

# FLIGHT

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## EDITORIAL COMMENT.

### Aircraft in Warfare.

Ever since the war commenced aircraft has loomed large in support of each of the nations—by the Allies as well as by the enemy—engaged in the present great struggle. It would seem, however, as if the climax in efforts of the aviation sections of both sides had been reserved for Christmastide. The startling, but not surprising, work of which such graphic accounts have been published was supplemented by other minor aircraft activities in the other countries whose armies are engaged in the fight for or against militarism.

By way of a preliminary to the Christmas adventures some encouraging details of the general work of the flying officers appeared in "Eyewitness's" report issued on Monday, in which it reads: "Though the weather has been generally unfavourable to aviation, several reconnaissances have been made by members of the Royal Flying Corps, and there have been three encounters in the air between British and German aeroplanes, as a result of which the hostile machine has, in each case, been forced to go down in the German lines. In addition to the more striking raids over the enemy's country that

are made from time to time, the report states that there is an immense amount of courageous, patient routine work being done from day to day by the Flying Corps, the arduous and risky nature of which has been increased as well by the extreme cold as by the fact that, with constant practice, the gunners of the enemy's anti-aircraft guns have become more and more expert."

\* \* \*

The performance, however, which stands out above all others in the week's aviation events, and one that will be handed down in history, is the daring raid that was carried out on Christmas Day by officers of the Royal Naval Air Service. As every daily paper in the land has recorded, working in conjunction with our fleet in the North Sea, seven seaplanes started off at daylight, from a point in the vicinity of Heligoland, for an attack on the German warships lying in the Schillig roads at the mouth of the Elbe off Cuxhaven.

The official report issued by the Secretary of the Admiralty is, as usual, extremely brief; it shows, however, that the seaplanes were escorted by a light cruiser and destroyer force, together with a number of submarines. As soon as the ships were observed by the Germans from Heligoland, two Zeppelins, together with three or four of the enemy's seaplanes, took up the defence, backed by several submarines, and ranged up for a counter attack. It was part of the plan for the British ships to remain in the neighbourhood in order to pick up the returning pilots, and a combat hitherto only depicted by imaginative artists ensued between the most modern cruisers, seaplanes, dirigibles, airships and submarines, each in its element above or under the water or in the air. By consummate manœuvring, our vessels avoided the submarines, and the two Zeppelins pretty quickly took the hint from the guns of the "Undaunted" and "Arethusa" that a retreat on their part was the only course open to them. The enemy's seaplanes were more daring and succeeded in dropping bombs near to our ships, but fortunately with never a hit to record.

In the meantime the British flying officers were well on their way to Cuxhaven, whilst our warships, ready for any emergency, quietly awaited their return—in striking contrast to the "cut and run" example recently set by the German Navy in their precipitate retreat after bombarding "fortified" Scarborough, Whitby and Hartle-