

Fifth Raid.—Southern pier bombed. Bombs fell very close. Shipping machine-gunned.

A sixth raid was attempted, but machines failed to rise. Photographs were taken on second and fifth raids.

22.—On the evening of 22nd and on the morning of 23rd a deserted appearance of ships and town was noticed, no one being seen in streets nor on decks of ships. No armed forces or encampments were seen in vicinity. On the first day heavy A.A. fire was experienced, but on the evening of 22nd and morning of 23rd there was none.

23.—Commodore Norris had every hope of carrying out a final attack with C.M.Bs. on the morning of 22nd May, but was unable to get into W./T. communication with the carriers. In view of the fact that the remainder of the enemy did not leave until night of 22nd May this lost opportunity is very much to be regretted.

24.—On 23rd May, after a night of thick fog, "Kruger" and "Venture" were attacked by two enemy destroyers, who had the range and speed of them, so that they were forced to withdraw. The carriers were informed of the presence of the enemy by W./T., and a seaplane was again got out to attack the enemy. Unfortunately the seaplane was unable to locate the enemy destroyers, and finally carried out another raid on Port Alexandrovsk.

It is probable that the enemy sighted the carriers, as they suddenly turned towards "Kruger," and then made off to the northward. The seaplane ran into a fog on her way back from Port Alexandrovsk and fell in the water. The officers were not picked up until 32 hours later (see par. 25 below).

25.—On 24th May Commodore Norris in "Kruger," who was short of fuel, with "Sergie" and "Edinburgh Castle," parted company, and proceeded to Petrovsk, leaving Captain Washington in charge of the squadron, which now consisted of "Windsor Castle," "Asia," "Venture," "Bibi-Abat" and "A. Yusanoff," with orders to cruise to the northward and search for the missing seaplane, to ascertain that Chechan was safe, and, when the carriers returned, to make an extended reconnaissance of Port Alexandrovsk. The seaplane was picked up on the evening of 24th May, after which the squadron cruised between Port Alexandrovsk and Chechen until the carriers arrived.

26.—On 28th May Captain Washington, with "Windsor Castle," "Venture," "Slava," "Bibi-Abat," "Sergie," "Edinburgh Castle," and "A. Yusanoff," made a close reconnaissance of Port Alexandrovsk. The 1st and 2nd Divisions (1st Division "Windsor Castle" and "Venture," 2nd Division "Slava" and "Bibi-Abat") took up positions for covering the approach of the C.M.Bs. who were got out and proceeded up harbour under the command of Commander Eric G. Robinson, V.C. On their way up harbour they torpedoed a large barge, and on arrival up harbour a white flag was hoisted ashore and a deputation came off. The deputation consisted of the Chief Engineer of the "Leila" and some of her crew, and some Persians and agents of the K-M Company.

From these men full details of the Bolshevik occupation were obtained, and also information concerning the capture of the

"Leila" and the death of General Almaroff. The attached lists show the details of the ships which were sunk and which escaped.

27.—From the reports of Commodore Norris, Captain Washington and other officers in command of vessels, and also from the Royal Air Force reports, the conduct of the officers and men appears to have been in accordance with the traditions of the service. I would specially draw attention to the following:—

Commodore David T. Norris, C.B., in command of the Caspian Flotilla. Quite apart from the successful conduct of this action, Commodore Norris deserves the highest praise for the unflinching tenacity with which he has overcome many and great difficulties and eventually succeeded in getting his Squadron in such a state of efficiency as to make this successful action possible. He has been handicapped all through the winter by want of efficient officers, by frequent and serious strikes in the various works at Baku, by delay in the arrival of material and also personnel, by the serious accident he met with in the autumn of 1918 and from which he is by no means recovered, his arm causing him continual discomfort. The way in which he has risen superior to all these and many other difficulties is beyond all praise. He had to take serious risks in attacking an enemy which was known to be efficiently manned and to possess ships with superior gun-power, including several destroyers. He has taken these risks, and has succeeded, by the latest reports, in driving the superior enemy from the Caspian.

Act. Captain Basil G. Washington, C.M.G. He commanded the "Windsor Castle" with great ability, and was the only British officer on board during the action. He did admirable work whilst temporarily in charge of the Caspian during Commodore Norris's illness from 9th October, 1918, to 5th February, 1919.

Commander Kenneth A. F. Guy. Handled the "Emile Nobel" with great ability under difficult circumstances.

Lieutenant-Commander Richard Harrison, R.N.R., of H.M.S. "Venture."

Lieutenant Alexander G. B. Wilson, commanding the "Asia."

Both handled their ships well.

Lieutenant Robert M. Taylor, D.S.C., of the "Emile Nobel." By his admirable control of fire was responsible for much damage to the enemy.

Engineer Lieutenant Thomas Gardner. The manner in which this officer kept his engines running after considerable heavy losses in personnel and severe damage to the complicated machinery reflects the greatest credit on his ability and resource.

Commodore Norris reports that Commander Edward L. Grieve's services on his Staff were of greatest assistance to him. This officer's services in the Caspian have been very valuable.

Lieutenant Bolinsky, R.N.V.R., of "Emile Nobel." Was of great service in attending the wounded.

Petty Officer John William Thompson, O.N. 239958. G.L. II., "Windsor Castle." This petty officer was of greatest assistance during the action to Captain Washington, who had no British officer with him.

J. E. Pether, Ch. E.R.A., O.N. 270497, "Emile Nobel." Was of greatest assistance in refitting repairs and in keeping the engines running after they were damaged.