

"Let us Forget" ²²
by an Naval Lieutenant

It is difficult to reconcile the emotions of a Mother, whose two sons were victims of the U Boat campaign; with the cordial welcome and hospitality extended to one of our late enemies the U Boat Commander.

The infamous warfare waged against those who, in many instances, were helpless non-combatants, incensed all - who knew the truth - with a just feeling of scorn for the German Submarine Service as a whole, and particularly for those individuals who, in their harsh callousness, carried on an even more fiendish crusade against impotent victims.

No one of us who remembers the incident (atrocious would be a more suitable word) of the sinking of the "Royal Prince" in the Mediterranean, in the early months of 1918, by a German submarine, can forget the brutal and callous conduct of the Commander who; after the crew had taken to the open boats; forced them to line up on the

deck of his vessel, and, at the point of his revolver, compelled them to scuttle their own boats.

Then submerging his vessel, he left his helpless victims to drown.

In these days of peace, when the din of warfare is happily passing further into the background of our memories, the story still does not fail to revive the old feeling of bitterness.

Yet, these - shall we say, in justice to our late enemy - isolated instances, should not allow us to condemn every individual unit of the U. Boat service, for, as many of us have reason to know, there were, among them, some of the bravest and cleanest fighting men, the pick of the German Navy - doing their duty as they interpreted it, according to their code of warfare, - compelled to wage ruthless

ruthless conflict - under orders from those who remained in the snug security of their official sanctuaries.

It happened to be my lot to meet a "U Boat" Commander, whilst on active service in the Near East. He - as our prisoner, - I - as the Officer in charge of the guard over him.

Our Vessel encountered the "U.C. -", "twenty miles or so, from the Sicilian Coast, and we "engaged", disabling the enemy vessel, in a few minutes, a shot from our 4" gun blowing away part of the Conning Tower.

In less than twenty minutes the "U boat" disappeared in a cloud of smoke, leaving five men struggling in the water.

They were afterwards picked up by one of our ship's boats, and brought aboard our vessel, obviously grateful to be alive. The Commander was among those rescued.

He received courteous treatment at the hands of our Commanding Officer, and was quickly provided with dry clothing from the Ship's Store, as were the remaining four survivors of his crew.

His several requests were granted, such as communicating to his relatives as to his safety, &c. immediately upon our arrival in port, and other matters were attended to, to ensure his comfort.

In due course he was handed over to the Authorities at Malta, for conveyance to England, where I believe he spent the remainder of the War period in the comparative seclusion of Donnington Hall.

He, at least, expressed his gratitude to our Ship's Officers and men, for the chivalrous treatment he had received. Yet, according to his diary - taken from him when captured - he had been responsible for sinking many thousands of tons of Merchant Shipping in the Mediterranean, before his defeat and subsequent

rescue by our hands.

If we put forward the hand of welcome to any representative of the service responsible for the ruthless campaign, surely, we are recognising the main fact, that the service, and not the individual is necessarily to blame.

Are we not rather, giving just credit to one, whose finer feelings were ever uppermost in his mind, despite his noxious duties, and who is ready to avail himself of the chance to meet his old enemy, on a friendly and brotherly mission of peace.

Surely, those who were individually and directly responsible for the ruthlessness-referred to, so often, — cannot avoid the tortures of abject remorse, upon each Anniversary of Armistice Day Yra! even more frequently perhaps, than we can ever conceive, — shall we then still think it necessary to exact further retribution?

Let us instead, make every endeavour to cast the

memories from us - bury the past - and say
to ourselves and them;

" Away with War and all that it
means, for all time, and strive to maintain
a bond of Brotherhood among Nations, to
expunge the very roots of the poisonous
Canker from our hearts".

While our hearts go out in compassion
to such as your Liverpool Correspondent, we can
only pray that such martyrs as she, may yet
rise to the great achievement, and say with
us

" To err is human, ~~but~~ to forgive - divine"

H. S. G.