turned over and disappeared.

There exists in a letter from one of the officers on board the *Cornwall* a most graphic description of the last moments of the *Leipzig*.

At about 9 p.m. she loosed off a rocket as a sign of surrender, and so we lowered what boats we could and sent them to her aid. I shall never in all my life forget the sight of that ship going down. All the ship's company had gathered on the foc's'le and one or two boats were still being lowered when the captain leant over the side of the bridge and said: "It's no good, she's going." The men in the boat which was half lowered stood up and every face was turned towards the blazing ship. You can't imagine what she was like. It was nearly dark, about 9.25 p.m., and the red glare from the flames lit up the remains of what had been the home of some 300 human beings a few hours before. As we saw her then she lay like an inferno on the sea. She had only the veriest stump of her second funnel left. The other two had been knocked completely away. Her mainmast was gone, and the upper half of her foremast. Aft she was blazing like an oil-factory, and forward she was also blazing furiously. Her ports showed up like faint red circles, and occasional spurts of steam and sparks ascended from her waist. How any ship could have floated like that Heaven only knows, and how any one can have lived through it simply astounds me. Suddenly she heeled to port and her stump of a foremast slowly dipped into the water as she sank with scarcely a ripple by the head. There was no cheering or anything of that sort. We just stood there in absolute silence, and personally I thought of the poor devils who had been chased for five months only to end like that. There is no doubt whatsoever that they fought like heroes. As for ourselves, they hit us fair and square eighteen times, and yet we had not one single casualty.

Meanwhile the *Dresden*, which had somewhat of a start on her less fortunate sister cruisers, had managed to make good her escape. She was however caught three months later, on March 14, to be exact, off Juan Fernandez, which she had left so blithely on November 15, in pursuit of the shattered remnants of Cradock's squadron. *Glasgow* and *Kent* caught her there and sank her in five minutes.

While *Glasgow* and *Cornwall* were pursuing *Leipzig*, *Kent* had been ordered as from half-past three to engage *Nuernberg*, which was nearest to her. *Nuernberg* evidently hoped to get away like the *Dresden*, and, as a matter of fact, had a very good chance of doing so, for *Kent* was woefully short of fuel. The captain however ordered the boats to be broken up and fed into the furnaces. "The order was obeyed, the boats were broken up, smeared with oil, and passed into the furnaces. After them went the wooden ladders, the doors, and the chests of drawers from the officers' cabins." In this way *Kent* was able to get up a speed of 24 knots.

*Kent's* pursuit of *Nuernberg* and their running fight lasted about four hours. It was at 7.27 that, blazing fore and aft, the German cruiser went down with her guns still firing. The *Kent* sailors were able to rescue seven of her brave crew. To this bravery one of the officers on the *Kent* bears striking testimony. "They were a brave lot," he writes; "one man stood aft and held the ensign flying in his hands until the ship went under." *Kent* lost four men killed and twelve wounded, and but for the heroism of Sergeant Charles Mayes might have been entirely lost with every man on board her. His action is thus recorded: "A shell burst and ignited some cordite charges in the casemate, and a flash of flame went down hoist into the ammunition passage. Sergeant Mayes picked up a charge of cordite and threw it away. He then got hold of a firehose and flooded the compartment, extinguishing the fire in some empty shell-bags which were burning." For this brave act he was awarded the Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.

It was one single shell which caused most of the casualties on *Kent*, which did not get within range of *Nuernberg* until an hour and a half after the chase began. Firing went on from the *Nuernberg* until half-past six, and then *Kent* ceased firing also, but as *Nuernberg* would not haul down her colours *Kent* opened fire again at a range of 3,300 yards. "Fire was finally stopped five minutes later on, the colours being hauled down, and every preparation was made to save life." This was not much, for it will be remembered that *Kent* had burned her boats after her coal had run short. "We do what we can with life-buoys and lumps of wood paid astern, but it's mighty little; it's lippy sea and dreadfully cold. The 'mollyhawks' are swooping around."

It is perhaps hardly necessary to mention that while the main action was going on *Bristol* and *Macedonia* had effectually disposed of the other two German units, the transports *Baden* and *Santa Isabel*, which they sunk after the removal of the crew.

If the superstition amongst sailors that there are lucky and unlucky captains have any foundation in fact, it must be admitted that Admiral Sturdee was greatly favoured by good fortune. It was almost a miracle, in view of the swarms of German spies in every naval base, that not an inkling of his movements ever reached the ears of Admiral von Spee. It was certainly a sign that British luck was in, as an officer on *Cornwall* put it, that Von Spee dallied en route from Juan Fernandez, in spite of his eagerness to raid the Falklands and make them his base.

When one remembers that the action in the Pacific was fought on November 1, and that the German fleet did not appear off the Falklands until

December 8, when they were free to have come any day previous to that, and that the British fleet had only arrived twenty-four hours earlier, it does seem obvious that our luck was in. If we had arrived later and they had arrived twenty-four hours sooner, the Falkland Islands would have been in German hands, and hundreds of lives would have been lost in regaining them.

Von Spee's delay cost him his entire squadron with the exception of one unit, the loss of his life and that of his two sons, and of over 2,000 Germans, against seven or eight British killed and four wounded.

The outburst of fury in Germany when the news became generally known, which was not for a considerable time after the event, was unparalleled. Some of the comments in the German papers read like the ravings of paranoiacs. And the fact is that the Battle of the Falkland Islands dealt a terrible blow to Germany's position as a naval Power. It wiped out the only squadron she had left, outside the fleet buried in the Kiel Canal, and removed all danger to British trade routes. The work was completed when *Bremen* disappeared, and *Dresden* and *Karlsruhe* amongst cruisers, and *Kronprinz Wilhelm* and *Prince Eitel Friedrich*, were successively disposed of.

So great was the German fury that even the cool and cautious heads of the German Admiralty seemed temporarily to have lost all self-control. There can be no doubt that the attack on our East Coast on December 16 was by way of retaliation, a foolish act dictated by spite rather than by policy.

The official announcement with regard to this raid was to the effect that :

This morning a German cruiser force made a demonstration upon the Yorkshire coast, in the course of which they shelled Hartlepool, Whitby, and Scarborough. A number of their fastest ships were employed for this purpose, and they remained about an hour on the coast. They were engaged by patrol vessels on the spot. As soon as the presence of the enemy was reported a British patrolling squadron endeavoured to cut them off. On being sighted by British vessels the Germans retired at full speed, and, favoured by the mist, succeeded in making good their escape.

A number of civilians, mainly women and children, were killed on this occasion by the German squadron. It was a pitiful revenge for the defeat off the Falklands. Much of Germany's latest naval activity, which has been strictly limited to submarine work, has been even more pitiful.