

SUBMARINE'S FINE ACHIEVEMENT.

VOYAGE HOME AFTER BEING MINED.

300 MILES OF PERIL.

The following article by Mrs. Jane Anderson, a well-known American writer, describes a remarkable feat of courage and seamanship on the part of the officers and crew of a British submarine—

In a certain dockyard in England there is to be found a splendid tribute to the prowess of British submarines and the skill of those who man them. It is one of the finest of His Majesty's undersea boats, which, with her bow twisted and bent as the result of a collision with an enemy mine in enemy waters, covered a distance of almost three hundred miles, under her own power, and arrived safely in a home port.

Through the courtesy of the British Admiralty, I was permitted to see this submarine and talk with her officers and her crew.

She is in harbour, with her bow plating torn into strips and two of her torpedo-tubes crushed. Her plates are crumpled; two of her bulkheads are broken away at the bow; but in her tubes are two unexploded torpedoes. Their casing is twisted and stove in, and the rear doors of them are jammed. But the quality of the high explosive in her torpedoes and the mechanism controlling it prevented an explosion, thus saving her from total destruction.

She struck a mine head on. The explosion smashed two of her bulkheads, broke all glass aboard her, and sent the crew sprawling to the floor of the compartments. But her torpedoes did not explode; her motors did not stop; her dials did not fail to register. She dropped to the bottom of the sea and the water flooded in under the doors of the torpedo-tubes. But within 10 minutes after the collision she had been righted, had come to the surface, and turned her nose toward home.

When I looked at her lying with her exposed ribs shining in the sunlight and her bulkheads in strips of rusty iron, it seemed incredible that she had been under the coast guns of the enemy, that she could have made in her damaged condition a journey of 300 miles, returning to a safe harbour with the information she had been sent to obtain. And, added to this, was the fact that she had made the voyage in a high sea, that for 20 hours, defenceless, she evaded the enemy patrol.

I had heard stories of German submarines sunk by a single shot, so I asked one of the officers how his boat had survived the tremendous shock of a mine explosion.

"She held because of her strength," he said. "It broke her bow and it tore off two of her bulkheads. But the last one held. The efficiency of her pumps was not impaired. Within two minutes we had them working."

He asked me if I would not come below and see the marks of the disaster. So I followed him across a gangway and on to the narrow deck, which already was beginning to show red patches of rust. The hatch was open. Below I could see a white compartment with brass fittings.

I do not know what I had expected to find, but when I stood in this compartment I could see no traces whatsoever of the catastrophe. Directly in front of me were the rear doors of the torpedo tubes, painted a brilliant white; and to my right and left the great aiming torpedoes were clamped in their racks. Only the wheel controlling the bow rudder was not true. The slender brass rod supporting it had suffered from the vibration.

This was the only mark made by the mine of the enemy. Not that it was to be estimated as minor damage. For the rudders have their part to play in the rise and the dive, and it was necessary to come up from the bottom of the sea. Not a simple matter, with the rudders not under control.

A BLACK MORNINGS.

"You see," one of the officers explained to me, "we didn't know what had happened—the water was spurting in and broken glass was everywhere. We didn't know how much of her was gone. We knew that every man aboard her had been knocked flat on his face, that the glass of the dials was rattling about undisturbed. But we didn't know what was to become of us. We were as far down as we could be, and as for getting up—well, it didn't look like much of a chance."

"It was fine, you know, to see the crew. They got on their feet and at their stations before the commander had time to order them there. In two minutes the order to rise had gone through to the engine room, and the pumps were going. But whether we were going to rise or not remained to be seen."

"It was still enough, down there, after all the noise of the explosion. You could hear the motors turning—it's not much of a sound they make. But we were glad enough to hear it. And when we saw the bubble in the clinometer was registering, and the inclination was becoming less, we knew that matters were not as bad as they might have been."

"Then they reversed the motors. We waited. That was a bad minute. Then the broken glass began to rattle about again. We were moving."

"We weren't long in getting up. At any time there's nothing like coming up into the air and sunlight after you've been under for a bit. But this was different. Yes, this was a bit different. . . . We came up. In the silence room there was the noise of the wireless sparking. The operator was testing it. At any rate, we were floating. So we started looking her over for the damage."

It was his ship he seemed to think of above all other things. "We found out what we'd come into," he said; "knew that there was no mistake about the mine. . . . Things didn't look particularly promising. But it all came down to whether we could make a port alone, or whether we couldn't."

"The wireless was working. That is, we could send; we couldn't receive. We took a look at the bow plating and at the bulkheads. They looked pretty bad hanging loose in strips. But we decided we could make it. The engines were right, nothing broken there. The periscopes was true. It was only her bow and her rudder that were gone."

"So we started back. We drove along under our own power. It was a bit of a sea, but we made it. The waves broke over the bridge and pounded on the one bulkhead we had left forward."

"And so," he said, and smiled, "we came home."