

ing hard in support of an advance along the right bank.

13. *The Seaplanes' good work.*—Very valuable assistance was rendered by the seaplanes bombing and machine-gunning, but by the forenoon of the 8th July they had "run out," and had to be given a brief rest and overhaul.

14. *The Flotilla.*—The situation about this time was that the enemy ashore was reported within 1,200 yards of the flotilla anchorage, with the Russians slowly retiring. The auxiliary craft were therefore moved back, and H.M. Monitor "Humber," which had been covering Topsis during the mutiny, came up-river and I embarked in that ship.

A telephone cable was run to the shore to keep in close touch with the General Officer Commanding (Brigadier-General L. W. de V. Sadleir-Jackson, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.), who had by now taken over the command.

"M.33" was hit by a heavy shell, fortunately without casualties, and continued in action. "M.27" did useful service with her triple 4-inch mounting.

The "Cicala," which had been heavily engaged as advanced gunboat, developed defects due to the continual firing at high elevation, and was relieved by "Cricket." The latter ship came under heavy machine-gun fire from the woods in the vicinity of Selmenga, but replied to it with her own machine-guns, and continued to engage the enemy ships until hit on the water-line with a heavy shell and obliged to come down-river and secure alongside the repair barges, as there appeared to be risk of the ship sinking.

The gap had to be filled promptly to prevent the enemy profiting by his success. The "Humber" slipped her cable and telephone and proceeded up-river at full speed. The fire of her twin 6-inch turret was so effective that, with the further assistance of seaplane bombing, the enemy flotilla's fire was silenced and it withdrew.

That evening a counter-attack was organised to be carried out by our Russian troops, and four heavy bombardments were carried out by the monitors; but very little progress was made.

As there were still no signs of the British reinforcements the naval paddle steamers and "Borodino" were despatched to assist in bringing them up, and on the morning of the 9th July they arrived and the position was stabilised.

15. *Floating mines and net defences.*—The enemy now endeavoured to damage the flotilla by floating mines down on to it.

One of these mines was sighted very early on the morning of the 2nd July approaching the hospital barge. Lieutenant R. H. Fitzherbert-Brockholes, R.N., jumped out of his bunk and into a skiff which happened to be alongside and reached the mine before it could do any damage. He was in the act of securing it, when it exploded, instantly killing him and the three men forming the crew of the boat.

The death of this very gallant young officer was a great loss to the flotilla.

All ships promptly set to work, and in a few days a complete net defence had been laid out above the flotilla anchorage.

16. *Fall of the river.*—The movements of the ships, and the water transport in particular, were seriously handicapped for the ensuing seven weeks by the abnormally low state of the river. Bars at several places limited the load draught to 3 feet 6 inches for some

time, and this greatly increased the difficulties of supply.

### III.—*Change in the Situation.*

On the 18th July a mutiny of the 5th North Russian Rifles at Chinova spread on to Onega, and by the 22nd July that place had been lost. This caused considerable anxiety to the Military Command on account of the threat to our line of communications on the railway front, and orders were received to prepare for immediate withdrawal on the Dwina front and to mine the river.

However, the position was stabilised, and such premature withdrawal avoided.

2. *A marked change had now taken place in the whole situation.*—Koltchak, who had completely failed, was retiring.

Our advance on Kotlas would therefore be purposeless.

3. The evacuation of our forces was governed by various factors, including the provision of shipping to enable persons whose lives might be endangered by our withdrawal to be given the opportunity of leaving the country first, and the collection up-river of the necessary water transport. This latter undertaking was affected to a great extent by the state of the river, as was also the withdrawal of the flotilla. A number of the ships of the flotilla were of such deep draught that at one time they could not have crossed the bars, and would have had to be destroyed.

4. *The main considerations preparatory to withdrawal* became therefore:—

(a) To strike a blow at the enemy to obtain freedom of movement.

(b) To mine the river to obstruct his advance after our withdrawal.

(c) To pass as many ships of the flotilla as possible down the river when the depth of water permitted.

### IV.—*Battle of 10th August, and Subsequent Events.*

An extensive plan of attack was prepared and carried into effect on 10th August.

2. The troops detailed having completed their enveloping movements and arrived in position for assault, the flotilla, in conjunction with the shore artillery, opened a heavy bombardment on Terekovskaya, Leushinskaya, Gorodok and Seltso.

3. H.M. Monitors "Humber," "M.31" (Lieut.-Comdr. F. L. Back, R.N.) and "M.33" were engaged. Seaplanes assisted in bombing and spotting. The kite balloon, working from its barge, was moved up close to the ships to assist in spotting and reconnaissance.

4. After a forty minutes' bombardment fire ceased, and the shore attacks were launched.

5. On the right bank the attack on Gorodok succeeded at once. A further bombardment on Borok was called for and carried out by "Cicala" (Lieut.-Comdr. J. H. L. Yorke, R.N.) and "Humber," when that place fell.

6. On the left bank the attack on Seltso failed at first, and a new attack had to be organised. "Humber," "M.27" and "M.33" bombarded in conjunction with the shore artillery, and Seltso was taken that evening.

7. During these operations the Navy also assisted the Army ashore.

Thirty-five seamen under Lieutenant M.S. Spalding, R.N., and thirty-nine Royal Marines