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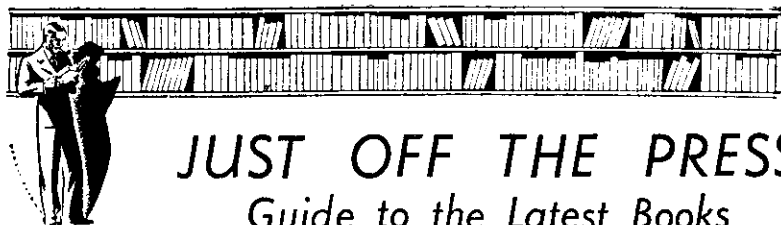


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JUST OFF THE PRESS Guide to the Latest Books

RAIDING THE RAIDERS

"The Wake of the Raiders." By A. D. Devine. Published by John Murray, London. Illustrated.

Here is a book which brings home to us more swiftly and acutely than any news bulletin our immense debt to the British Navy. But it is more than that; it is current history, minus some facts which it would not be politic at this moment to disclose, written by a man who knows the sea and its moods and is familiar with ships and the men who, in war-time, never cease in their relentless pursuit of the enemy. "The Wake of the Raiders" is primarily the record of the failure of Germany's pocket battleships as shown by the Battle of the Plate.

The book begins with the first rumours of the sinking of the Clement somewhere in the Atlantic, and ends with the rescue of the British prisoners from the Altmark in a Norwegian fiord. But what a story there is of heroism and something approaching despair, of courage and achievement on many seas in the weeks separating those two events. Mr. Devine's canvas is an immense one, linking up naval history of this and the last war; sweeping over the oceans of the earth as dates and names knit the events together. Here we have the end of the Rawalpindi, that gallant passenger liner which went under to a pocket battleship after she had been pounded to scrap and her flames lit up the grey wastes of the North Sea. Here are pages of naval history thumbed back to 1917, recalling stories of incredible heroism by tiny British destroyers and merchant cruisers when German U-boats and battleships tried to break the British blockade. There is the Sydney's defeat of the Emden; our own defeat at Coronel—the first British naval defeat in many hundreds of years. Mr. Devine has the historian's regard for truth as he compares this war with the last and points his moral with grim and magnificent example. He leads us by those examples, as well as by strange happenings before the outbreak of war, to the Battle of the Plate, but he leads us along with such a rush of words that the current is almost too swift.

Mr. Devine has a special heart for the merchant cruisers—passenger lines which were stripped of their Louis Quinze saloons and Rococo lounges to make way for strengthening girders and plates that guns might be mounted to help in guarding the seas. He gives us a brilliant picture of those ships on patrol duty, night and day in the wicked North Sea and beyond, round Iceland, where autumn soon turns to a long winter of cold hell and frozen water comes aboard and masts turn to pillars of white; where men work constantly, chipping ice from the decks lest the ship be thrown out of trim by its accumula-

tion; he recreates for us those two living lines of ships which shuttle back and forth through sleet or snow or sun round the twenty-four hours of every day of every year of war. All this is told from what reads like actual experience. There is a pitifully true account of the part played by German pocket battleships during the Spanish War, when their strength was tried out under the guise of neutrality and, in revenge for the loss of some men when a Republican bomb dropped on the deck of the Deutschland, the Germans sent the Admiral Sheer to pour 200 eleven-inch shells into a de-



S. P. Andrew photograph

DR. G. H. SCHOLEFIELD, editor of the "Dictionary of New Zealand Biography" referred to in our Leading Article on Page 5 this week

fenceless Spanish town. There is humour, too, in an account of H.M.S. Hood shadowing the Admiral Sheer off Vigo in September, 1938, turning as she turned, following her over the wastes of ocean.

The Battle of the Plate is told so clearly and precisely that it becomes more exciting than a thriller. Here is part of the description of the end of the Graf Spee:

"Crash followed crash. There was noise like battle—the hollowed, coward mockery of a battle. This ship which should have fought, which could have fought, was battling herself to death, here in the calm silence of the Plate. Each thunder as the torpedoes burst and as the magazines within her blew her sides asunder was like the bitter substitute of war—the ersatz of courage.

Not the least interesting part of this book is its illustrations, which include the triumphal return of H.M.S. Achilles to New Zealand. "The Wake of the Raiders" makes an excellent companion to Mr. Devine's first book of this war at sea, "The Merchant Navy Fights."