

THE NAVY IS HERE.

London, City of Pageants, has been made to realise War, for the past six months by the deprivation of the glitter of Royal Processions, the prancing of caparisoned horses, the music of triumphant bands, and the sound of its own voice. Especially has London deplored its inability to take a vocal part in the passing show. It can be well imagined, therefore, that after six months' loss of pageantry, with what a will the millions of spectators let themselves go on February 23rd, when with peace time magnificence of Civic State, London paid honour to the officers and men of the cruisers *Ajax* and *Exeter* for their victory over the German "pocket battleship" *Admiral Graf Spee*.

Their march through streets packed by wildly cheering crowds, than which nothing could have been more disciplined and manly, and the Royal Investiture at the Horse Guards Parade, culminated in a proud and happy luncheon party in the City's ancient Guildhall.

Here, amid flowers and a blaze of light, was celebrated,

Islands was read, and heartiest greetings to wounded comrades, wishing speediest recovery to health, was returned.

"THE NAVY IS HERE."

Upon rising, Mr. Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, was received with tumultuous cheers.

The right man in the right place.

His speech was, of course, brilliant and inspiring.

Referring to the battle of the River Plate, Mr. Churchill said: "It is an action at once joyous, memorable and unique. . . . The brunt of the war has fallen upon the sailor men and upon their comrades of the Coastal Command of the R.A.F., and we have lost nearly 3,000 lives in a hard, unrelenting struggle which goes on night and day, and is going on now without a moment's respite. The brilliant sea fight which Admiral Harwood conceived and which those who are here executed takes its place in our Naval annals, and I might add in a dark, cold winter it warmed the cockles of our hearts.

"But it is not only in the few glittering hours, glittering,



[Photo]

[Central Press Photos Ltd.]

"Thumbs up" typified the happy spirit of "Exeter" and "Ajax" men joined in their triumphal march to the City of London, February 23rd, 1940.

in the words of the Lord Mayor, the Navy's "victory over the King's enemies."

In proposing the toast of the men of the *Ajax* and *Exeter*, the Lord Mayor, Sir William Coxen, said that nothing had given a greater thrill to the people of this country since the war began than the account of the Battle of the Plate. "For courage, daring, skill, seamanship and tenacity it will merit an honoured place in the annals of the Royal Navy. But the victory was not gained without its price, and of those who had not returned he could only say they were brave men whose names would live for evermore. The officers and men of the *Ajax* and *Exeter* had shown the world that the Royal Navy was ready, able, and willing to accept a challenge whenever and wherever it was offered."

A cable from the Mayor of Auckland, New Zealand, said: "Like you, we are to-day at a civic luncheon honouring *Achilles* heroes of *Graf Spee* engagement. Please convey our citizens' fraternal greetings to the Captains, officers and ships' companies of *Exeter* and *Ajax*."

A cable from *Exeter* and *Ajax* wounded from Falkland

deadly hours, of action which rivet all eyes—it is not only in those hours that the strain falls upon the Navy. Far more does it fall in the weeks and months of ceaseless trial and vigilance on the stormy, icy seas, dark and foggy nights when at any moment there may leap from the waves death and destruction with a sullen roar. . . .

"The Admiralty and the Fleet are learning together the special conditions of this hard and novel war, and, although mistakes and accidents will certainly occur and sorrow will fall from time to time upon us, we hope that from Whitehall the sense of resolution and design at the centre will impart itself to all the Fleet and will lighten the burden of their task and concert the vigour of their action.

"The spirit of our forces serving on salt water on what to-day is, after all, a naval occasion, has never been more strong than now.

ALTMARK EPILOGUE.

The Navy is Here.

"Warriors of the past may look down, as Nelson's memorial looks down upon us now, without any feeling that the island race has lost its daring or that the examples

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