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Adventure

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COMMANDER ELLSBERG · GORDON MACCREAGH · ROBERT CARSE
F. R. BUCKLEY · JAMES STEVENS · CAPTAIN RAABE *and others*



Adventure

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A Submarine Story
by the Author of
"Pigboats" and
"On the Bottom"

QUEENSTOWN PATROL

By COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

"YOUR last chance, Mr. Parker!" Commander Wilson fairly snapped out his words. "One more breakdown on the *L-18* and back you go to Annapolis instructing midshipmen; that is, if they'll have you there. Otherwise you'll go to Guam till this war's over!"

Lieutenant Parker nervously twisted the visor of his cap.

The irate commander added—

"Two boats in this flotilla are already wearing chevrons for sinking U-boats, while all you've done is to break down on three patrols and get towed in!" He glowered up at the *L-18's* skipper.

Parker waited a moment for Commander Wilson to continue; then, looking into the stern face before him, hesitantly began to explain. He was curtly interrupted.

"Wartime, Mr. Parker. No excuses!" The flotilla commander turned abruptly in his chair, started to examine the chart spread on the table before him. The interview was over.

The dazed lieutenant paused in the midst of his explanation, stared at the

broad back before him, then his jaws clicked firmly to.

"Aye, aye, sir!" He turned on his heel, stumbled out of the cabin.

Parker looked across the deck of the mother ship, his eyes sweeping for an instant the hills that circled Queenstown harbor, then gazed down hopelessly at the *L-18* moored alongside the tender. What ailed that damn pig, anyway? It was not his fault, or his crew's either, if the mass of junk that had been squeezed into that sleek hull below there was continually breaking down.

Parker stepped to the port rail, looked overboard. A tangle of lines led from a cargo port in the high side of the *Melville*, disappeared down an open hatch just forward of the *L-18's* conning tower. Through those lines the submarine was sucking compressed air, distilled water, electricity for her batteries; storing up the vital energy necessary for her next patrol. Outboard of the *L-18* were three sister submarines, and on the *Melville's* starboard side were two more—her litter of pigs, sucking greedily away at the mother ship's lines.



DUNGAREES smeared with grease, his white cap oil-soaked and hardly recognizable as ever having been the starched and gold laced headgear of a once smart Naval officer, his face grimy with dirt and perspiration, Lieutenant Parker painfully dragged his strained body off the top of the starboard Diesel engine. There, jammed between the sloping inner hull of the submarine and the

cylinder heads, he had been painfully cramped, struggling to adjust the fuel oil sprays.

Abaft him, in the passage, a weary gang of machinist's mates surveyed the maze of cams and valves on the engines, turned tired eyes on their skipper as he slid off the cylinder and landed on the floor plates alongside them.

"Well, Mac, they look O.K. to me."

COMMANDER EDWARD ELLSBERG

Parker, his neck still aching from his cramped position over the Diesels, faced his chief machinist's mate and nodded stiffly.

"They oughta be, Cap'n," replied McCarthy. "Since the *Walton* towed us in night before last, there ain't a man in this gang's had an hour's sleep. We been workin' on them engines steady, an' wot ever else breaks down on the next patrol, it ain't gonna be them Diesels."

"It had damn well better not be anything else, either," said Parker ruefully. "The Old Man just got through giving me hell on the *Melville*. What ails this tub, anyway? The other pigs've managed to keep on moving."

"The way she's built, I guess," answered McCarthy. "She's a war baby. Some shipyard made a record on 'er—built 'er complete in four months from duct keel to connin' tower; sorta stunt to show how they was doin' their bit to win the war. An' this is the result. Nothin's right. When it's not one thing bustin' down, it's two. I wisht I was back on a battlegwagon. This bucket's gonna be our finish sure."

"Not if I know it," snapped the skipper. "You carried out your orders, Mac?"

"Yeh, I done what you said. There ain't a piece o' machinery inside this hull that us engineers ain't gone over to make sure she's right. Up for'd, Fuller an' the torpedo gang's done the same fer their gear; an' Sparks here's gone over the electric outfit from stem to stern. Nothin' in the boat that we could git hands on ain't been overhauled; only the rudders an' the gear outside's left. If you want that inspected you'll have to put the boat in drydock. An' lemme tell you, Cap'n, the crew's all shot. They ain't had no rest fer forty-eight hours; the first thing you know, they'll be goin' to sleep standin' up."

"No, Mac, we can't drydock her. Orders are to sail at dusk. Turn all hands in except the watch; let 'em get what

rest they can till we get out. There'll be mighty little rest for 'em once we're out playing hide and seek with Fritziel!"



A VAGUE mass loomed in the darkness off the starboard beam. Lieutenant Parker glanced up hastily at it. Daunt Rock. They were passing through the rocky cleft that formed the entrance to Queenstown harbor.

"Right a little!"

"Right a little, sir!" echoed the quartermaster, and swung the steering controller over for a moment.

"Steady now. Follow the lights."

"Aye, aye, sir!"

Ahead in the darkness two faint points, perhaps a hundred yards apart, gleamed fitfully, bobbing up and down against the black background of the night—the hooded sternlights of the two mine-sweepers clearing a safe passage to the open sea for the *L-18*. Between those boats a wire cable sawed through the depths, sweeping for mines sowed by enemy submarines outside the harbor.

Anxiously Parker watched the steering, keeping always in the wake of that sweep. At half speed the *L-18* plowed through the night, a safe mile astern of her shepherding convoy.

The submarine started to pitch sluggishly as she met the ocean waves; spray broke over the chariot bridge, drenched the quartermaster and soaked the officer crouching behind him in the confined space between the binnacle and the periscope shears; a trickle of water ran down the open hatch at their feet, gathering in a little pool in the control room below. Parker pulled the helmet of his wind breaker lower over his forehead, wiped the salt spray from his eyes, peered steadily ahead over the binnacle, conning the ship to keep it squarely between those protecting lights.

A thud, a distant roar; a cloud of white foam shone for an instant against the black water ahead; the light on their port bow danced violently a few sec-

onds. The *L-18* shook uneasily a moment, then settled down again to the steady pounding of her Diesels.

"Another egg," muttered Parker. "Funny how the Heinies always know when a ship's coming out."

"Easy enough, Skipper," growled the quartermaster, his eyes glued on the patch of froth ahead where the mine had exploded. "Queenstown's full o' spies. Lucky fer us we had them sweeps. That egg was right in our path!"

Parker nodded. Lucky, yes. For the *L-18* was steaming squarely through a roiled mass of foam, standing out sharply in the dark ocean. He glanced ahead. There were the twin lights, a hundred yards apart, moving steadily on through the night as if nothing had happened. He owed his luck to the mine-sweepers, unromantic trawlers manned by fishermen, steaming unconcernedly through the minefields clearing a path for the fighting ships. Parker shook his head. A tough life on those sweeps. Fine chance of striking mines themselves. Of course, their light draft allowed them to steam right over a mine without contacting it. That is, if Heinie had his mines all set at the right depths. But occasionally he didn't, and one floated too close to the surface for even a light draft trawler to pass over. A tough life on those mine-sweeps. He shook his head again. Not for him.

"We're clear, Cap'n. The sweeps is headin' back!" mumbled the helmsman.

Parker turned, looked over the edge of the chariot bridge. The lights ahead had veered to port, stopped while they heaved in their kites and reeled in the sweep wire. A sharp flicker of light pierced the darkness; a blinker tube was flashing at them from the wheelhouse of the nearest vessel. In dots and dashes came the message—

"Good luck!"

The flickering ceased, the dim guide lights on the trawlers were suddenly turned off, the *L-18* pounded ahead through the darkness into the open sea. They were clear, in water so deep the

Germans could not anchor mines. A brief command, the *L-18* turned to starboard, headed for the seas to the west of Ireland where the troopships of America, jammed full of doughboys, were rushing reinforcements to the hard pressed Western Front.

"Good luck!" Parker repeated the message gloomily, strained his eyes ahead where the low bow of his submarine plunged into the seas.

Good luck! The *L-18* had meant anything but that to him so far. Would she hang together this cruise? His last chance. Disconsolately he wondered what a tour on Guam was like. A mere speck in the Pacific, no place for an officer in wartime. He gripped the rail, stared ahead into the night. No tour on Guam for him!



"SILENCE in the boat!"

At diving stations, the crew of the *L-18* leaned tensely over their controls. The pounding of the Diesels ceased suddenly. A strange quiet gripped the hull, broken only by the sharp hiss of air whistling out the vents as the *L-18* went awash.

In the center of the control room McCarthy heaved round on a huge valve wheel, screwing home the main air inlet to the Diesels. A bang, the quartermaster above slammed the conning tower hatch, slid down the ladder into the control room, gripped the steering lever.

With his eyes glued to the depth gage on the port bulkhead, Parker watched as the needle registered their sinking.

McCarthy gave his valve a final twist, reported—

"Outboard ventilation valve secured, sir!"

Parker nodded. Twenty feet, the deck was just going under.

"Ready on the main motors, sir!"

"One third ahead!" Without taking his eyes from the gage, the skipper stepped to the periscope, watched their rapidly increasing depth.

The hiss of air ceased, a tiny jet of

water shot out the telltale from the ballast vent line. A seaman hastily closed the cock, called out—

"Ballast tanks flooded, sir."

"Aye, aye. Close all the vents!"

More valves were hurriedly screwed down, reported closed. The *L-18* kept sinking. Forty feet on the gage.

"Enough!" called Parker sharply.

"Hold her at forty. Standard speed, both motors."

Diving wheels twirled; down went the controllers; the whir of electric motors filled the boat. Parker pressed a button. A slight grinding broke out as the periscope tube rose slowly from the well at his feet, came to full elevation, stopped. He pressed his face against the rubber eyepiece, looked out.

A few faint streaks of red glowed in the east, lighting dimly the dark circle of sky and sea visible through the periscope. The day was breaking. He swung his lens around, swept the horizon. Nothing in sight.

For the hundredth time Parker looked at the crumpled radio message on the chartboard. He knew it by heart now.

FROM: C IN C, QUEENSTOWN.

TO: U.S.S. *L-18*.

U-6 REPORTED OPERATING IN YOUR SQUARE STOP USE UTMOST ENDEAVORS TO MAKE CONTACT.

Parker smiled ruefully. Only too well he realized the *U-6* was there. Would he ever forget those drifting corpses he had glimpsed yesterday, the sightless eyes staring down his periscope, the gray sea dotted with the bloated bodies of men and horses through which he had picked his way gingerly as the *L-18* swam slowly through the wreckage where the torpedoed *Morentic* had gone down? Yes, the *U-6* was in his square.

And if it had not been for that destroyer, he might have made the contact the C in C was so anxious about. He groaned at the recollection. Infernal luck! Midnight, the *L-18* was cruising slowly awash, her engines barely turn-

ing, all hands on the bridge straining their ears for the pounding of Diesels.

Their enemy, they knew, must be on the surface somewhere, running engines full power recharging batteries for his next day's work. The *L-18* had caught her radio code signals, reporting no doubt to far off Germany her success in sinking the horse transport; had heard her chattering the gossip of the war zone with sister U-boats scattered over the seas off Ireland. Strong signals—she was close to them. Cautiously Parker had zigzagged back and forth, seeking the bearing on which his antennæ caught the signals loudest, then headed carefully in on that bearing. He remembered the sudden thrill when a familiar throb came to them faintly across the heaving seas, when through his night glasses he had picked up the vague outline of a distant conning tower silhouetted against the dark horizon.

And he had made a perfect approach. With engines stopped to prevent any noise which might alarm the enemy, he had stealthily crept in on his motors to within a mile, submerged to periscope depth to avoid any chance of being seen, and at full speed had moved in to make his attack on his unsuspecting prey, torpedoes ready, his finger on the firing button, his target broadside on, success assured.

C'est la guerre! He bit his lip at the recollection. His radioman, white faced, had stumbled out of the little sound-proof booth abaft him with startling news. A destroyer! The high pitched note of her propellers was ringing in his microphones.

And almost before the breathless operator had blurted out his message, Parker, his eye still pressed to the periscope, saw a streak of fire flash through the darkness, a brilliant glare as the tracer shell burst, and in that flash of light the *U-6* brilliantly outlined with men madly scrambling down her conning tower, while she moved slowly ahead and started to settle in a crash dive. Then darkness again.

In anguish, Parker had taken a wild chance, hurriedly pressed the trigger, fired a torpedo at his vanishing prey. He had missed. Range too long, aim bad, poor run on his torpedo? He never knew. The *U-6* had disappeared before he could fire again; in the rush of events that followed, only the *L-18* had occupied his thoughts.

"Hard dive!"

With diving planes at full depression, they had plunged suddenly from periscope depth to eighty feet. And just in time.

A sharp explosion, the *L-18* shook violently, her white faced crew clung to their controls to save themselves. A depth bomb. Was it meant for them or the *U-6*? Who knew? To a destroyer every submarine was an enemy. Shoot first, investigate afterward.

A little sick, Parker had hesitated a moment. Should he come up? A salvo of four-inch shells might come crashing into his hull before he could get the lid open and his Very recognition signals bursting in the air.

Another crash, and then at brief intervals a series of shocks. The *L-18* quivered with each shock. The destroyer was laying a pattern of depth bombs as she whirled in a figure 8 over the spot where the *U-6* had disappeared. Soon she would stop, listen for propellers. And if she picked them up instead of the *U-6*, a shower of depth bombs would come raining down on them. Parker's indecision vanished.

"Stop the motors!"

Without headway to overcome her negative buoyancy, the *L-18* commenced sinking. 100 feet, 200 feet, 250 feet. In agony Parker had watched the gage. Bottom at sixty fathoms according to the chart. 200 feet was their working depth, 300 feet their safe limit. Was the chart accurate? 300 feet, still sinking. Petrified, the men gripped their controls, watched the gage. And then at 305 feet, a gentle bump, the *L-18* came softly to rest in the mud. A sigh of relief echoed audibly through the con-

trol room, tense limbs relaxed, his crew breathed once more.

The shocks of the depth bombs were fainter now, ceased shortly. Crouched alongside the operator in the tiny radio booth, receivers jammed over his ears, Parker listened on the microphones to the shrill note of the propellers on the surface, singing in his ears one moment as the destroyer darted ahead, then ceasing abruptly as she stopped her engines to listen. Back and forth, it seemed endlessly, that note rang through the sea as the destroyer searched the depths, then faded gradually as the baffled ship swung in ever widening circles, trying to pick up the trail of her submerged enemy.

But in vain. Somewhere in the depths, nestling quietly in the mud like himself, Parker visioned the *U-6* and shuddered at the thought. The vessel, which a few minutes before he had been ready to blow out of the water, was now like the *L-18* a hunted fugitive, her crew crouching in terror like his own in their cramped compartments, shaking at the fear that something might float up, give their hiding place away, send a hurtling bomb, set to burst at the bottom, down on the hull to crush their fragile shell, bury them forever in the mud and the ooze of the ocean floor.

But it had not happened. The destroyer had vanished, seeking a submarine still underway. After two hours on the bottom, Parker had partly blown his safety tank, floated up to thirty feet, pushed up his periscope, made a careful search to insure that neither friend nor foe was in sight on the surface, then hastily had blown the rest of the safety tank to get his conning tower fully out of water.

With the lid open to get air for the engines, he had hurried full speed through the night to put at least five miles between himself and the scene of the battle, lest the *U-6* should bob up and catch him unawares; then, with propellers disconnected and engines working full power, the *L-18* spent the

rest of the dark hours recharging storage cells, while her thankful crew took turns, four at a time, in clambering up on the little bridge, hardly six feet out of water, and breathing in the free air of heaven.



ONCE more Lieutenant Parker swept the horizon with his periscope, scanned the waves as the dawn broke over the sea. Nothing in sight on the surface—the destroyer had vanished.

At dead slow speed the *L-18* swam through the sea, using only enough of her precious electricity to give her diving planes control and hold the depth against the slight positive buoyancy which Parker was carrying on the boat for safety's sake. Slowly the minutes dragged on, grew to hours. The sun rose high in the heavens, no longer throwing a blinding glare into the periscope eye as it swung round. The submarine wheeled gradually in a huge spiral, the search curve on which he hoped to find his enemy.

Inside the boat the air grew thicker; the odor of oil, of acid fumes from the batteries, permeated the control room, the atmosphere became laden with carbon dioxide from being breathed over and over again. Parker noted that the air of alertness with which his men had taken the boat under was gradually vanishing; heads drooped over the controls, lack-luster eyes gazed vacantly at gages, pored uncomprehendingly over the switchboard. His own head started to ache; his eyes, strained by the high powered lenses in the periscope, burned in their sockets; his head felt heavy, his mind thick.

Six hours under, eight more to go before darkness settled again and they could safely come up. He wondered vaguely what had become of the *U-6*. She must be taking it easier. Unaware of the presence of another submarine, she would spend part of her time, at least, awash with her lid open, taking a fresh supply of air every hour or so,

perhaps even running on her Diesels to conserve her batteries, safe in the thought that she could spot a surface ship and dive long before such a small object as her conning tower could be seen by any approaching vessel.

Parker thanked his luck for that unawareness; at least he had not given himself away by coming up and firing recognition signals while the *U-6* was still around; unquestionably the Germans had dived the night before without the slightest knowledge that the sudden rush of that hurtling destroyer was all that had saved them from certain disaster.

Well, it was nearly over. With the night, his patrol finished, the *L-18* would move hastily out of that square, get well clear before the *L-7*, relieving them, came on the patrol in the morning. A grim situation, all right. Once his relief arrived, if he was still there submerged, she would certainly blow him out of the water if she sighted his periscope; if he ran on the surface and disclosed his identity as an Allied man-of-war, then a torpedo from the lurking *U-6* was almost certain to do the same.

A rotten life in the pigs—fair game for everybody, submerged or afloat, with that blasted air to eat your lungs out while under water, and the deafening roar of Diesels to ruin your sleep and drive you crazy while you charged at night; and always in the background of your mind, while running submerged, that gnawing fear of the sea, lying in wait to crush your boat and flatten you out if your pig went out of control for a brief instant and sank just a few feet too deep before you caught her.

Parker shook his head, tried to throw off the weight that seemed to press in on his throbbing temples. He was lucky—his last day on patrol. Tonight when they broke surface, and the engines started to pound again, it would be to drive them home to Queenstown, not to charge batteries for another day of torture in the depths.

And nothing had broken down. He

could face Commander Wilson on the *Melville*; his men, instead of overhauling engines, could spend their time in port on liberty. Cork, even Queens-town, after a week jammed inside this pig would be heaven for a sailor. No breakdowns. Perhaps the jinx was shaken at last. With an effort, the weary skipper pulled his thoughts back from the rest that awaited him in Queenstown, pressed his eye against the lens in front of him.

A vista of gray waves met his sight, undulating gently, capped with patches of white foam here and there, merging in the distant haze with a cloudy sky. Slowly he revolved the periscope tube, scanned the horizon, searched the intervening sea. Nothing in sight—no ships, no smoke, only the vast sweep of the deserted ocean. Perfunctorily he finished his inspection, then pressed the motor button and started to house the periscope.

A glint of sunshine flashed into his eye. Queer. The sun was too high for that. He stopped housing, squinted out the lens. His heart skipped a beat.

There, half a mile off on the starboard bow, its tapering length glistening in the sun, was a periscope!

Parker leaned forward, punched a voice tube button, shouted excitedly:

"Torpedo room! Stand by. U-boat on the starboard bow!"

As if jolted by an electric current, the drooping figures around the control room stiffened suddenly, looked toward their skipper. Forgotten were the bad air, the cramped quarters. Tense fingers gripped the controls again, eager eyes scanned their instruments, ready for action.

The enemy was in sight!

His temples throbbing wildly, Parker pressed his face again to the eyepiece, looked hurriedly at the bearing. Forty degrees on his starboard bow. They must bring her dead ahead.

"Ten degrees right rudder!" His voice sounded strange, far off, as, eye glued to the periscope, his words echoed through

the stale air.

"Ten right, sir," repeated the helmsman just forward of him.

The *L-18* started to swing. Parker dared not even for an instant take his gaze off that thin steel finger dancing in the far off waves; if he lost it in the whitecaps, he might never pick up that gleam again. Slowly he walked his periscope round as the submarine answered her rudder, and the bearing of his target drew ahead. The *L-18* heeled gently in her turn and Parker clung tightly to the handles to maintain his balance. Only ten degrees on the bow now.

"Meet her!"

Hurriedly Lieutenant Parker tried to estimate the course of that periscope. Was the *U-6* bows-on to him, or was she broadside? Only in the latter case would a slim submarine offer target enough for a decent shot. Tensely he watched the wisps of spray play round the distant tube, caught a tiny wake on its far side, switched in the high magnification lens to study it. The field of view in his periscope narrowed, the distant waves seemed suddenly to leap closer; he was startled to see that the eye of the enemy periscope was pointing directly at him, that the two submarines were at that moment headed directly for each other!

For an instant his blood froze, his jaw dropped, he stared open mouthed, hypnotized by that tiny lens gleaming at him across only half a mile of tossing seas.

"Steady on th' course now." The quartermaster's voice broke the silence of the control room.

With a jerk Parker came back to life. No more maneuvering; he must get his torpedo in first!

He fumbled for the firing pistol, stared out the lens. The enemy periscope was dead ahead, his boat had steadied. His fingers gripped the firing handle, started to squeeze the trigger. A vague recollection; he paused. The torpedo room had not reported ready.



FOR the first time since sighting the enemy, Parker tore his eye from the rubber shield, stooped hastily, and looked forward through the open watertight doors into the torpedo room, where outboard of the shining bronze covers to the tubes, he glimpsed the broad back of his chief torpedoman straining frenziedly over a wheel.

Parker straightened up, punched a button, sang out into the voice tube—

“Torpedo room there! What’s wrong?”
The reply fell like a bludgeon on his ear.

“The bow cap’s jammed, Cap’n! We can’t rotate it to uncover any o’ the torpedo tubes outside.”

Parker’s heart sank like lead. The bow cap, the spherical outside fair-water over his nest of torpedoes, with a solitary opening which had to register with the mouth of the tube to be fired before the missile could be ejected! Jammed! And with none of his four tubes in line with the opening.

Parker stooped, stared forward into the torpedo room where his men were struggling with the rotating gear. A brawny seaman seized a spoke, added his weight to the chief’s on the wheel.

Broken down again! In a daze the stunned skipper watched the straining torpedo men while the full meaning of the accident sank into his brain. The glistening bodies of his torpedoes, the grim warheads full of TNT that a moment before, so he thought, had needed but the pressure of his finger to spring from his tubes toward the *U-6*—imprisoned now behind that fatal cup, impossible of release. The *L-18* had suddenly become impotent, unable to attack, helpless even to defend herself. What had sprung the shafting, jammed the operating gears? Rotten construction? Those depth bombs last night? No difference now.

As he watched, a third seaman sprang forward with a huge monkey wrench, slipped its jaws over the rim of the wheel for a lever, flung his body hard

down on the handle. No use. The wheel refused to turn, the bow cap was frozen tight with all the tubes sealed off.

Stunned by the situation, Parker turned to find terrified faces staring at him from all sides; the after end of the room was filled with engineers. Like a flash the news of their disaster had spread through the boat. Unconsciously the men were starting to edge toward the escape hatch beneath the conning tower.

Escape! A cracked laugh died in his throat. Why worry over the hatches? The *U-6* was close aboard. Another few seconds and the quickest way out would be through their smashed side.

“Hard dive!”

The order burst from his parched lips, echoed like a bomb through the room. Diving wheels spun madly, controllers went over to full speed ahead. The *L-18* started to seek safety in the depths. Ignoring his crew, Parker flung himself at the periscope, got a fleeting glimpse of that deadly eye staring at him not two hundred yards away, saw a fine cloud of spray spout through the surface, a streak of bubbles form in the waves, race for him. Then the sea washed over his periscope, suddenly blotted out everything.

“They’ve fired!” groaned Parker. He twisted his head from the useless lens, looked feverishly over his shoulder at the depth gage. Still 40 feet, the needle hardly starting to move. Would they never get down? Blanched faces, wild eyes all around followed his glance; trembling lips muttered curses watching that dial.

In a few seconds now the torpedo would strike. Parker looked despairingly toward his torpedo room, at the men still struggling there. “One more breakdown and back you go to—” Commander Wilson’s threat flashed through his mind. “Annapolis.” One more breakdown. How deep was the ooze on the ocean bottom? “Or Guam till this war’s over.” Wilson was wrong. A shattered submarine buried in the mud. 45 feet

on that gage now. No hope. How many seconds since the U-6 had fired? Only ten seconds needed by a torpedo to cover that distance. His gaze wandered over the side of the submarine, covered everywhere with intricate machinery. Where would their hull suddenly burst open, let the ocean come pouring through?



A DEAFENING crash! The L-18 heeled drunkenly to port; the bow shot up at a sharp angle. The end. Curses, prayers, a tangle of arms and legs, a knot of crazed seamen struggling for the ladder to the conning tower—then a sudden silence as the fighting men stopped, looked wonderingly around for the rushing water that should be flooding the boat.

Parker, in a daze, extricated himself from the kingston levers in the port bilges, groped his way uncertainly back to his station. The water. Where was it? Which compartment had that torpedo torn apart?

Incredulously he shot a glance through the forward bulkhead, then aft through the quivering hull. The deck was badly heeled; mattresses, men, tools, charts, were sprawled out everywhere; but there was no cataract of water rushing toward him—yet.

What had happened? That explosion, the shock that had tossed them through the seas like a bubble? The torpedo had hit somewhere. In a damaged boat Parker dared not stay submerged.

“Blow all ballasts! Hard rise!”

His sharp command rang through the control room. Bewildered men, startled to find themselves still alive, untangled themselves from the manifolds, scrambled out of the bilges, staggered back to their controls. The shrill whistle of compressed air, the grinding of gears, the whir of motors echoed through the boat as the men of the L-18 fought to check their descent, to rise to the surface, escape from their prison. Ballast

water poured overboard, propellers drove viciously ahead, diving planes at full elevation shot the trembling shell upward.

An instant, then their conning tower burst clear, and the submarine rocked unsteadily in the seaway. Parker scrambled up the ladder into the conning tower, tripped the lever; the hatch flew back, he crawled through. Water was still pouring off the chariot bridge, his low deck was just breaking from the sea. Swiftly his eye ran along the hull from the jagged net cutter in the bow to the tapering stern; unbelievably his glance swept back. No damage anywhere.

And yet, that explosion? The torpedo had certainly struck something. What?

Half a ship length ahead, a spreading patch of oil caught his eye. He stared thunderstruck. That was where the U-6 had been!

Something rubbed his legs. He looked down. McCarthy was squeezing through the hatch; below him Parker caught a glimpse of the conning tower jammed with men, struggling to get out. In a trice, his chief machinist's mate was alongside him, seamen were pouring out the hatch, crowding the chariot bridge, clambering down the outside of the conning tower to the half awash deck below.

A huge bubble of air rose through the sea into the middle of the slick, frothed a moment, then subsided as the oily ring widened out, a patch of water, strangely smooth in an ocean of tossing waves and spray tipped crests. Anxiously Parker scanned the sea. No periscope anywhere. But there in the bubbles and the froth, a few bits of oil soaked wreckage were breaking surface, shattered fragments of a submarine's deck!

“Look, Skipper, this pile o' junk rates a chevron on 'er conning tower from now on. We're heroes! The L-18's sunk a U-boat!” McCarthy pointed excitedly at the bits of wood and huge globules

of oil gushing upward near their bow.

Lieutenant Parker nodded slowly.

"Guess you're right, Mac, she's gone. But what under the sun's happened? I saw that torpedo start for us."

"The gyro in the tail o' that torpedo must'a' stuck holdin' its rudder hard over, an' made it run in a circle so it curved round an' soaked the *U-6* instead o' us. I seen that happen onct in target practise, but never with a war shot." He mopped the beads of sweat off his fore-

head. "I guess Heinie's pigboats ain't no more reliable than Uncle Sam's."

Parker looked forward to his bow, in full surface trim now, vaguely made out just below the waterline the outlines of the jammed torpedo tube cap.

He shook his head, gripped the engine telegraph, turned a grimly smiling face toward McCarthy.

"Well, Mac, we're almost helpless. Let's get under way for home while we're still live heroes!"



Ulysses' Last Speech

By HARRY KEMP

"As careless lovers go to their delight
With lifted heart, Elysian-taken breath,
We dared the kiss and fierce embrace of death,
Innumerable day, unnumbered night!
There was no stratagem we failed to shape;
What breaks men's hearts we tossed up for a game;
The sick excuse withholding caution makes
We scorned to serve—and won immortal fame!
We struck defection down with jests for rods.
The chance that serves the coward for escape,
Or that unsettled resolution takes
When the red wave of roaring onslaught breaks,
We brushed aside with laughter like the gods!

"And half the battle was the thing we planned,
Half, shafts we aimed in thought before the blow;
And often, when we moved against the foe,
They, had they guessed how we were undermanned,
Had swept us from the field into the sea—
So great, so slight a thing, is victory!

"As with the meed we fought for, we depart;
Though justly wearers of the laureled fame,
There now needs other courage for the heart
For which old battles can not find the name!"

* * *

When victory crowned them in their tenth, worst year
And what they lost their last persistence won,
Some thought their last, heroic deed was done:
Until Ulysses, leaning on his spear,
Launched this last speech at Agamemnon's host,
And stirred in them again the immortal ghost!