

WAR ON THE HIGH SEAS

The Big Blockade.

By E. Keble Chatterton. 18s. net.
(Hurst & Blackett.)

Imperial Defence and Capture at Sea in War.

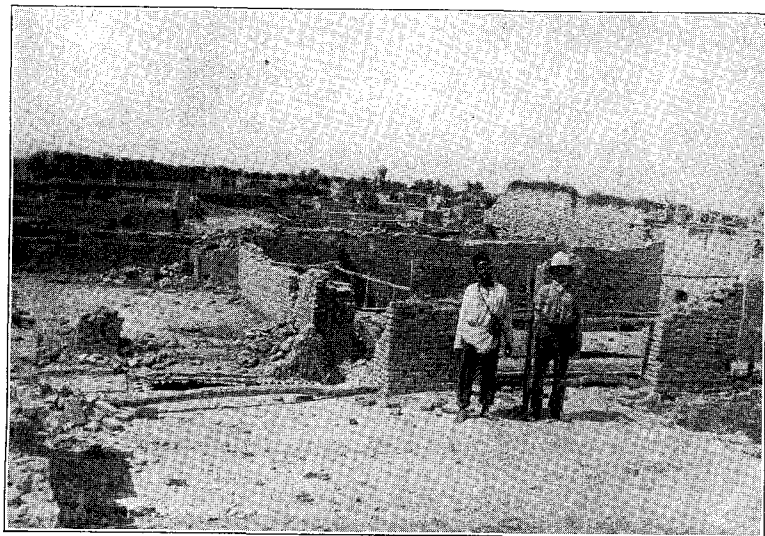
By Admiral Sir H. W. Richmond. 10s. 6d. net.
(Hutchinson.)

by Rolf Bennett

In Mr. Chatterton's book we have the first authentic and complete account of the wonderful work of the blockading fleet known as the Tenth Cruiser Squadron which operated in the fog-infested and gale-swept seas of the North. Organised, trained and "fathered" by Admiral Sir Dudley de Chair, its labours, to quote the then First Lord of the Admiralty, "were more continuous, more important, and more successful than any other branch of His Majesty's Naval Forces."



From *Red Sea Nights*
By William J. Makim
(Jarrold).



From *Tigris Gunboats*
By Vice-Admiral Wilfrid Nunn
(Melrose).

VIEW OF KUT IN RUINS AFTER
THE SIEGE AND RECAPTURE.

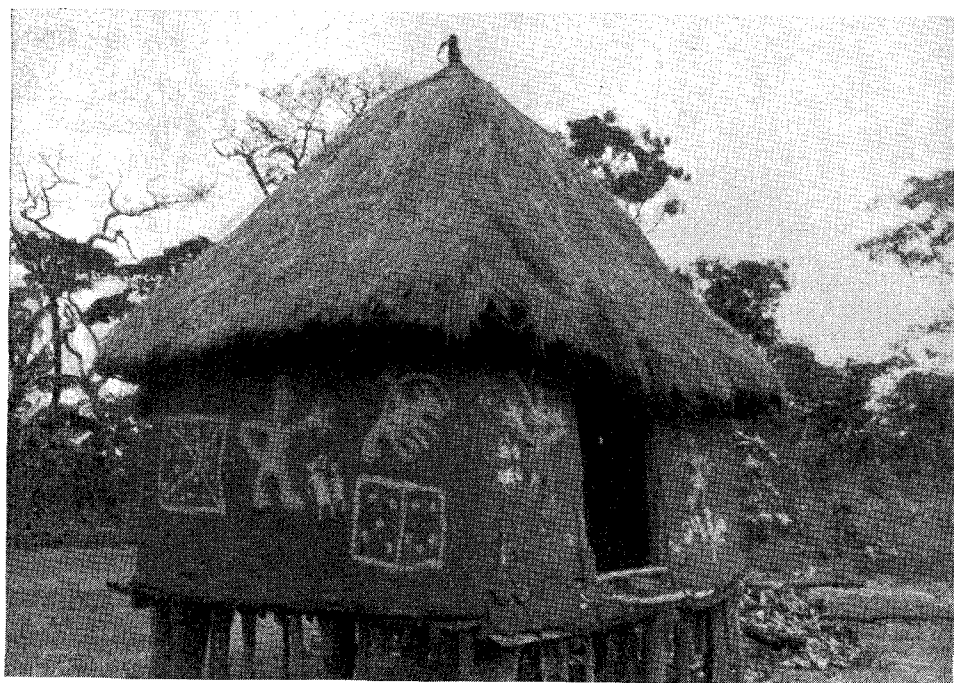
The duty of this squadron was primarily to intercept, examine and, if necessary, detain all neutral ships entering or leaving the North Sea by the North of Scotland route. That this duty was no sinecure may be judged from the fact that from August, 1914, to the end of 1917, this famous squadron intercepted 8,905 ships. Its strength never exceeded twenty-five armed merchant cruisers, and frequently fell below this owing to the necessity of various units leaving their stations for the purpose of replenishing stores and undergoing repairs. It lost during that period a dozen ships, as well as two trawlers, a seemingly high proportion until one realises that it was this squadron, of whose existence the public was scarcely aware, that was "employing the one weapon which was wounding the enemy till he almost bled to death."

Thrilling as such a history must necessarily be, it will

probably be valued more for the lessons it conveys, than for its record of quiet heroism in the face of constant danger and amidst appalling conditions. One of these lessons is that the strength of a maritime nation is embodied in its merchant shipping no less than its Navy; the other is the danger of vesting practically unlimited authority in a small bureaucratic assembly.

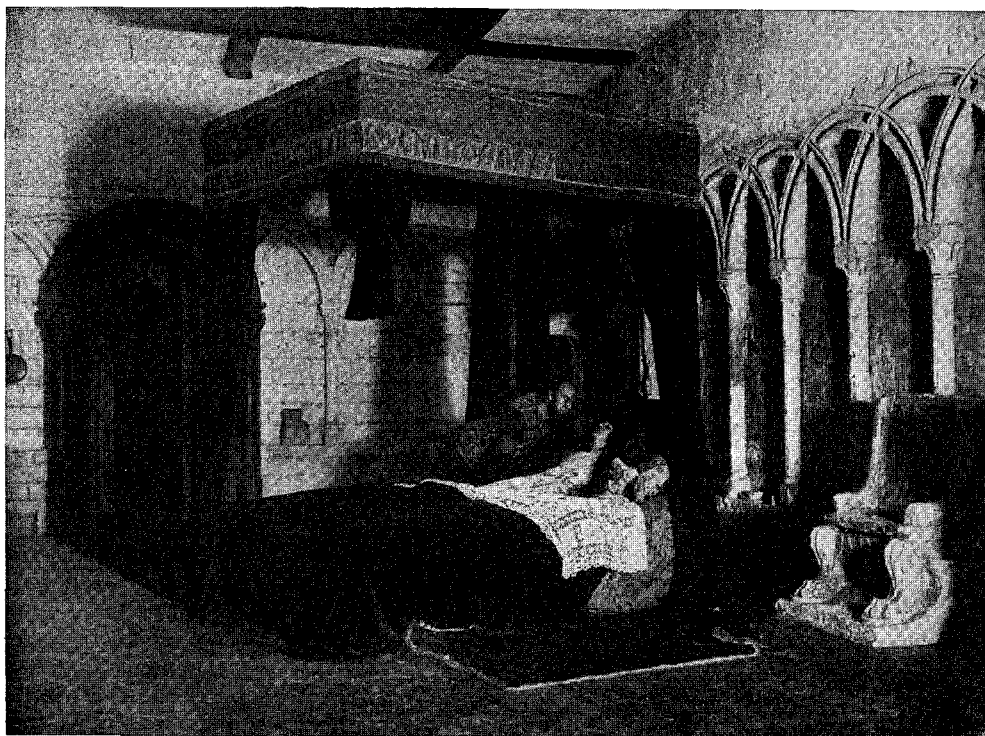
Such was the Contraband Committee of the Foreign Office, set up to decide the fate of ships captured by the blockading squadron. It was bound by "no law, custom, precedent, treaty, rules of evidence, rules of procedure, or legal restraint," and, by allowing cargoes obviously intended for the enemy to continue to their destination, was largely responsible for that ugly belief concerning the presence in high quarters of a "hidden hand." Fortunately this phase of maladministration passed and this country was able to reap to the full the benefits of the work being done by the Tenth Cruiser Squadron in the tempestuous northern seas.

Admiral Richmond's book is of a more controversial character, and will appeal to experts rather than to the general public. In it he



From *Jungle to Jutland*
By Major Claude Wallace
(Nisbet).

A FETISH HOUSE.



From *Maeterlinck and I*
By Georgette Leblanc
(*Methuen*).

DEATH OF MÉLISANDE.
A PERFORMANCE AT SAINT-WANDRILLE.

discusses the vexed question of the right of belligerent nations to capture neutral vessels at sea. Though opinions differ widely on this subject, the author makes out a good case for the retention of the right of search. Since, he argues, a war can only be carried on as long as the combatants can obtain the material necessary to prosecute it, the longer they are enabled to obtain this material, the longer the war will last with its attendant consequences—death, destruction and misery. In other words, if the abolition of the right of search is established, it will only be for the benefit of neutral speculators whose pockets will be filled as long as the slaughter continues.

While, no doubt, equally cogent arguments could be produced to combat the author's views, it is for this very reason that all those who are interested in the safety of the Empire should read this book. It is illustrated and there is a well-arranged index.

UNDER TSAR AND SOVIET.

By John W. Hird. 12s. 6d. (Hurst & Blackett.)

Notwithstanding the usual exaggerated publisher's boost, this book is really informative. Mr. Hird has thirty years' experience of Russia, and in the last few years of it seems to have collected all the satirical anecdotes about Bolshevik rule. He has also many amusing tales of his own to tell, and some bitter ones. And through the medium of a varied personal experience he gives a lively picture of Soviet Russia to-day. Admittedly it is not a complete picture; if any country could be imagined to be in only such conditions as Mr. Hird describes, it could not continue to be for long. But substantially his picture is that brought back by any man who has more than a tourist's acquaintance with

Russia, and to that extent it is true. To appreciate its full flavour it should be read along with, say, Mr. Julian Huxley's account of his Cook's tour to Paradise.

Kerensky's preface—surely he is the worst possible guide to the country he deserted fifteen years ago!—is a joke. Like the Bolsheviks (speaking of course from another angle and of other books), he hopes that Mr. Hird will "help to disperse, however little, the regrettable idea held by public opinion in England regarding the brilliant 'achievements' of Stalin's dictatorship." It seems to be a common belief among Russian politicians of all shades that the British public's ideas are expressed by the pro-Bolshevik and anti-Bolshevik claptrap of the British Press, and that they lack minds of their own with which to judge. (Perhaps, all the books on Russia considered, they are right.)

W. H. H.



From *Charles I*
By F. M. G. Higham
(*Hamilton*).

CHARLES ON THE WAY TO THE
SCAFFOLD.
(After Wappers.)