CHAPTER IV.

So confident did the Germans feel of their security that they stayed in this neighborhood from October twentieth to November seventh, only once—on October twenty-eighth—moving a few hundred yards away from their original anchorage, and although a most vigilant lookout was kept from the crow’s nest on the “Wolf,” the seaplane was not sent up once to scout during the whole of that time. Coal, cargo and stores were transferred from the “Hitachi” to the “Wolf,” and the work went on day and night with just as much prospect of interference as there would have been if the “Wolf” had been loading cargo from a wharf in Hamburg in peace time. The coolness and impudence of the whole thing amazed us.

But one day, October twenty-second, was observed as a holiday. It was Lieutenant
Rose's birthday, and, incidentally, the Kaiserin's also. So no loading or coaling was done, but the band on the "Wolf"—most of the members with the minimum of clothing and nearly all with faces and bodies black with coaldust—lined up and gave a musical performance of German patriotic airs.

Every day we looked, but in vain, for signs of help in the shape of a friendly cruiser, but the Germans proceeded with their high-seas robbery undisturbed and unalarmed. The "Hitachi" had a valuable cargo of rubber, tea, tin, copper, antimony, hides, coconuts and general stores, and it was indeed maddening to see all these cases marked for Liverpool and London being transferred to the capacious maw of the "Wolf" for the use of our enemies.

On October twenty-eighth a Japanese sailor wounded at the time of the "Hitachi's" capture, died on the "Wolf." This was the last death from wounds inflicted on that day. His body was brought over to the "Hitachi"—once again all the German officers from the Commander downwards, including the two
doctors, appeared in full uniform to attend the funeral service. The Japanese Captain and officers also came over from the “Wolf,” and the body was committed to the sea from the poop of the “Hitachi.”

Various rumors came into circulation about this time as to what was to happen to us. The most likely thing was, if the “Wolf” did not secure another prize, that the “Hitachi” would be sunk and all of us transferred to the “Wolf” once more. It was certain, however, that the Germans did not want us on the “Wolf” again, and still more certain that we did not want to go. They regarded us, especially the women, as a nuisance on board their ship, which was already more than comfortably full. In addition, some of the German officers who had before given up their cabins to some of the married couple prisoners, naturally did not want to do so again, as it meant that all the officers’ quarters would become very cramped. The German doctor, too, protested against further crowding of the “Wolf,” but these protests were overruled.
There was talk of their leaving the "Hitachi" where she was, with some weeks' stores on board, with her coal exhausted and her wireless dismantled, the "Wolf" to send out a wireless in a few weeks' time as to our condition and whereabouts. If this had happened, there was talk among us of a boat expedition to the Seychelles to effect an earlier rescue. There was also mentioned another scheme of taking the "Hitachi" near Mauritius, sending all her prisoners and German officers and crew off in boats at nightfall to the island, and then blowing up the ship. But all these plans came to nothing, and as day by day went by and the "Wolf," for reasons best known to herself, did not go out after another prize, though the Germans knew and told us what steamers were about—and in more than one case we knew they were correct—it became evident that the "Hitachi" would have to be destroyed, as she had not enough coal to carry on with, and we should all have to be sent on to the "Wolf."

But the married men protested vigorously against having their wives put in danger of
shell fire from a British or Allied cruiser, and
on October thirtieth sent the following peti-
tion to the Commander of the “Wolf”
“We, the undersigned detained enemy
subjects traveling with our wives, some
of whom have already been exposed to
shell fire, and the remainder to the risk
thereof, and have suffered many weeks’
detention on board, respectfully beg that
no women be transferred to the auxiliary
cruiser, thereby exposing them to a
repetition of the grave dangers they have
already run. We earnestly trust that
some means may be found by which
consideration may be shown to all the
women on board by landing them safely
without their incurring further peril.
We take this opportunity of expressing
our gratitude for the treatment we have
received since our capture, and our sin-
cere appreciation of the courtesy and
consideration shown us by every officer
and man from your ship with whom we
have been brought in contact.”
He sent back a verbal message that there
was no alternative but to put us all, women included, on the "Wolf," as the "Hitachi" had no coal, but that they should be landed at a neutral port from the next boat caught, if she had any coal.

We were still not satisfied with this, and I again protested to our Captain against what was equivalent to putting women out in a German first line trench to be shot by our own people. He replied that we need have no anxiety on that score. "We know exactly where all your cruisers are, we pick up all their wireless messages, and we shall never see or go anywhere near one of them." Whether the Germans did know this, or hear our ships' wireless I cannot tell, but it is certainly true that we never, between September and February, saw a British or Allied vessel of any sort or kind, or even the smoke of one, although during that time we travelled from Ceylon to the Cape, and the whole length of the Atlantic Ocean.

The food on the "Hitachi" was now getting poorer and poorer. There was no longer any fruit, cheese, vegetables, coffee or jam. All
the eggs were bad, only a very little butter remained, the beer was reserved for the ship’s officers, iced water and drinks were no longer obtainable, and the meat became more and more unpleasant. On the “Wolf” the food was still poorer, and beri-beri broke out on the raider. A case of typhoid also appeared on the “Wolf” and the German doctors thereupon inoculated every man, woman and child on both ships against typhoid. We had heard before of German “inoculations” and some of us had nasty forebodings as to the results. But protests were of no avail—everyone had to submit. The first inoculation took place on November first, the next on November eleventh, and some of the people were inoculated a third time.

One night while the ships were lashed alongside a great uproar arose on both ships. The alarm was given, orders were shouted, revolvers and side arms were hastily assumed and sailors commenced rushing and shouting from all parts of both ships. Most of us were scared, not knowing what had happened. It appeared that a German sailor had fallen
down between the two ships; his cries, of course, added to the tumult, but luckily he was dragged up without being much injured. We could not help wondering if such a commotion were made at such a small accident, what would happen if a cruiser came along and the real alarm were given. The ship would bid fair to become a veritable madhouse—evidently the nerves of all the Germans were very much on edge. The only thing for the prisoners to do was to get out of the way as much as possible, and retire to their cabins.

In addition to the transference of coal and cargo which went on without cessation, day and night, our ship was gradually being stripped. Bunks and cabin fittings, heating apparatus, pianos, bookcases, brass and rubber stair-treads, bed and table linen, ceiling and table electric fans, clocks and all movable fittings were transferred to the "Wolf," and our ship presented a scene of greater destruction every day. The Germans were excellent shipbreakers. Much of the cargo could not be taken on board the "Wolf," it was not
wanted, and there was no room for it, and some of this, especially some fancy Japanese goods, clothes, gloves and toys, was broached by the sailors, and some was left untouched in the holds. The Prize Captain secured for himself as a trophy, a large picture placed at the head of the saloon stairs of the “Hitachi.” This represented a beautiful Japanese woodland scene, embossed and painted on velvet.

Longing eyes had been cast on the notice published by the Germans concerning rules and regulations on board, and most of us determined to get possession of it. When first fixed on the notice board it had been blown down, and recovered by a German sailor. It was then framed and again exhibited. Later on it was again taken out of its frame and again pinned up. It remained on the notice board till the day before the “Hitachi” was sunk. After supper that evening I was lucky enough to find it still there, so removed it and have kept it as a memento of the time when I was a “detained enemy subject!”

The boats were all lashed down, the hatch-
prevent wreckage floating away when the vessel was sunk. On the afternoon of November fifth the Germans shifted all the passengers' heavy luggage on to the “Wolf,” and we were told we should have to leave the “Hitachi” and go on board the “Wolf” at one p. m. the next day. The “Hitachi” was now in a sad condition, her glory was indeed departed and her end very near. We had our last meal in her stripped saloon that day at noon, and at one o'clock moved over on to the “Wolf,” the German sailors carrying our light cabin luggage for us. The crew and their belongings, the Japanese stewards and theirs, moved over to the “Wolf” in the afternoon, and at five p. m. on November sixth the “Wolf” sheered off, leaving the “Hitachi” deserted, but for the German Captain and officers, and the bombing party who were to send her to the bottom next day.

Both ships remained where they were for the night, abreast of and about four hundred yards distant from each other. At nine a. m. on November seventh they moved off and manoeuvred. The Germans did not intend to
sink the "Hitachi" where she was, but in deep water. To do this they had to sail some distance from the Nazareth Bank. The "Hitachi" hoisted the German Imperial Navy flag, and performed a kind of naval goose-step for the delectation of the "Wolf." At one p. m. the flag was hauled down, both ships stopped, and the "Hitachi" blew off steam for the last time.

There were still a few people on her, and the "Wolf's" motor-launch made three trips between the two ships before the German Captain and bombing officer left the "Hitachi." Three bombs had been placed for her destruction, one forward outside the ship on the starboard side, one amidships inside, and one aft on the port side outside the ship. At one thirty-three p. m. the Captain arrived alongside the "Wolf," and at one thirty-four the first bomb exploded with a dull subdued roar and a high column of water; the explosion of the other bomb followed at intervals of a minute, so that by one thirty-six the last bomb had exploded. All on the "Wolf" now stood watching the "Hitachi's" last struggle.
with the waves, a struggle which, thanks to her murderers, could have but one end; and the German officers stood on the “Wolf’s” deck taking photos at different stages of the tragedy. The struggle was a long one—it was pathetic beyond words to watch it—for some time it even seemed as if the “Hitachi” were going to snatch one more victory from the sea, but just before two o’clock there were signs that she was settling fast. Her well deck forward was awash; exactly at two o’clock her bows went under, soon her funnel was surrounded with swirling water; it disappeared, and with her propellers high in the air she dived slantingly down to her great grave, and at one minute past two the sea closed over her. Twenty-five minutes had elapsed since the explosion of the last bomb. The Germans said she and her cargo were worth a million sterling when she went down.

There was great turmoil on the sea for some time after the ship disappeared; the ammunition-house on the poop floated away, a fair amount of wreckage also came away,
an oar shot up high into the air from one of the hatches, the sodium lights attached to the lifebuoys ignited and ran along the water, and the “Wolf,” exactly like a murderer making sure that the struggles of his victim had finally ceased, moved away from the scene of her latest crime.

Thus came to an end the second of the Nippon Yushen Kaisha fleet bearing the name of “Hitachi Maru.” The original ship of that name had been sunk by the Russians in the Russo-Japanese war. Our ill-fated vessel had taken her place. It will savor of tempting Providence if another ship ever bears her unfortunate name, and no sailor could be blamed for refusing to sail in her.