

ATLANTIC SINKING.

I was on my first trip as an apprentice to the Booth Line, when at 11-50 a.m., Sept. 30th, we sighted what we *believed* to be a British ship, steaming towards us at full speed. We had no reason to suspect any danger, and our flag was hoisted.

Some time before reaching us, the raiding pocket battleship, for such it was, sent a seaplane towards us, and we were stopped by machine gun fire. Apart from the mate, who received a wound in one hand, nobody else was injured, and no serious damage was done.

It was only then that we, on the S.S. "Clement," of 5,000 tons, realised that we were face to face with one of Nazi Germany's most powerful ships, the "Graf Spee." Immediately our master gave orders for abandoning the "Clement" and there followed a great bustle aboard ship.

There was no time to waste and no hope of saving kit, but several of the men made a dash to secure some personal comfort. I managed to secure my sextant, and from a drawer, which contained six new white suits, I saved pipe and tobacco. One of the crew, who was wearing only shirt and trousers, recovered two hundred cigarettes from his bunk.

The order for abandoning ship having been given, boats were lowered and we rowed clear

of the ship. A mile away we rested oars and waited to see the last of the "Clement." As we waited, a picket boat was sent from the battleship to make prisoners of our captain and chief engineer.

Then the guns of the "Graf Spee" opened fire on the "Clement" and sunk her. The last we saw of her was with her stern going up into the air and she disappearing in a vertical dive.

It was then that we hoisted sail, and with the help of a small compass, made as best we could for the Brazilian coast. Throughout the long, cold night three of our boats clung together and steered in a westerly direction. A fourth boat was lost in the early evening but, as we heard later, was rescued by a Brazilian ship. During the night another boat was lost because of superior sailing qualities, which enabled her to leave the others behind.

On the morning of Sunday, October 1st, land was sighted. Imagine our disappointment on discovering that it was an almost uninhabited spot with a rocky shore, which made landing impossible. Again we rowed out to sea, and this time steered a more southerly course. At daybreak, land was again sighted, and we were overjoyed to see Maccio lighthouse right ahead of us, with the prospect of substantial food, after fifty hours of sailing in an open boat, and living on condensed milk, water and ship's biscuits.

Ashore we enjoyed a much needed meal and a "luxurious" shave, and were lodged in hotels until we left for Pernambuco.

The journey of one hundred and twenty miles to Pernambuco was no sweet experience, although it was made through sugar-cane country. It took twelve hours on a British-owned railway, resembling the English Great Western in name only. At a meal during the journey, we ate shark for a fish course. The people at one station brought us heaps of chicken sandwiches and big baskets of oranges. At every station we were accosted by beggars, who went away empty-handed, as we had nothing to give them.

At Pernambuco we obtained fresh clothes and after five days in the port, we joined the Royal Mail steamer "Almanzora," which was bound for the great city of Rio de Janeiro.

In Rio we stayed with British residents. They and the Brazilians did everything in

their power to entertain us. The sailing club lent us boats: picnics were arranged: and trips to many places of interest.

Later we rejoined the "Almanzora," and after an uneventful passage, reached England just six weeks after the sinking of our ship.

A. CROFT-BAKER, 1937-39.



THE DAILY TASK.

Amongst destroyers there is a great deal of cockiness as to whose is the best flotilla. Well, to stop all this I'm writing this article showing who the top dogs really are.

I am in a destroyer of the "Tribal" class, which is the best class in the Navy. In fact, we had to be called back to home waters to show other flotillas how to sink U boats, which brings me to my little effort.

We had just returned home from a trip in the North Sea, wearing semi-tropical kit, for what we thought would be a short rest. We had one night, that was all. Having oiled, we dropped anchor and settled down for the night's entertainment, when a signal was handed out. This had arrived from F.O. I.C. stating that we were to hunt and destroy a U boat operating off —— on our convoy route. We were to sail at 03.00 and be at the R/V at daylight.

At 03.00 the ship weighed anchor and proceeded to sea in company with "Cossack," who was in charge of the operation. My day started with a loud explosion which sent a quiver through the ship and a quiver down my spine. Almost at once I realised we had started our day's work. I hopped out of my bunk, threw my clothes on and went to see what was going on. The "Cossack" had dropped one charge or "tulip" to keep the U boat down. She then signalled us to carry out a deliberate attack. This we did, checking our bearing and keeping the U boat right ahead the whole time. On reaching the distance of 100 yards from the position of the U boat we increased speed and dropped one pattern of five "tulips." These having exploded we turned round and came back to the spot very slowly to pick up any traces of debris or survivors. All we could see was dead or stunned fish and a little oil. This may have been pumped out by the U boat in hope