

CONCEALING THE DRESDEN

By 'Calafate' [pseudonym of Robert Riddell]

Seldom in modern times has there been a search so protracted and vexatious to British arms, or one pursued with such dogged and, for a long time, fruitless effort, as the hunt through the Magellan Archipelagos for that sole survivor of Admiral von Spee's ill-fated fleet, the *Dresden*, which on the afternoon of the 8th of December 1914 (in compliance with orders) broke away from the battle line, scatheless.

To all who are unfamiliar with the Magellan region, the fact that from 8th December until the 14th March, more than three months, the *Dresden* contrived to elude the British cruisers in a comparatively restricted area must appear inexplicable and, conceivably, may have given rise to grave doubts as to the efficiency of the forces employed. But this ungenerous sentiment could never find acceptance by any one conversant with the almost insurmountable difficulties imposed by Nature in an ideal lurking-ground, causing the search to be highly dangerous, with success or failure a mere toss-up. Furthermore, it was perhaps fortunate that, much as they desired it, the British cruisers did not find the quarry in her Magellan lair. Brought to bay, the *Dresden* would surely have shown her teeth—she was fully prepared for this—and, although she never could have escaped, her destruction would not have been so economically achieved as at Juan Fernandez on the 14th March.

The only part of the southern extremity of the American Continent adequately charted, or even mapped out with the slightest pretence to accuracy, was the main channel of the Magellan Straits, that important waterway connecting the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. But this is a mere straggling thread drawn across an immense and practically unknown labyrinth stretching from Cape Horn, Lat. 56° S. to above 52° S. Also there is an intricate network of islands to the south-east of the toe of the continent and a tangled skein of uninhabited, maze-like, rock-strewn alleyways stretching right up the Pacific Coast to 40° S. The waters which bound these desolate, awe-inspiring regions are notorious as the most stormy and unfriendly the world over. As for the channels themselves, for the most part uncharted, in the rare spells of good weather they may resemble a delicately conceived fairyland, placid sapphire waters reflecting the majestic snow-clad peaks and glaciers; nevertheless, they bristle with hidden dangers—every yard of them. Suddenly this fairyland will vanish to give place to an inferno of menacing, forbidding, rock-girdled channels swept by the fierce south-west gales, willywaws, shrieking snow-squalls and rushing currents. The British cruiser captain had to nose his way through these tortuous passes in all weathers, praying that he would not hit the submerged rocks, the presence of which may or

may not be advertised by floating kelp. He risked his ship continually—a long-protracted, nightmare ordeal. Also the searching cruisers' movements might be observed and the discovery of *Dresden's* lair immediately heralded by a hostile torpedo.

To this day the Admiralty charts of the region show an unhealthy profusion of dotted lines and blanks. In 1914 the three places of *Dresden's* concealment figured as *dry land* in the local charts, so it may be gathered that, as the German cruiser avoided the main channels, the British search was conducted without the aid of accurate data; such as the searchers had were completely misleading.

In Magallanes, at the outbreak of war, Germany was in the happy position of being able to enlist the practical aid of her subjects and sympathisers. These included a number of ex-whalers and sealers—all hardy and experienced sea-dogs—who from the earliest days of Magellanic occupation had trafficked through these remote waters on their lawful occasions or, possibly, in anticipation of *Der Tag*. Each German was a reservist and consumed with fervid patriotism; no disciplinary pressure was required to recruit his services. Germans abroad are like that; they are all for the Vaterland. But the German is unhappy if he has no leader—and a leader there was in the person of the German Consul, the ex-British Consul of previous years!

H.B.M. Vice-Consul, himself a hard-bitten, energetic old deep-sea captain, had no such trained and disciplined material at his disposal. While the German Colony, *en masse*, spontaneously gave its whole-hearted co-operation to the Fatherland, the British, the majority of whom were engaged in sheep-farming activities, either volunteered and left for Active Service or became irreplaceable far from the scene of the operations. Wool had to be grown and sheep had to be frozen.

Our Vice-Consul contrived a very efficient system of communication with the British cruisers, but apart from this officer's co-operation, the British ships were thrown upon their own resources during the entire exasperating search.

The writer was in Magellan during the first year of the War, when he managed a farm in the Last Hope or extreme N.W. of the district, and he can vouch that the German system of communications was also efficient. His immediate neighbour, the aristocratic Baron von Maltzahn, kept him posted daily with news of the war's progress, which, although discouraging in those dark days, generally proved correct. This wily gentleman, ex-officer of a crack Prussian regiment, had been locally appointed Generalissimo of an expedition to be composed of 500

reservists, recruited in Chile, who were to attack and occupy the Falklands. He objected strongly to this scheme, but recommended that his adventurous contingent should be landed in South Africa to effect a Boer Rebellion. The plan was under study when Admiral Sturdee registered his vote 'against.' Not only this. He had a visit from a German agent, a tall traveller in 'hardware' rejoicing in the assumed name of zu Helle. He was an intelligence officer from von Spee's squadron, who was put ashore at Valparaiso after Coronel. He was to prepare the way for the German squadron, but found himself at a loose end after the Falklands affair. By their system the Germans occasionally contrived to hoodwink the British Intelligence, as witness the following incident. In compliance with the orders of Captain Luce, of H.M.S. *Glasgow*, the writer on two occasions heroically sallied forth on a small tug to search for the *Dresden*. These were really Laurel and Hardy-esque expeditions. The district to be covered was the Last Hope area, within the Kirk and White narrows. The *Dresden* was never there, for there she would have been cornered. Captain Luce knew she was not there: the writer knew that she was not there; still, the British Admiralty KNEW THAT SHE WAS THERE (in Consuelo Inlet where the depth at high-water is two fathoms), and insisted on Captain Luce's combing out the picturesque locality—to the detriment of his temper and with damage to the *Bristol's* propeller or rudder—or both. On his return from the expedition the writer had a trying half-hour at the telephone listening to the uncontrolled sniggers of the fat Baron who, it turned out, was the primary source of the Admiralty's information.

Of the German Colony, Albert Pagels, a resolute old fisherman, was more than any other agent instrumental in keeping the *Dresden's* pursuers on a string; and lately the writer, in the capacity of an ex-combatant on the other side with a whole week's naval experience to his credit, took the opportunity of discussing the *Dresden* episode with him. Pagels had been guide through the entire district for the Skottsberg Scientific Expedition. Skottsberg speaks highly of him. Twenty years have a healing influence and the *post mortem* was carried out in a friendly atmosphere. Pagels' narrative is unadorned; for the writer does not speak German and Pagels' English and Spanish are almost equally sketchy. It would take a Byron to do poetic justice to the magnificent fiords, snow hills and glaciers which were the scene of Pagels' odysseys. Occasionally the names of cruisers may be confused. This is unavoidable, as Pagels usually recoiled from too great an intimacy with them. Nevertheless, the writer considers Pagels' tale authentic in every detail (except that the dates are taken from memory), and has checked up the narrative by every available means.

Pagels was in his prime at the time of the Falkland Islands battle. He was a herculean, steadfast, red-bearded mariner of unalterable fidelity to the Vaterland (of course, he still is; but now he is twenty years older), a reservist who had seen active service with the German Contingent in the

1900 Boxer rising. But he was a sick man: his hand had been almost blown off by the bursting of an American service rifle, wrested from a Chink in a free-for-all round the Taku forts, and after years in the damp Magellan climate it was giving trouble.

In early December 1914 a large Kosmos liner *Amasis* had been detached from von Spee's squadron and was stowed away in Hewett Bay, an obscure little cove in one of the myriad islands a hundred odd miles south-east of Cape Pillar, that last dread portal from the Straits to the Pacific. Her function was to act as supply and communications ship, maintaining wireless contact with von Spee's squadron. Meanwhile an American freighter *Minnesotan* was on her way from the States with a 7000-ton cargo of coal consigned to a German (ostensibly commercial) firm in Punta Arenas, /1/ but really destined for von Spee's squadron. From there she would be ordered to meet *Amasis* and trans-ship her valuable cargo to the latter's holds, whence it would find its way to the warships. Unfortunately there was a hitch; for when *Minnesotan* called at Punta Arenas, her captain (so Pagels alleges, but *Minnesotan's* captain actually had pro-British sympathies) was 'nobbled' by the British representatives and induced to trans-ship his cargo into the *Turpin*, an interned Roland liner. There it had to remain. This was a serious set-back. Although *Amasis*, as communications ship, remained anchored in Hewett Bay she was practically without coal in her bunkers and unable to move any distance.

On the afternoon of the 6th December /2/ (about forty hours before von Spee's vanguard was sighted from Port Stanley) the German Consul received urgent advices from Monte Video that the two great British battle cruisers, *Invincible* and *Inflexible*, along with several smaller ships, were converging on Port Stanley. It would appear from this that something had leaked out about Admiral Sturdee's secret sailing. The Consul did not know von Spee's exact whereabouts, but presumed that was where he was making for; he was sailing right into this nest of out-size hornets. (It was common knowledge that his destination was the Falklands. This caused quite a flutter there.)

Immediately there was consternation in German quarters and their whole organisation broke into feverish, futile activity. It was essential that von Spee be warned; if he were not he would blunder into Port Stanley and there meet his doom. The Germans still fondly calculated that, by the action of their raiders and submarines, British shipping could be driven off the seas and the Allies brought to their knees. Thus the war might be lost or, at least, defeat might be influenced should von Spee's squadron once come within range of the guns of the manifestly superior British units.

He must be turned; anywhere—away from annihilation.

The Consul rushed round to Pagels' house, found him lying ill, but, invoking the desperate issues at stake, ordered him off on his puny launch. He had to sail forthwith; he was to be the bearer of the fateful telegram for von Spee, which must be transmitted to him from *Amasis*.

Pagels was nothing loth; hurriedly he made his preparations and, accompanied by a comrade of the Boxer rising—one Hans Schindlich—he started away on his little cockle-shell in the teeth of a furious sou'wester. Pagels' fishing boat *Elfreda* was a twenty-six footer, half-decked and rigged for a small sail. She had a tiny motor of one cylinder and fractional horse-power. Seldom has so much depended on so minute a factor. A vehicle so ridiculously trivial to be the bearer of a reprieve for five doomed warships and nearly 3000 men was tantamount to carrying the Crown Jewels in a paper bag on a windy day.

It would appear that the capricious god of battles, who had aided the German cause until the Coronel *débâcle*, had suddenly deserted it. *Elfreda* butted her impudent nose into the driving hurricane while her engine popped in piffling endeavour. It was a tragic race against time, and it was a losing one. *Elfreda* advanced at a snail's pace and was frequently almost engulfed. Twice she was completely swamped, obliging her exhausted crew to make for the shore in order to bale her out. She turned south into Pedro Sound or Bell Bay—a dotted thoroughfare—and fussed her weary way towards Cockburn Channel. On the last morning, close to the seething Brecknock Peninsula, the crew descried a cruiser tearing up channel to meet them.

Was she British? For a moment they were in doubt; but no. She was a friend- *Dresden*—thank God! They waved their eager salute and hoisted what signals they had. They must speak *Dresden*. But the cruiser slashed past; she had no interest in this little boat—none whatever. Pagels did not know it, but the Battle of the Falklands had already been fought and this furtive fugitive was the sole surviving ship of a sunken squadron.

Elfreda carried on and, seventy-four hours out of Punta Arenas, reeling from want of sleep, pain from his injured hand and utter exhaustion, Pagels reached *Amasis*. This was on the 9th of December—forty hours too late.

A tense company grouped in *Amasis*' Telefunken cabin as the operator sent his insistent, pleading messages into the ether: "Von Spee—Von Spee—Von Spee—*Amasis* calling—*Amasis* calling"—but von Spee had vanished.

Numb and bemused, Pagels realised that a battle had been fought. No message could reach the gallant von Spee in this world: there remained nothing else but to do what was possible for *Dresden*.

Next day *Elfreda* set off back for Punta Arenas, making the port in two days. *Amasis*, now a forlorn waif, had just sufficient coal in her bunkers to follow; she did so and was interned in Punta Arenas "for the duration."

On arrival Pagels found that *Dresden* had called there on the 11th and had already sailed, closely hounded by H.M.S. *Kent*, which reached Punta Arenas a few hours after her quarry had slipped out. This was the second of *Dresden's* lucky escapes. She had left to stow herself away in Hewett Bay. After the headlong flight from the battle she had run out of coal somewhere in Beagle Channel, and had hurriedly refuelled by sending her crew ashore to cut firewood-poor soggy stuff at that, but, in the absence of anything better, it served. While she was thus engaged a Chilean sloop of war made its appearance and chivied her on; so she had had to continue her flight to Punta Arenas where coal might be obtained. It was just after this that Pagels had met her and failed to stop her. In Punta Arenas, where she remained twenty-two hours, *Dresden* refuelled with coal briquettes from the interned German liner, *Turpin*. These briquettes did not form part of the cargo of the inconsiderate *Minnesotan*; they were part of *Turpin's* German cargo. From now, until she broke out into the Pacific on her ill-fated essay to play seven bells with Allied shipping (only to meet her doom at Juan Fernandez), *Dresden* was a proscribed fugitive, skulking in an outlaw's Paradise, inaccessible to any but the holders of the keys.

Pagels had only rested in Punta Arenas one day when he was despatched to the *Dresden* at Hewett Bay. He made three trips in quick succession and, seemingly, no serious effort was made to stalk him to *Dresden's* lair; at least there was no organised *private* British expedition.

On the last of the three trips *Dresden's* captain (who, by the way, appears to have been a particularly ingenuous individual) informed Pagels that he had held up a little cutter, *Galilea*, manned by a Frenchman and a Russian, as it had seen his ship and had endeavoured to sail past her. Captain Luedecke had accepted the crew's protestations that they were benevolent neutrals and were merely interested in finding new sheep country. He supplied them with black *brot* and brown, sundry provisions, and virtually 'chased them out of town' by permitting them to continue on their way.

Pagels was disturbed when he heard of this visitation. He knew the cutter and its crew, and strongly suspected that they were out on a roving

commission to locate the hidden cruiser in order to reap a rich reward from the grateful British authorities. He pointed out to the Captain that no such rarities as neutrals had their being in Magellan; even a German might betray him for a consideration, and he recommended that an immediate shift be made to some equally efficient hiding-place. He indicated Christmas Bay (Gonzalez Channel), a little cove in the waterway which figured on the chart as dry, unexplored land but which, in fact, connected Barbara Channel with Stokes Bay.

The Captain pushed off instantly. Captain Luedecke seems to have become more sophisticated after this incident; for later, on receiving a visit from a fellow countryman—a sealer—accompanied by his numerous Indian friends and floating seraglio, he became insistent in enforcing his hospitality on these distinguished visitors, and they remained his guests until he left Christmas Bay for his fresh cubby-hole, an unnamed bay at the eastern end of the Breaker Coast, Santa Inez Island.

Pagels himself raced back to Punta Arenas, arriving before *Galilea*. An hour or two after the latter's arrival he saw from the wharf that a local tug, *Eduardo*, was preparing for a lengthy cruise, and learned that she had been chartered by a party of three prospectors who were loading a quantity of shovels, picks and other engineering impedimenta. Next he scrutinised the prospectors themselves, and avers that 'by the cut of their jibs' he saw R.N. written all over them. So this ostensible gold-rush was really a party of British officers starting out on an expedition to confirm the news brought by *Galilea* of the finding of *Dresden*. Pagels and his mate, on *Elfreda*, sailed away to dodge up and down Barbara Channel for fourteen days, observing this enemy movement, which, he afterwards learned, had carried on as far south as Cape Horn. At last one day, from a little screened nook which was out of *Eduardo's* range of vision, he spotted this tug sailing down Barbara Channel in a southerly direction. *Dresden's* hiding-place was just north of *Eduardo's* position, so, providentially for *Dresden*, she had escaped the notice of the British officers who were now sailing past her. This is not surprising, as the entrance is distinctly uninviting and effectively screened by Nature. Pagels, totally absorbed in *Dresden's* destiny, imagines he was at the time aided by unnatural powers of prescience in following her movements. On one occasion, when utterly worn out by the fatigues of his trip, he fell asleep at the tiller and dreamt that *Dresden* had shifted position to behind a rock some hundreds of yards from her previous one. In the darkness he steered straight for this spot, and there was the *Dresden*.

About this time also, it would seem, Pagels had been seriously threatened ashore; he had been urged by a personage to remain neutral for a consideration of £2500—or—he would be 'for it.' Therefore, rightly or wrongly, he took it for granted that he and his launch were marked by the

British for the 'high jumps' and that if he were caught he would be summarily hanged as a spy. Perhaps Pagels had reason for his pessimistic deductions—partisan feeling runs high when there is a war on. During one of the writer's devoted scourings for *Dresden* (where she never could have been), H.M.S. *Glasgow's* First Lieutenant was told off to accompany him. The Lieutenant had orders from his Captain that in the event of there being the slightest danger of capture by *Dresden*, he was to slip overboard and drown himself rather than let the tug's heroic commodore and her equally meritorious crew run the risk of being shot or hung as civilian spies. So on this and each subsequent occasion Pagels never moved out of town nor slept without his rifle comfortably tucked under his arm.

Just at this time, too, the German cause was favoured by a tremendous slice of luck. *Dresden* was again short of fuel and provisions, and so it had been arranged that an ex-Bremen liner, *Sierra Cordoba*, 12,500 tons, which had been tender to *Kronprinz Wilhelm* and separated from her after disembarking a full complement of Allied prisoners from the ships sunk by the latter raider, should meet *Dresden* and supply her with her cargo of 1500 tons of coal and a choice store of provisions garnered during her mother-ship's depredations. The *Sierra Cordoba's* skipper had never been in the Straits before. There is a doubt as to whether he was aware that the main channel of the Straits was unremittingly guarded by British cruisers or whether he had only his own reckless navigation to thank for escaping their vigilance.

Two, possibly three, cruisers lay in Possession Bay close to the north shore of the Straits, from whence they could command a view of the *navigable* course which here comes, if anything, nearer to the Tierra del Fuego side. On this, the Tierra del Fuego side, there is a huge bank—the Orange Bank—considered so unfeasible for navigation that on the chart no soundings are marked at all. It is fringed by an intricacy of smaller banks where the soundings vary from three to fifteen fathoms; thus this route is only to be recommended to shipowners who may desire to exploit the underwriters. It was ridiculous to conceive that any ship, voluntarily at least, would tackle the Orange Bank, while a vessel taking the only sane course could not fail to be spotted by the watchful cruisers.

Sierra Cordoba, whose captain was 'all at sea' in the Straits, came in from the Atlantic at the top of the tide, steered straight on to the First Narrows, right over the Orange Bank, just brushing Anegada Point, and hugged the Tierra del Fuego coast, contemptuous of buoys or any refinement of present-day navigation. Visibility was bad and the cruisers failed to spot her, for she was steaming miles to the south. The skipper brought his ship to Punta Arenas in blissful ignorance that he had achieved the miraculous. This is the first occasion that a vessel of any size has sailed over the

Orange Bank, and it is likely to be the last.

Sierra Cordoba was informed of the rendezvous with *Dresden* and sailed off under a full head of steam. However, she was not to escape thus easily; for, two hours later, H.M.S. *Kent*, having been advised by wireless of the steamer's passage, arrived in Punta Arenas to pay her respects. The moment this tiresome warship was sighted the German Consul despatched a Captain R., a local German pilot, on a steam tug to catch *Sierra Cordoba* and order her to run into the first convenient anchorage, the sanctuary of territorial waters, so as to avoid capture. As usual, the staff work was good but the material faulty; the tug was too slow, far too slow to catch *Sierra Cordoba*, and soon the *Kent* raced past—an easy winner. Two hours' sail from Punta Arenas, just beyond Cape Froward, is Snug Bay, and it was here that *Sierra Cordoba's* skipper became aware that the Assyrian was upon him. He promptly dumped his codes and log-book and ran into Snug Bay closely attended by the obsequious *Kent*. The *Kent* had just sent off a boarding party and ordered *Sierra Cordoba* to weigh anchor and follow her, and Captain Schaeffer was scratching his head and cogitating as to whether he should comply or send *Kent's* captain to a well-known destination, when the Chilean destroyer *Lynch* sailed into the poignant picture. Her Commander ordered *Kent* to buzz off. This was hard lines on the *Kent*, but there was nothing to be done except release her capture and depart.

The officious destroyer stood by till the *Kent* disappeared in smoke while Captain R. boarded *Sierra Cordoba*, and, with the latter as pilot, the emancipated freighter sailed to the splendid isolation of Martinez Inlet, frowned on by the huge Sarmiento glaciers. This inlet is about a hundred miles from Christmas Bay, where the *Dresden* lay. It was ideal for *Sierra Cordoba's* purpose—it is a long narrow fissure, almost enclosed by towering precipices—but it is a dead end.

At the *Sierra Cordoba* debut Pagels had been replaced as pilot by this Captain R. because *Elfreda's* motor had conked, the cylinder having 'broken' (cracked?) on the last trip from *Dresden*. The repair of the cylinder was troublesome, no soldering done in town held, so Pagels took the damaged piece on board another interned steamer, *Tucuman*, where a mixture of gum and other substances was pressed into the fracture. This mysterious alloy served satisfactorily, and as soon as *Elfreda* was once more in commission she was despatched to *Sierra Cordoba* in Martinez Inlet, bearing a fresh set of code books (encased in wax and buoyed to a little keg so as to be thrown overboard should *Elfreda* run into trouble) to replace those dumped in Snug Bay.

He turned in by Magdalen Sound and was already committed to this Channel when, at 2 A.M., as the low-lying mists cleared, he discerned

smoke issuing from six smoke-stacks—those of H.M.S. *Kent* and H.M.S. *Carnarvon* lying close inshore at Sholl Bay. He felt pretty certain that he also had been spotted by the cruisers, and this was very awkward as the cruisers were in the vicinity of *Sierra Cordoba's* hiding place. His boat was known to have been active on the German side, and if he bolted he would certainly be captured. Even if he escaped, his sudden flight would cause the cruisers to concentrate their attention on this particular locality, which actually hid their quarry. Therefore he decided to keep on without any appearance of furtiveness. He hard-a-starboarded, dumped his code books at a recognisable spot and laid his course to pass within two hundred yards of the anchored warships. While sailing, he blazed away at all sorts of water-fowl, real and imaginary, to give the impression of aloofness and absence of trepidation at this, to him, embarrassing encounter. Then he anchored between the ships and the shore and threw out his nets. No one interfered with him, he caught 'nodings' and at 7 A.M. (of the same morning) the cruisers weighed anchor and slowly proceeded southwards. This brought them still closer to *Sierra Cordoba*, so the apprehensive Pagels dashed up an eminence to follow their movements. One ship proceeded to Cape Turn, then both wheeled back to the north. Again they had been within an ace of success. Pagels decamped before they returned, but now decided that it would be imprudent to carry on to *Sierra Cordoba*; there might be eyes from the shore eagerly watching him, and if he ventured into Martinez it would 'blow the gaff.' He decided to make for the Straits and by Barbara Channel to report to *Dresden*. He retrieved the codes and, just as he was reaching the Straits almost at nightfall, he spied H.M.S. *Glasgow* racing up towards him from Punta Arenas. Again he was spotted, and this time he bolted. The *Glasgow* chased up and he made for a confusion of little channels into which no large ship might enter. Still things looked critical until friendly darkness fell and he was able to dodge pursuit.

Elfreda made very little noise when sailing, as her chirping exhaust was muted by a silencer, a contrivance which consisted of a perforated paraffin tin wrapped in canvas (aeroplane manufacturers, please note).

At 9.30 next morning Pagels was alongside the *Dresden*. Captain Luedecke had resolved that *Dresden* must do something to justify her existence; he was not satisfied with absorbing the attention of the entire squadron that was searching for him; also he must have work to keep his men up to scratch, although, of course, the morale of his crew was excellent. To sally forth, however, he must have coal and provisions. These were on *Sierra Cordoba* only about a hundred miles distant; but they might just as well have been at the other side of the globe, because the latter ship was perfectly blockaded by the British cruisers which, apparently and indefinitely, had adopted Sholl Bay as their station and, for the present, not even a seagull could come out of Martinez without

being perceived. He decided on a desperate measure; the freighter, taking advantage of thick weather when visibility would be at its worst, must run the blockade, must come to Christmas Bay. she might be lucky; anyhow the sheer audacity of the scheme would contribute to its success. Avaunt this inaction!

He therefore ordered Pagels to proceed to *Sierra Cordoba* with his written instructions to Captain R., the pilot, to bring the ship to the *Dresden* as best he might.

In the short summer night of these latitudes *Elfreda*, again hugging the east side of the Channel, slipped past the three British cruisers lying at anchor at Sholl Bay. By hugging the east coast she avoided the cruisers by about three miles. On reaching *Sierra Cordoba* Pagels handed Captain R. his instructions to run the blockade and join up with *Dresden*. Captain R. does not appear to have been a very resolute character; for he immediately threw in his cards declaring that the scheme was a mad one; they must be captured, and he, for one, would find himself dangling from a British yard-arm, a prospect quite repugnant to him. He had had enough of this nonsense, anyhow, and insisted on being immediately repatriated to Punta Arenas. Followed a bitter, lurid argument; but the apprehensive pilot was insistent, and at last Pagels had to agree to conduct him to safety. *Elfreda* sailed with Captain R. as passenger; the pilot had many heart-throbs as again *Elfreda* passed in close proximity to the cruisers, but nothing untoward happened. Pagels immediately returned to *Dresden*, reported the pilot's abdication and volunteered for the job himself. His services were gladly accepted by Captain Luedecke, who expressed every confidence in him.

On this occasion Pagels had a discussion with Captain Luedecke. Having repeatedly run the gauntlet of the cruisers without being observed and knowing that they were still stationed at Sholl Bay, which was within a few hours' sail of *Dresden*, he begged the Captain to come out and guaranteed that he, Pagels, would bring him to within four hundred yards of the unsuspecting enemy without *Dresden's* being seen. Then he imagined, three well-directed torpedoes would rid them of these utter undesirables. Captain Luedecke refused, emphatically. He would not hear of it, as this would constitute a violation of the neutrality of the friendly Chilian nation, causing more harm than good.

The running of the blockade by *Sierra Cordoba* was Pagels' star turn. The weather was atrocious, as only weather in those latitudes can be; but, being so, it was propitious for the undertaking. It was nearly the death of him, but it was this stormy circumstance that made success possible. Ordinarily, there would have been no chance of evading the watchful cruisers.

On the 2nd of January *Elfreda* sailed away but ran into a continuous hurricane, which increased in violence as she proceeded; her route—the southerly Cockburn Channel route—was exposed to the entire fury of the blast. On one occasion *Elfreda* was swamped and had to anchor close inshore while Pagels and his faithful mate emptied the boat of water. Both men were exhausted and all but dead from exposure. In the whirling, smoking night they again passed the cruisers, but under these conditions there was little danger of being seen; in fact, the storm held them up and they had to anchor for some hours near-by. At last, on the evening of the 3rd, with little life left in her crew, *Elfreda* staggered alongside the *Sierra Cordoba*. The latter's spick-and-span skipper, Captain Schaeffer, was outraged to the point of convulsions when he realised that he was ordered to hand over the command of his precious ship to this disreputable-looking ruffian who had boarded him. Still, orders were orders, so he complied with the best possible grace and relapsed into profound despondency.

Pagels ordered the engines to be ready for 8 P.M. the following evening, the 4th of January. *Elfreda* was hoisted on board the freighter before sailing. Pagels had whiled the hours away by throwing out his fishing nets, being fortunate enough to catch over a ton of *robalo* (bream)—a welcome addition to the German crews' fare.

Promptly at 8 P.M. *Sierra Cordoba* weighed anchor, her boiler pressure at its highest and her smoke stack shrouded in wire gauze to avoid betrayal by sparks. For the first ten miles of her course, being still in Martinez Sound, her presence was concealed from the cruisers as here the mountains interposed their bulk. The critical moments would come when she swung into Keats Sound, which is commanded from Sholl Bay; but here the elements came to the aid of the would-be unobtrusive steamer. The furious storm continued, the night was as black as pitch and, except for occasional breaks, no objects could be discerned even a hundred yards off. After carefully nosing her way out of Martinez, *Sierra Cordoba* swung round into Keats Channel and, hugging the precipitous Goodwin side, which furnished a very effective background, raced along at full speed on a bearing. The hurtling, sleety smother of darkness held; they were now close to the cruisers, but in this weather the keenest look-out was futile. The cruisers were passed in safety; but now, all but blindly, *Sierra Cordoba* had to thread her way in the darkness through the savage labyrinth of rocks and little islands that led to Cockburn and thence to Adelaide Passage. Pagels remembers that Captain Schaeffer was nearly frantic with nervous foreboding during this unorthodox *paseo*, but realised that risks had to be taken. It was all for the Vaterland.

The entrance to Christmas Bay (Gonzalez Channel) might well have spelt disaster to them in spite of their earlier good fortune, even when they

reached it in the morning's watery light. This passage is a snaky S-shaped narrow, at most a hundred yards wide, banked by lowering, lofty cliffs, a most hazardous pass for any bark of greater tonnage than a canoe. But fortune was again 'mitt uns': *Sierra Cordoba* braved it on a strong outflowing tide, a roaring current, and this gave the ship, with her twin screws and powerful engines, good steerage-way. The last danger-point was successfully negotiated and soon *Sierra Cordoba*, to the delirious hoofs of both crews, dropped anchor four hundred yards from *Dresden*.

Truly an achievement only to be adequately appreciated by seamen who know these waters. Pagels says that on arrival he was too played out and overcome by reaction to try to come any nearer to the cruiser. As soon as the anchor dropped he lay down in a cabin. However, his rest was of short duration, for, after he had dozed off, he was awakened by a jolt. In his shirt tails he rushed up to the bridge and found that skipper Schaeffer had weighed anchor to come alongside the *Dresden*. Possibly he imagined that all danger was over; anyhow, he evidently failed to appreciate the significance of a patch of floating kelp close to his port side, and suddenly his ship drifted on to the submerged rocks, taking an ominous list. There was a strong current running and it looked as if *Sierra Cordoba* had become definitely attached to her beautiful surroundings. The trusty Pagels, in *déshabillé*, again took temporary charge, working each screw alternately full astern and executing devious nautical handspings until the ship, with a reluctant shudder, was induced to return to her element. It was a narrow squeak; it also marks the first occasion on which Captain Schaeffer's bearing towards his temporary supplanter became tolerably genial.

There is little more to tell. Pagels made further supply trips to *Dresden* until, towards the end of February, she and her consort moved position to an uncharted and unknown bay on the Breaker Coast, Santa Inez Island, preparatory to raiding the Pacific. These trips made by Pagels were effected on the steam tugs *Kosmos* and *Explorador*, *Elfreda's* loose nocturnal habits having by now been brought to the notice of the police patrol. On one occasion he passed the whole squadron at full steam and was unmolested. He also derived comfort from the British community's policy of non-aggression—no one ever followed him.

He last saw *Dresden* at her anchorage on the Breaker Coast when he arrived the bearer of orders to her Captain to proceed south of Cape Horn, where he would meet a collier. This last time he came on *Elfreda*. Captain Luedecke informed him that in all probability his, Pagels', services would never again be required by *Dresden*, for she was off into the blue. Pagels was heart-broken. He pleaded with the Captain to continue dodging the cruisers. Winter was approaching, the nights would be longer, they could conceal themselves indefinitely—he swore it—and

always there was the prospect of bagging some of the enemy. But no; not to be thought of, there had been enough of that. Alternately Pagels besought the Captain to fill up with coal and let the collier tow him round the Horn and then well up into the North Atlantic, there to make his dash, run the blockade round the North of Scotland, and thus reach Germany. "If you venture into the Pacific, it must indeed be good-bye, Herr Kapitan." He would sink the trusty *Elfreda* and accompany him right to Germany.

No, Pagels and *Elfreda* could continue to make trips to the channels in order to delude the British into thinking that *Dresden* was still there. This Pagels continued to do until, in the second fortnight of March, he heard the fateful tidings of the *Dresden's* end.

Captain Luedecke considered it his duty to scour the Pacific and sink Allied shipping. He committed the *Dresden* to this laudable enterprise, but luck was against him. She achieved meagre results, and, while anchored in a bay at Robinson Crusoe's Island, fell to the *Glasgow's* guns on 14th March 1915.

Pagels was awarded the Iron Cross of the first and second Orders, and richly merited these distinctions; also each German war vessel that visits Punta Arenas today infallibly sends her officers to do him honour. It is a pity that, in the hour of need, there was not his counterpart on our side, as this would have prevented a lengthy series of headaches.

Footnotes:

1. Punta Arenas, known to the English as Sandy Point, now renamed Magallanes.
2. The battle of the Falkland Islands was fought on 8th December.