

were most other neutrals. Yet "it was not utilitarian calculations which guided the guardians of Swedish neutrality, but rather the sincere love of peace and the feeling of responsibility towards the people and the country." Thus the "agitating section" of the people was held in check in a manner creditable to the Government.

Whenever M. Nekludoff's narrative is not consciously of a potentially controversial nature or in the nature of mere painstaking historic record, it is generally very affording.

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THE VICTORY AT SEA. By Rear-Admiral William Sowden Sims, U. S. Navy, in collaboration with Burton J. Hendrick. Garden City: Doubleday, Page & Company.

It is a somewhat curious commentary upon the character of the victory over Germany as an enormous coöperative undertaking that the personal element is almost wholly lacking in Admiral Sims's own story of the operations at sea. This lack, one feels, is not due to the intervention of a collaborator; the nature of the subject simply excludes it. Admiral Dewey's account of our naval fight with Spain might be given, properly, as a part of his personal experiences; Admiral Sims's book about the American part in the work of suppressing the submarines has to be in the nature of a businesslike report. It has to be educative, too; for the public needs to appreciate the fundamentals of warfare as of politics. Admiral Sims is simply the best informed American on the subject. From his headquarters in London he directed the movements of American naval forces and in conjunction with his British colleagues planned the victory. We are probably as proud of him as of any naval hero in our annals; but he is right in thinking that what he ought to give us is the facts in the briefest and clearest form consistent with clearness and readability. The modest but extremely valuable result is a sort of explanatory treatise, its great merit lying in this: that one accurately learns the important facts and the governing ideas in a singularly effortless way while the details fit in without possibility of confusion. One cannot read this book, however cursorily, without feeling that one has obtained a valuable conception of the Allied naval warfare; the precise nature of each problem that came up for solution is really impressed upon the mind, and the facts are striking. The book is a masterly exposition—proportioned to its purpose as few books about the war have been proportioned. There is just enough personality in it to make it thoroughly human. Finally it may be mentioned that it is not, as so many war books almost necessarily are, a book of horrors. One reads it, not "lest we forget," but in order to gain perspective on past events and knowledge useful in understanding the events of the future.

We know now that up to the moment of victory, Germany was never so near the end of her resources as it was natural to suppose. May the great lesson of her malevolent efficiency never be forgotten! "Americans still have

the idea that the German Government adopted the submarine campaign as the last, despairing gambler's chance, and that they only half believed in its success themselves." On the contrary the chance of failure in the German plan was probably not greater than in most business calculations. They did not fear failure. The submarine was in fact the trump card, and it nearly won the game. "Yes," said Admiral Jellicoe, as quietly as if he were discussing the weather and not the future of the British Empire, "it is impossible for us to go on with the war if losses like this continue." That was in April, 1917. By April, 1918, the peril was practically over.

The great enemy of the submarine was the destroyer. It was largely for this reason that the Germans kept their High Seas Fleet intact. "The really fatal effect of a great naval defeat would have been that it would no longer have been necessary for the British to sequester a hundred or more destroyers at Scapa Flow." The same fact explains the German attacks upon hospital ships, and what is more significant, the German official announcement of intention to attack them. The Huns were ruthless, but their ruthlessness was far from unreasoning. "Germany attacked these ships in order to make us escort them with destroyers, and thereby compel us to divert these destroyers from the anti-submarine campaign." It is thus a great error to suppose that Germany did not pin her faith to the submarine campaign. She did, and according to the logic of the situation, she was right.

The convoy system was, therefore, the natural and, as it proved, the right "answer." The patrol plan, though operated with admirable skill and far better than nothing, was necessarily ineffective. The simple fact that the submarine could see its adversary long before the destroyer could see it, and could then promptly make itself invisible—this simple fact, which was the key to the whole situation, has often been ignored. Thus the aggressive policy, axiomatic in naval strategy, the policy of seeking out the enemy to destroy him gave, in fact, all the advantage to the under-water boat. The best strategy for the destroyer was to force the submarine, in the pursuit of its mission, to approach its enemy.

Why then was the convoy system not adopted sooner? In the first place, before the arrival of the American ships, the Allies had not a sufficient number of destroyers for the purpose: one hundred British boats of this type were essential to screen the Grand Fleet. In the second place, the masters of merchant vessels were loath to try the experiment; they were not afraid, of course, but their judgment was against it. "They asserted that they could not sail at night without lights, and that an attempt to do so would result in many collisions." One of the strangest psychological facts about the war is that this honest judgment proved to be merely a case of self-delusion. The first experimental convoy reached England safely on May 20, 1917, and the date marks "one of the great turning points in the war." From then on the system worked smoothly and thoroughly; outward bound as well as inward bound ships were escorted, mishaps like that to the *Justicia* notwithstanding.

Even when the situation has been explained clearly and repeatedly, it is difficult for the average person to understand the fundamental strategy of the submarine campaign. It is almost impossible to refrain from imagining that the German subs in the waters around Great Britain were far more numerous than they really were. It is not easy to see, at first, that the main object of the Allies was to restrain the activity of these boats rather than to destroy them. Every destroyer or other craft which kept an undersea boat out of action was doing its full part; every depth bomb that shook the nerves of a German crew helped to win the war though the submarine reached its base in safety. The number of submarines destroyed, bears a small proportion both to the total number of these German craft that were at sea at one time or another during the war and to the total number of the craft employed against them. The figures tell the story. "The Allied destroyers, about 500 in number, sank 34 German submarines with gunfire and depth charges; auxiliary patrol craft, such as trawlers, yachts, and the like, about 3,000 in number, sank 31; while the Allied submarines, which were only about 100 in number, sunk 20."

Every branch of the service, including the air-service, which had the lowest score of all, performed an essential service. The striking fact that the submarines, supposed incapable of fighting their own kind effectively, did best in proportion to their numbers, detracts nothing from the credit of other branches. All were coöperating in ways that in the long run and in the total effect so restrained the German submarines as to drive them eventually to the adoption of tactics that could not win. The fact itself has a simple explanation—so simple, indeed, that few would ever think of it.

One of the most remarkable chapters in the book is that concerning "College Boys and Subchasers." The opinion doubtless has been somewhat widespread that the work of the little chasers amounted to little. This judgment, however, proceeds from the erroneous point of view that some one invention or some one method could and should be found for overcoming the submarine peril immediately. In point of fact the subchasers fully justified themselves. The story of their work is remarkable, but even more remarkable is the enthusiasm of the Admiral which causes him for once to voice an opinion about something not closely connected with naval matters. "If there is any man," he writes, "who still doubts what the American system of higher education is doing for our country, he should have spent a few days at sea with these young men. That they knew nothing at first about navigation and naval technique was not important; the really important fact was that their minds were alert, their hearts filled with a tremendous enthusiasm for the cause, their souls clean, and their bodies ready for the most exhausting tasks." The Admiral even feels inclined to suggest that in future a college education might well be combined with a shorter intensive technical course at the Naval Academy.

While the author does not attempt to emphasize the work of the American

navy as if it were a separate achievement, but rather views that work in its true light as part of a great systematized effort, the plain record shows better than any eulogy that the performance of our navy is something of which we may be justly proud. Nothing can be better than the best possible under the circumstances—and the circumstances did not make the work easy. “I think I am justified in saying,” writes Admiral Sims, “that without the coöperation of the American Navy, the Allies could not have won the war.” It is to be noted that the Admiral weighs his words, and that what he says could not by any possibility be said by a man of his character of a navy not first-rate in fighting power and in personnel.