

TO COME . . . WILL GRAVE

The bombers, heavily loaded with their projectiles and maximum fuel tankage, quickly climbed up out of the gusty air near the ocean's surface and droned on through the thick clouds till they came out into the clear air above. That had been about half an hour before dawn.

The scouting planes climbed until they were flying just under the cloud layer at 2200 feet. There they stayed, the flight spreading out so that the pilots and observers could see as much of the sea as possible.

THE scouts were low so they could see the surface, but the main air fleet stayed above so that its presence could be concealed. Contact between the scouts and the commander was maintained by special ultra-high-frequency short-range directional radio. Their reports during the preceding hours had come in regularly and monotonously.

They had seen nothing.

Radio Blockade

BUT now every man in the air fleet

knew that the enemy must be somewhere near by. Positive evidence of this came through the earphones worn on each pilot's head. They all heard the faint crackling and moaning of a radio blockade.

The enemy, to prevent radio communication among the aeroplanes and surface ships of their opponents, had begun sending out meaningless signals over a wide range of frequencies to simulate the worst static conditions.

NOW the job was up to the scouts.

They must find the enemy, estimate his strength, communicate this information to the commander of the bomber fleet above so that he could determine the order of the attack.

Suddenly, looming out of the mist and rain falling between the ocean surface and the lower cloud level, one of the scout pilots spied a destroyer wallowing along. The pilot immediately sent his plane higher until the concealing clouds cut the ocean from his sight.

Two minutes later he nosed down carefully, reducing his altitude so that he again could distinguish the ocean surface. To his intense excitement he found that he had just passed over a string of cruisers which he recognised as those of the invaders.

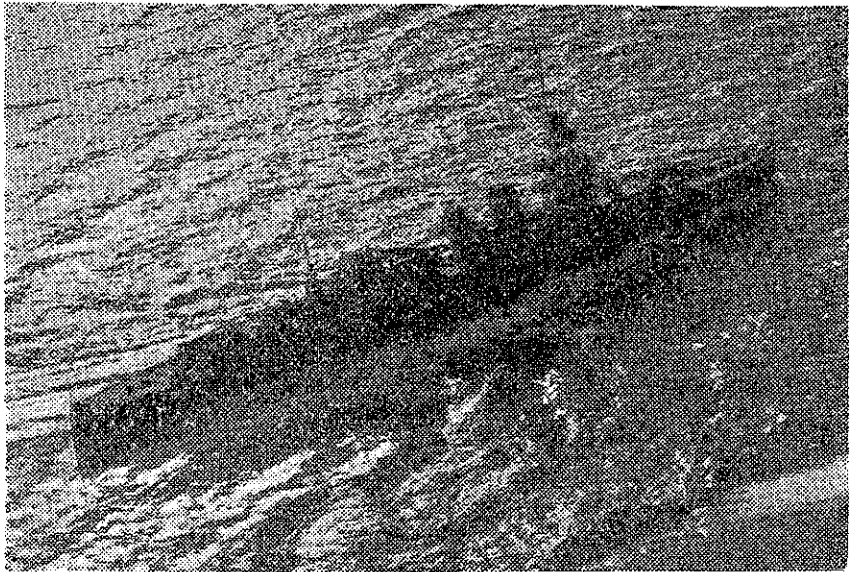
Just beyond he spotted the more ponderous ships of the main line of enemy super-dreadnoughts.

While his eyes dilated with excitement at the sight, and while he ventured lower to confirm his find, his ship apparently became visible from the surface, for a burst of anti-aircraft shells suddenly boomed on all sides of him.

AT the first deep cough of the shells the scout flyer zoomed again for the protecting clouds.

A second later came the report of the scout, faint but intelligible above the enemy-made static, into the phones on the air commander's ears:

"Enemy contacted. Cruiser squad-



SHADOWS OVER THE BIG SHIPS

. . . Are cast by the wings of the fighting planes.

ron protecting six battleships. Enemy sighted my plane, so on alert."

FLIPPING a switch, the commander changed his transmitting frequency to another ultra-high frequency developed especially for inter-command communications, and ordered the torpedo-bombers to descend at once for the attack upon the big battleships. His orders were specific. Their torpedoes, exactly like those launched from submarines, must not be wasted on targets smaller than the battleships.

The sub-commander of the torpedo-bomber squadron acknowledged these orders with a waggle of his wings and, with his planes behind him, dived into the fleecy cloud floor.

This left the nine dive-bombers alone at their height.

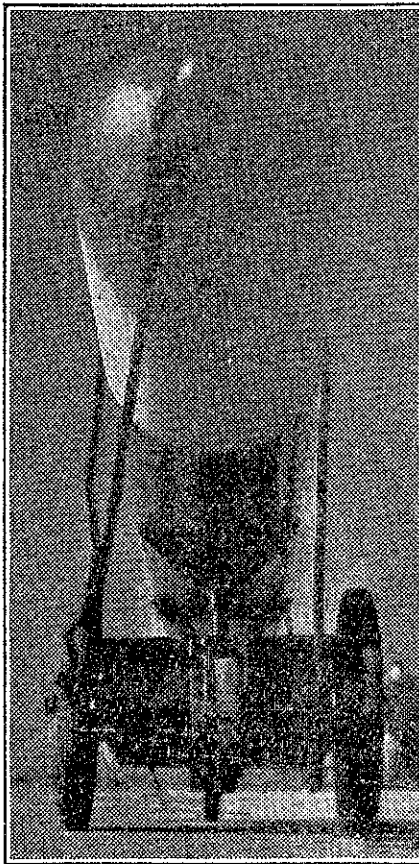
Through the Mist

IN his mind the commander followed the torpedo planes down, down through the swirling mists. Their speeds would gradually increase, he knew. From 140 they would quickly rise to 300 miles an hour as the noses of the bombers were held in a steep power-on descent.

It was the purpose of the torpedo ships to stick together until they broke out beneath the cloud. Then they would scatter, circling and still descending, to fly down just above the waves. Their altitude would not be more than 100 feet, and their speed, with throttles wide open, would be 220 miles an hour.

Each of the torpedo pilots, trained to his job, would then pick out a capital ship, line up in his sights, and roar toward it. At approximately 1000 yards range the pilots would drop one or two torpedoes, as their judgment dictated, then pull away.

WHILE the torpedo planes descended, the dive-bomber commander also began. (Continued on page 40).



TO-DAY'S FLYING FISH.

. . . British naval torpedo, waiting on its stand to be loaded on the plane for torpedo practice.