



DROPPING : A "Horsley" after diving down to 15 feet from the surface discharges a dummy torpedo. The island of Inchkeith is in the background. (R.A.F. Official: Crown copyright reserved.)

however, there is a bit of "haar" about, and the camera does not do full justice to a fine landscape and seascape.

The quarry is easily spotted down below, and the "Horsleys" prepare for action. One passenger gazes down on the cruiser with grim satisfaction, recalling that he had once been seasick on the *Champion* and chuckling that he was now getting some of his own back. For photographic purposes it looks well for the whole flight to commence its dive in formation, but actually the three "Horsleys" break formation before commencing to attack. The anti-aircraft guns on the cruiser must be distracted as much as possible by attacks from different directions. After circling round to choose his position, each pilot pushes his stick forward and commences a head-long dive. That is quite a great experience for the passenger, though not at all of the same nature as his recollections of the *Champion*. It is no time for photography, however. The roomy back cockpit of the "Horsley" is too much like the proverbial drum on which a pea once found itself. Down they come from some 4,500 feet to 15 feet in about seven seconds—seven seconds full of glorious life. At 15 feet the machines flatten out, and for a brief, dangerous period the pilots hold them steady on their course while they take aim. They must not be higher up, or the torpedoes will be broken by their fall into the water. Two machines are on one side of the ship and one on the other. The pilots work the levers so soon as they are satisfied with their aim, and the dummy torpedoes drop into the sea. Being real dummies, they do not run, and motor-boats from Donibristle dash out and pick them up. Theoretically H.M.S. *Champion* has been reduced to a lot of yawning holes connected with bits of metal, and is now lying at the bottom of the Firth. At the same time, no doubt, the A.A. gunners on board are gleefully telling all and sundry how they simply riddled the "Horsleys" with shells before ever a mouldy was dropped. Then both sides go off and have lunch.

Matters would not be so simple in the "real thing." It is, in fact, not very easy to picture what the real thing will be like, from the torpedo-plane point of view. It may turn out that these craft will be chiefly useful for attacks on fleets in harbour—if they can reach them; and on the other hand they may be able to cause serious embarrassment to fleets at sea. In all probability the torpedo attack will be combined with a bombing attack, the former taking place shortly before the latter. Both Nos. 36 and 100 Squadrons are equipped and trained as bombers as well as torpedo-dropping units. Perhaps one flight of the squadron would go over the ships first at a

great height and drop bombs. The bombs might do damage themselves, and in any case they would be likely to draw all eyes on the ships upwards. The muzzles of the guns would be likely to follow the eyes. That would be the moment for the torpedo-planes to deliver their attack. During their dive they might be in danger from anti-aircraft fire, if they were noticed, as it is not easy for a pilot to manoeuvre his machine to the left or right during the dive, and so they would present a fairly steady moving target. But the most dangerous moment would be after flattening out when the pilots have to fly straight at 15 feet above the water as they aim. Incidentally, it is not too easy to maintain a level 15 feet altitude. If there seems any danger of flying into the sea, the nose is sure to be raised by an instinctive movement. If this is overdone, the machine will rise too high to allow of the torpedo being dropped without risk of its breaking up. But supposing the level height is maintained, this is the time when the machine presents the best target to the quick-firing guns. The moment the torpedo has been dropped, the pilot will naturally use all his wiles to escape.

It is sometimes suggested that smoke screens may be used to mask the approach of the torpedo-planes. Opinions seem to differ as to whether this would be good tactics or not. The smoke-layers might themselves suffer heavy casualties, the operation would certainly put all the gunners of the fleet on the *qui vive*, and then after all the wind might make the screen useless.

When attacking moving ships, the object of the torpedo-planes is to make a ship turn. Once it has commenced to turn, say the pilots, it cannot get back on to its course in a hurry, and then it should be cold meat. Therefore it is good tactics to make a preliminary attack with the object of causing a ship to turn, and when that has been effected the main attack should be delivered. There are, in fact, so many considerations that it would be premature to say that torpedoes from the air are considered a proved means of making a deadly attack on hostile ships. For that reason, perhaps, there is only one squadron in Great Britain and one overseas which has been given the task of experimenting with torpedoes, and it may also account for the omission of all mention of the torpedo from the description of No. 100 Squadron in the Air Force List. The Fleet Air Arm employs seven flights of torpedo-bombers, and therefore may be held committed to the policy of using torpedoes from the air; but the circumstances of flights on a carrier and squadrons at a shore base are not identical.

During this summer No. 100 B.S. is due to surrender its