

May 23rd 1917.

My darling Mother

Very many thanks for your letter of May 16th. I'm afraid I've been very slack with my letter writing, but I really have very little time these days, and there is nothing whatever to write about. Didn't I ever thank you for the parcels of "washing"? I'm so sorry. They arrived quite safely.

I'm afraid that Zepp., L. 22., that was brought down was not "ours". We, unfortunately, weren't in that show.

I can give you a rather fuller account of our show on the 4th May now, though it was nothing to shout about.

This ship was S.O. of a small squadron consisting of one other light Cruiser and four Destroyers, doing a sweep not far from the Dogger Bank. It was a perfectly gorgeous day - bright sunshine and not a breath of wind or a ripple on the water, and I was sitting in my ^{Cabin} actually writing a letter saying how peaceful my surroundings were, when, at about 11.30, I heard the bugles sound "Action", so dropped my pen and streaked for the Bridge. A Zepp. was in sight, approaching us from the Eastward, about 40,000 yards away, but quite distinct in the clear atmosphere. Zepps. generally mean submarines as well. The Zepp. scouting & the submarines doing the dirty work - so we naturally kept our eyes skinned, and soon found ourselves amongst them. We were all zig-zagging and twisting and turning at about 26 knots, but making our way towards the Zepp., our bow guns firing occasional rounds

at her at extreme range, just on the chance that a lucky shot might burst near enough to damage her - the other guns opening fire whenever a periscope, or anything that looked as if it might be a periscope, appeared. Whether we got any or not I can't say definitely, as it would have been a somewhat unhealthy proceeding to stop and look! I'm inclined to think though, after hearing what the other ships said, that we did get one & possibly two. Anyway I we harried them considerably, and though they fired many torpedoes not one of us was hit. After about an hour of this the Zepp. turned away without giving us a chance, & as we couldn't possibly catch her, we turned too, hoping that she would think we had had enough and would come after us. This she did, and we at once turned again and attacked, but she never came lower than 15,000 or 20,000 ft., so we didn't have much chance of damaging her. Things then became very interesting, and it was a fascinating sight to watch her manoeuvring overhead to get into position for dropping her bombs - looking like a huge aluminium cigar. The air was so clear that we could see her propellers going round, and, with glasses, could read her number, L. 43.

After a time she got nicely overhead, and then we heard a long drawn-out sort of a wail, and then a terrific roar, and a big column of dirty looking smoke and water rose up about 100 to 150 yards from us. Then a little more manoeuvring, and another column about 50 to 60 yards

from us on the same side - Then a third one which fell just on the other side of us, peppering us with splinters, one of which, a lump of jagged iron about a foot long, landed on the Bridge, but no damage was done or anyone hurt. Then she let us have it good and hearty, and dropped another nine in rapid succession, but acting on the principle that no two shots ever go through the same hole, we had whipped round to where the first bomb fell and they just missed us, but only by a few yards! She left us then and turned her attention to a Destroyer who had stopped her engines and lowered a boat to examine a Dutch Trawler, and dropped a salvo of three bombs within about ten yards of her, but again did no damage.

By this time another Zepp. had appeared, but didn't come within range, and our first friend apparently got discouraged by ~~our~~ our combined gun. fire and sailed off towards the other one and soon they were both out of sight.

The submarines then did some more attacking and the wakes of several Torpedoes were seen, but we never saw a sign of any of the boats themselves, and after criss. crossing about all ways at once for some time, and dropping a number of high explosive charges overboard they cleared out or were destroyed, & we were left in ~~possession~~ possession of the field, after an amusing and thoroughly entertaining two or three hours. I really enjoyed myself enormously. The only part that made me feel a bit uncomfortable was the waiting for the Zepp. to get into position overhead, and then after

one bomb had fallen, the waiting for the next. It seemed to take such a long time, and I nearly got a crick in my neck! The submarines didn't affect me one way or the other, though of course one was keeping one's eyes very wide open all the time. As for the Sailors, they seemed to think that it was a Brock's Benefit, put on for their special edification and amusement! I ordered all of them down below under cover when the bombs began to get close & splinter us, but I ~~did~~ had to leave the Bridge and literally shoo them down myself! That's about all that happened - result unsatisfactory, but the whole thing great fun. If only we'd had some sea-players with us it would have been a good show, but without them we were practically helpless.

It's maddening to read in the papers of the lovely warm spring weather. May 4th was the only decent day we've had this month up here. All days alike, cold and grey, with a strong bitter East wind. I'm still wearing the warmest things I've got!

Life is strenuous but dull these days - we spend most of our times dashing wildly about at night, and coaling ship in the daytime! We coaled on Sunday, coaled this morning, and will be coaling again tomorrow afternoon - and then I hope will get a night or two "in".

I hadn't seen Nor's promotion in the paper, but I'm very glad he's got it at last, & that they have dated him

back, and I was very glad to see that Durr has once
more been mentioned in despatches.

I've no more news - Haven't been ashore for 2½ weeks, but
am very fit and well.

Much love darling brother to you all -

Your loving son

Halley.