

# THE VICTORY AT SEA

By ADMIRAL WILLIAM SOWDEN SIMS



## Our Subchasers in the Adriatic

**American Subchasers Take Brilliant Part in Destruction of Durazzo—Two Austrian U-Boats Sunk, One by Chaser No. 129 and One by Chasers No. 215 and 128—Thanks of British and Italians for Gallant Work of Our Subchasers in Protecting Cruisers that Shelled Austrian Military Base.**

On September 28th, 1918, Captain Nelson received the following communication from the commander of the Allied naval forces at Brindisi, Commodore W. A. H. Kelly, R.N.:

"Can you hold twelve chasers ready to leave Corfu to-morrow (Sunday) for special service? They should have stores for four days. If unavoidable, barrage force may be reduced during their absence. Request reply. Further definite orders will be sent Sunday afternoon."

To this Captain Nelson sent an answer which was entirely characteristic:

"Yes."

The captain well knew what the enterprise was to which this message referred. The proposed undertaking was one which was very close to his heart and one which he had constantly urged. The Austrian port of Durazzo, on the Adriatic, at that time was playing an important part in the general conflict. It was a base by which Germany and Austria had sent supplies to their ally Bulgaria; and in September the Entente had started the campaign against Bulgaria which finally ended in the complete humiliation of that country. The destruction of Durazzo as a base would greatly assist this operation. Several ships lay in the harbor; there were many buildings used for army stores; the destruction of all these, as well as the docks and military works, would render the port useless. The bombardment of Durazzo was therefore the undertaking for which the assistance of our subchasers had been requested.

### Plan to Shell Durazzo.

It was estimated that about one hour's heavy shelling would render this port valueless as an Austrian base; and to accomplish this destruction the Italians had detailed three battle cruisers, the San Giorgio, the Pisa, and the San Marco, and the British three light scout cruisers, the Lowestoft, the Dartmouth, and the Weymouth. According to the plan agreed upon the Italian ships would arrive at Durazzo at about ten o'clock on Wednesday morning, October 2nd, bombard the work for an hour and then return to Brindisi; when they had finished, it was proposed that the British cruisers should take their places, bombard for an hour and likewise retire.

The duty which had been assigned to the subchasers in this operation was an important one. The Austrians had a considerable force of submarines at Durazzo; and it was to be expected that they would send them to attack the bombarding warships. The chasers, therefore, were to accompany the cruisers, in order to fight any submarine which attempted to interfere with the game.

"Remember the life of these battle cruisers depends upon your vigilance and activity," said Captain Nelson in the instructions issued to the officers who commanded the little vessels.

### Subchasers Slip Through Net.

At nine o'clock that Sunday evening twelve chasers slipped through the net at Corfu and started across the Adriatic; they sailed in "column," or single file, Captain Nelson heading the procession in sub-chaser 95, his second in command, Lieut.-Commander Bastedo, coming next in chaser 215. The tiny fleet hardly suggested to the observer anything in the nature of military operations; they looked more like a group of motor launches out for a summer cruise. The next morning they arrived at Brindisi, the gathering place of all the Allied vessels which were to participate in the operation—that same Brindisi (or Brundisium) which was one of the most famous ports of antiquity, the town from which Augustus and Antony, in 42 B.C., started on the ex-

## pedition which, at the battle of Phillipi, was to win them the mastery of the ancient world. Upon arriving, Captain Nelson went ashore for a council with Commodore Kelly, who commanded the British cruisers, and other Allied officers. When he returned Captain Nelson's face was glowing with happiness and expectation.

"It's going to be a real party, boys," he informed his subordinate officers.

Two days were spent at Brindisi, completing preparations; on Tuesday evening Capt. Nelson called all his officers for a meeting on board

chasers left Brindisi, steering a straight course to Durazzo. The night was very dark the harbor was black also with the smoke from the cruisers and other craft, which were making preparations to get away. After steaming for a few hours, the officers, with their glasses, obtained their first glimpse of Durazzo; at this time there was nothing in sight except the chasers, as the larger ships had not yet arrived.

Captain Nelson knew that there were two or three Austrian destroyers at Durazzo, and his first efforts were devoted to attempts to persuade them to come out and give battle. With this idea in mind, the chasers engaged in what they called a "war dance" before the port; they began turning rapidly in a great circle, but

screen to the Italian cruisers while the bombardment was under way. One unit, three boats, was stationed at Cape Pall, to the north, to prevent any submarines leaving Durazzo from attacking British cruisers, which were to approach the scene of activities from that quarter, and another unit, three boats, was stationed off Cape Legli. Thus the two critical capes were covered against submarine surprises, and the attacking vessels themselves were effectively screened.

### The Shelling Begins.

The Italian cruisers sailed back and forth for about an hour, blasting away at Durazzo, destroying shipping in the harbor, knocking down military buildings, and devastating the place on a liberal scale, all the time screened in this operation by our chasers. Meantime unit B, commanded by Lieutenant-Commander Bastedo, had started for its station at

Cape Pall. The Austrian shore batteries at once opened upon the tiny craft, the water in their neighborhood being generously churned up by the falling shells.

Meanwhile the British cruisers, after steaming for a while east, turned south in order to take up the bombardment station which, according to the prearranged programme, the Italian warships were about to abandon. The three screening chasers were steaming in column, No. 129 bringing up the rear. Suddenly this little boat turned to the right and started scampering in the direction of some apparently very definite object. It moved so abruptly and hastily that it did not take the time even to signal to its associates the cause of its unexpected manoeuvre.

### A Submarine Spotted.

On board No. 215 there was some question as to what should be done,

no mystery as to the cause of the feathery disturbance. It was made by a periscope; it was moving with considerable speed also, entirely ignoring the subchasers and shaping its course directly toward the advancing British cruisers. Commander Bastedo forgot all about sub-chaser 129 which apparently was after game of its own, and headed his own boat in the direction of this little column of spray. In a few seconds the periscope itself became visible; Commander Bastedo opened fire at it with his port gun; at the second shot a column of water and air arose about six feet—a splendid geyser which informed the pursuer that the periscope had been shattered. By this time the third chaser, No. 128, was rushing at full speed.

### "That Got Him!"

The submarine now saw that all chance of attacking the British ships

Commander Bastedo and his associates remembered the 129, which, though the water on an independent course of her own. In the midst of an excitement there came a message on this boat:

"Submarine sighted!"

"Then a second afterward came another message:

"My engines are disabled."

In a short time Bastedo had reached the boat.

"Where is the submarine?"

"We just sank it," was the answer. No. 129 had dropped eight depth charges, one directly over the Austrian boat; in the water thrown up the officers had counted seven pieces of metal plates, and the masses of oil and bubbles that presently arose completed the story of the destruction. Meanwhile the British cruisers had taken up their station at Durazzo and were finishing the work that made this place useless as a military headquarters.

Not a man in the whole American force was injured; in a brief time the excitement was all over, and the great ships, screened again by the wasps of chasers, started back to Brindisi. The impression made upon our Allies was well expressed in the congratulatory message sent to me in London by Commodore Kelly, who commanded the British cruisers in this action.

"Their conduct," he said, "was beyond praise. They returned safely without casualties. They thoroughly enjoyed themselves."

And from the Italians came this message:

"Italian naval general staff expresses highest appreciation of useful and efficient work performed by United States chasers in protecting major vessels during action against Durazzo; also vivid admiration of their brilliant and clever operations which resulted in sinking two enemy submarines."

### Subchasers Most Efficient as War Ends.

The war was now drawing to a close; a day before the Allied squadrons started for Durazzo Bulgaria surrendered; about two weeks after the attack Austria had given up the ghost. The subchasers were about this time just getting into their stride; the cessation of hostilities, however, ended their careers at the very moment when they had become most useful. A squadron of thirty-six, under the command of Capt. Arthur J. Hepburn reached Queens-town in September, but, though it had several interesting contacts with the enemy, and is credited with sending one German home badly damaged, the armistice was signed before it had really settled down to work.

The final spectacular appearance was at Gibraltar, in the last four days of the war. The surrender of Austria had left the German submarines stranded in the Adriatic without a base; and they started home by way of the Mediterranean and Gibraltar. A squadron of eighteen chasers had just arrived at the Azores, on the way to reinforce the flotilla at Plymouth; seven of these were at once despatched to Gibraltar on the chance that they might bar the passage of these U-boats. They reached this post at the storm season; yet they went out in the hardest gales and had several exciting contacts with the fleeing Germans. The records show that five submarines attempted to get through the straits; there is good evidence that two of these were sunk, one by the British patrol and one by our chasers.

(To Be Continued.)

Copyright, 1920, by the World's Work. The copyright of these articles in Great Britain is strictly reserved by Pearson's Magazine, London; without their permission no quotation may be made. Published by special arrangement with the McClure Newspaper Syndicate.

A refreshment tray to be clamped to the side of an automobile has been patented by a Nebraska inventor.

**Hood's Sarsaparilla**  
**Makes Food Taste Good**  
**Creates an Appetite**  
**Aids Digestion**  
**Purifies the Blood**

Promotes assimilation so as to secure full nutritive value of food, and to give strength to the whole system. A well-known Justice of the Peace in Indiana says Hood's Sarsaparilla made "food taste good," as after taking three bottles he eats three hearty meals a day, works hard and sleeps well. It will help you to do this. Fifty years' phenomenal sales prove its merit. Prepared by educated pharmacists. Get a bottle today.



SEMAPHORE FROM THE CROW'S NEST. While subchasers were on duty in the war zone a lookout was posted in the crow's nest, the elevation giving him a wide horizon.



This drawing shows the listening device as used on the subchasers, the lower end of the T-tube being under water.



TAKING A SIGHT. The rolling and pitching of a sub-chaser made navigation difficult, but by bracing oneself, a sight could be taken from which a position could be worked out. Almost none of the officers who commanded these subchasers had any knowledge of navigation before the war, yet they took their little ships to Europe and back with gratifying efficiency.



THE OFFICERS AND CREW OF A SUBCHASER. At sea a sub-chaser found it impossible to preserve the spick and span appearance of the dreadnaught, but once in port the little ship was thoroughly cleaned and the men when in their "liberty blues" compared favorably with any others in the navy.

The British destroyer Badger, to give them all the details of the forthcoming "party." If there had been any flagging spirits in that company when the speech began—which I do not believe—all depression had vanished when "Jugy" had finished his remarks; every officer left with his soul filled by the same joy of approaching battle as that which possessed his chief.

A Dark Night For a Journey. At 2.30 Wednesday morning the

had gone, and turned to the south in an effort to get away with a whole skin. But the two subchasers, 215 and 128, quickly turned again and started for their prey; soon both were dropping depth charges and shooting their "Y" guns; and a huge circle of the sea was a mass of explosions, whirling water, mighty eruptions of foam, mist and debris—for in the mass, steel plates and other wreckage flew from the depths into the air.

"That got him!" cried the executive officer from the deck of 215, while the crew lifted up its voices in a shout that was reminiscent of a college yell.

It was not until this moment that



ON DECK AT SEA. The subchasers proved to be very seaworthy and heavy weather seldom prevented the performance of their tasks, but even in fair weather they rolled badly, and when the weather was heavy their actions were amazing.