

eastern shore of the Caspian. Consequently (after an unsuccessful attempt to get the seaplanes away) the seaplane carrier had to return to Petrovsk, escorted by "Emile Nobel," who was running short of fuel. By this time Commodore Norris had news of reinforcements in the shape of "Venture," and he cruised off the eastern shores of the Caspian to the southward to await her arrival.

5.—In addition to "Venture" he was joined by "Windsor Castle" and "Emile Nobel," and on the morning of 21st May was cruising in position lat. 44.57 N., long. 50.02 E. Course S.E., speed 5 knots. Detached squadron, consisting of the C.M.B. carriers and seaplane carrier, had parted company on 20th May, with orders to rendezvous off Fort Alexandrovsk.

6.—At 09.27, in lat. 44.43 N., long. 50.03 E., course was altered to S. 66 E. Two small craft were sighted north of the harbour.

7.—Shortly before 11.00 one T.B.D., two small craft and A.M.C. "Caspie" were sighted under the land west of the harbour steering northward. At 11.00 the destroyer opened fire, but the shot fell a long way short. The enemy craft returned to harbour. It was thought possible to cut them off, and the course was altered accordingly and speed increased to 9 knots.

8.—At 12.03 ranging shots were fired by both sides, and ten minutes later "Venture" was straddled. The general signal to "Open Fire" was made at 12.13.

9.—"Emile Nobel's" third salvo hit a large armed barge, which caught fire amidships, and whose crew were taken off by small craft. From 12.30 to 13.00 all ships were in action with "Caspie," a destroyer of the "Finn" class, and various armed barges. "Caspie" was hit by "Emile Nobel," and the destroyer was probably hit by "Venture," as she was seen to be in difficulties, and appeared to run ashore among the fishing boats.

10.—By this time the enemy's fire was both accurate and heavy. "Asia" was repeatedly straddled, and at 12.57 a shell hit "Emile Nobel" in engine room, killing five and seriously wounding seven, and causing considerable damage to the engines. "Emile Nobel" hauled out of line, but eventually followed the squadron into the harbour and continued to engage the enemy.

11.—At 13.03 course was altered down harbour in single line in the following order: "Kruger," "Venture," "Asia," "Windsor Castle," "Emile Nobel." The enemy had retired to the southern end of the harbour and taken shelter behind barges and small craft, so that only the flashes of his guns could be seen, and it was difficult to get good points of aim. At this time a shore battery situated on the cliffs opened fire on the squadron, and was engaged by "Kruger," "Venture," and "Asia." A few minutes later "Kruger" was hit aft, but, beyond cutting away the telegraphs, little damage was done.

12.—All the enemy ships were now packed together at the south end of the harbour, and it was estimated that five or six separate ships were firing at the British Squadron; these included "Caspie" and the "Finn" class T.B.D. "Caspie," who had been hit repeatedly, was on fire, but was continuing to fire with one gun. A very large fire was started ashore at the south end of the harbour,

and many of the ships and small craft were observed to be on fire. This rendered all control very difficult, as there was so much smoke and so many splashes from the various ships. At times the enemy were seen landing from their ships and running up the hillside.

13.—About 13.30, in view of the difficulty in manœuvring and "Emile Nobel's" condition, Commodore Norris decided to haul off. The shore battery had been silenced and did not fire at the Squadron on its way out. When well clear of the harbour speed was eased to 5 knots, but at 14.30 "Emile Nobel" reported she could steam 8 knots, and speed was accordingly increased.

14.—While still in sight of Fort Alexandrovsk the smoke on shore was seen to be increasing; one very large explosion was observed at 15.00 and two others at 15.15 and 15.43, besides several smaller ones. It was known that "Caspie" and one steamer were on fire during the action, and it was presumed that the enemy was destroying his stores and fuel.

15.—At 17.00 the Squadron stopped and surgeons were sent to "Emile Nobel." Squadron then proceeded N.N.W. in the direction of Astrakhan, as Commodore Norris intended, if possible, to remain on the enemy's line of retreat.

16.—At 20.10 "Emile Nobel" was forced to stop, and the Squadron so remained till midnight. At midnight course was shaped S. 37 W., speed 4 knots, but during the night "Emile Nobel" worked up to 7 knots.

17.—In the early morning two more heavy explosions were observed in the direction of Fort Alexandrovsk.

18.—At 10.00, on 22nd May, the men who had been killed in "Emile Nobel" were buried at sea, after which "Emile Nobel" and "Windsor Castle" were detached to Petrovsk.

19.—In the meantime the detached squadron of C.M.B. and seaplane carriers had arrived at rendezvous, and a seaplane had been sent up to bomb Alexandrovsk. Unfortunately, he had to return owing to engine trouble, and was out of action for 12 hours. He again went up at 15.35, and returned two hours later. Bombs were dropped, but no direct hits were obtained. He reported that a large oil steamer was burning as a result of the bombardment of the afternoon.

20.—In the evening some fishing boats were observed from "Sergie" and searched by a C.M.B., and their cargoes thrown overboard.

21.—At 05.25 the seaplane again started for Fort Alexandrovsk, and dropped bombs on the shipping in the harbour and small craft machine-gunned. During the 22nd May five raids were carried out by this one seaplane with the following results:—

First Raid.—Shipping and Eastern Pier bombed and machine-gunned. No direct hits, but probably some damage done as bombs fell close.

Second Raid.—Shipping bombed. Direct hits obtained on large destroyer of "Finn" class, which sank. One hit on armed merchant cruiser. Ships and piers machine-gunned.

Third Raid.—Barges at eastern and western piers bombed. No direct hits, but bombs fell very close, and damage was probably inflicted.

Fourth Raid.—Shipping bombed. No direct hits. T.B.D. bombed in second raid now completely sunk.