

these islands. The final stage of the journey to Thurso through the brown hills of Caithness after Forsinard is left behind is somewhat wearisome. There are miles upon miles of practically uninhabited countryside, reminding one of the South African veld.

Thurso is reached in time for luncheon before embarking on the mail steamer at St. Ola for the passage across the Pentland Firth. On leaving Scrabster the distant hills of Orkney come in view, and if the day is clear the cliffs of Hoy, with the famed Old Man, can be distinctly seen. The Pentland Firth, with its tide-races and exposure to the Western Ocean, is capable of providing the traveler with some unpleasant experiences and recollections, but frequently the Firth does not live up to its evil reputation, and the passage is effected without any rough-and-tumble. In any case, even when the mail steamer lurches and rolls her worst, it is a comfort to recollect that she is reputed to have crossed twice daily for fully twenty-seven years, and that she has never yet 'couped.'

But the chief attraction at the present time is that the mail steamer does not pursue her usual course, but diverges to call alongside the naval base ship H.M.S. Victorious with mails and naval ratings. After a two-hours' journey we enter Scapa Flow by the Longhope entrance.

Here one gets some idea of what a great improvised naval base looks like, even now, when the Grand Fleet has for the most part departed—the shores of the islands covered with temporary buildings of all sorts, the coal hulks, hospital and repair ships, the immense floating dock, the crowds of drifters and mine-sweepers, the general air of bustle and hurry. Before running alongside the Victorious an obliging petty officer points out a group of fully a score of salvaged German destroyers, all huddled together in Lyness Bay, also, marshaled side by side, three salvaged cruisers, the Nürnberg, the Emden (the successor of the famous cruiser, with an enormous Iron Cross painted on her bows), and another. It is only after we cast off from the base ship that we fully realize the cataclysm which has overtaken the mighty German navy. We steam for a considerable

distance past numerous masts with wireless equipment popping up everywhere above the surface, suggestive of the powerful ships now rusting at the bottom of the sea. We note a destroyer lying almost high and dry on the beach. We steam past the mighty hull of the Seidlitz, lying on her side like a great whale or monster of the deep, half submerged on the one side, showing her red bottom and rolling bilges, on the other her funnels and decks with their fittings, a sight never to be forgotten.

A short distance from the Seidlitz lies the Hindenburg. She has sunk erect; no list is detected in her masts or funnels, and her deck is still well above the surface. Her appearance does not give one the same sense of overwhelming and irretrievable disaster as is afforded by the Seidlitz.

Before leaving Orkney one should see Holm Sound, or one of the other entrances to Scapa Flow, still sealed against the ingress of submarines or other craft by British merchant ships sunk stem to stern, linked together by chains, with the tide racing between them. The surprising thing to a landsman was the way these 'block ships' appear to have survived, apparently with little or no damage, the stormy seas of several northern winters.

The trip roughly outlined in these notes is well worth undertaking, if it were only for the unique experience of seeing what is left of the High Seas Fleet.

W. B. B.

ALTHOUGH the solicitors to the Duke of Devonshire will neither confirm nor deny the report that Devonshire House, Piccadilly, has been sold to a British syndicate, there is every reason to believe that the statement is correct, and the purchase price is understood to be about £750,000.

Since the Duke of Devonshire went to Canada in 1916, there has been more than one offer for the acquisition of his historic mansion, and rumor has been busy with various schemes which were said to be on foot for the establishment of a large hotel to be run by an American syndicate. Whether the British purchasers of the property intend to erect an hotel or an imposing block of high-class flats cannot at present be definitely stated; though in-

quiries made by an *Observer* representative recently show that the latter supposition is regarded as the more likely.

The demolition of Devonshire House will rob London of its most famous mansion, and one which, with the exception of Holland House, has played a more important part in its social and political life than any other.

With its disappearance, and the erection on the site of tall premises, in line with the adjoining houses, a material — one might say a lamentable — alteration will be made in the appearance of Piccadilly. The agreeable break, with its stretch of sky, will cease to exist when Devonshire House and its spacious forecourt, through which so many brilliant companies of guests have passed, have given place to a towering hotel or a mammoth pile of flats. With the exception of the well-known club, familiarly known as the 'In and Out' Club, a little

lower down, Piccadilly will then present an uninterrupted line of frontage.

In the event of the purchasers deciding to build an hotel on the site of the mansion, Piccadilly could claim to possess the lion's share of London's high-class hotels, for in it are situated the Piccadilly Hotel, Prince's, the Ritz, and the Berkeley. Not one of these, however, enjoys the unrivaled prospect over the Green Park, which will be the pleasant portion of the visitors or tenants of the building that will occupy the grounds of Devonshire House, though the Ritz Hotel partly shares this advantage.

For many years the front of Devonshire House was hidden completely from view by a blank wall, but in 1897 the beautiful iron gates, which form such a feature at this point of the thoroughfare, were brought there from the Duke's residence at Chatsworth.

## THE EDITOR'S NOTE-BOOK

**Lieutenant-Colonel Repington** is the military critic of the *Morning Post*.

\* \* \*

'**Astolfo**' is a signature of the Italian correspondent of *L'Europe Nouvelle*, a journal of French liberal opinion.

\* \* \*

**Richard Whiteing** is the author of *Number 5 John Street*.

\* \* \*

**René Bazin**, poet and novelist, is one of the group of French literary men

who have justly attained international distinction.

\* \* \*

**Brinsley MacNamara** is the author of *The House with the Squinting Windows*.

\* \* \*

**J. C. Squire** is on the staff of the London weekly, *Land and Water*.

\* \* \*

**Archibald Hurd** is a distinguished civilian critic of naval affairs.