# LANDING FROM 'INCREDIBLE ARMADA' HEROES REPORT CASUALTIES LIGHT IN FIVE-DAY MIRACLE OF FLANDERS

These Men Not Defeated But Wear Light of Victory in Their Eyes, Says Gregory Clark, After Interviewing Tommies "Back in Blighty"

## ARTILLERY SECTION, TWO GUNS LEFT **GETS 25 TANKS ON MARCH TOWARD SEA**

### By GREGORY CLARK

On the Southeast Coast of England, May 31.—During the past 24 hours, both night and day, I have watched an incredible armada of everything from a battle cruiser to a 30-foot Muskoka cabin cruiser bringing the British expeditionary blank as they met them. force and their French fighting brothers-in-distress across the channel to England. Yesterday we saw a great many rescued from the German trap. One-half the British ex-peditionary force is said to have been landed up to this morning at various British southeast coast ports.

Exhausted. hungry, sleepless, bloodshot, unshaven - these densepacked shiploads of the flower of manhood of two nations, rescued off Belgian beaches and harbor moles under savage gun and bomb fire give a terrible impression disaster as the boats creep, in the wan light of dawn, alongside the quays of England. But that impression vanishes the instant you hear their hoarse voices shouting up the most incongruous cheers from such apparently cheerless humanity. The fact is that the evacuation of the expeditionary force is a great triumph that will rank amongst the most extraordinary exploits in military history. The British navy, which organized and directed this wild bumboat armada, deserves first mention.

#### 76 Hours Without Rest

I talked to staring-eyed naval officers who had not closed their eyes in 76 hours, rushing their destroyers, cruisers and the channel boats they had commandeered back and forth across channel, under the guns of their own warships on the one hand and, on the other, an ever-increasing artillery fire from the encircling Germans, as well as concentrated bombing from as many as 60 planes at a time. I saw and touched the 28-foot family eabin cruiser Chanticleer, of the Royal Thames Yacht club, under the command of a young sub-lieutenant of the navy, if you please. It took her 12 hours to make a round trip with 30 men weighting her down solid. She has made five crossings since the evacuation began, and had honor of being bombed by a German flight of Junkers, this tiny little boat plowing amid the swift ferrying destroyers.

But if the navy comes first, the army itself, for its successful evasion of encircling and overwhelming German armored fighting vehicles, backed by hordes of infantry, will merit gilt names on all their regimental colors.

I saw a few Bren and Lewis guns

lery who had to abandon his 25pounders two days before arriving at Dunkirk, but who managed, with his officers and sections, to retreat with two guns for five days, giving up all idea of firing on infantry, but only engaging tanks point-

"German tanks seemed lost and bewildered all over the place," said the sergeant. "Modern tactics may be infiltration, but we came upon



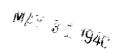
#### GREGORY CLARK

them lonely at all hours of the day and night, in side-roads and on highways, and whenever we met one, we wasted one shell and it always did the trick. Big tanks about the size of a corner grocery store go about eight to 10 miles an hour. Until finally we were caught by bombers and both our guns damaged, we managed, despite all odds, to retreat our guns five days and knock out maybe 25 tanks in that time. Others did the same."

Two young officers of an infantry battalion said that on the beach at Dunkirk they had rounded up enough of their unit to encourage them to believe their losses were less than 20 killed, maybe 50 wounded, yet their unit had on three occasions during the fall-back caught solid marching detachments of German infantry in a cross-fire of Brens and Lewises and in each case could not have failed to inflict twice the losses they sustained in the whole action.

#### "Miraculous" Action

"We beg you to reassure people. This whole action has been miraculous," they said. "To look at us you might think it was bad. We are tired to death now, largely as a result of the strain of waiting on the beach under bomb and shell fire and in sight of these dear shores. But try and find one man on all this quay who is downhearted!" The strangest, most incongruous sight I ever hope to see was these tattered, exhausted hordes sleepwalking ashore, not with the look nor air of beaten men but with the expression of victors in their bloodshot eyes and sagging faces. heart-punch of all was an old-timer, a lance-corporal with medals of the old war, who heaved up the ladder from a little jammed fishing-tug and on the quay roared hoarsely: "High tiddley ighty," but suddenly fell forward on one knee in utter weakness, his hands clutching at the ground of England. His comrades grabbed his arms and helped him to his feet, and with a strange grin on his face and tears tumbling down his cheeks, he merely whispered the second line of that old-war refrain: "Carry me back to Blighty." With mere kids bearing him up, they stumbled past to a train, not vanquished but, by every rag of bearing and force left,



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somehow brought off by men who might well have had to swim or wade part way. But without a single exception, every man stresses the fewness of casualties.

Five Days, Two Lost

For example, a half-company of the East Yorks regiment, This particular battalion consisted of youths of 20 called up last December. This half-company of between 100 and 150 men and three officers detached from their battalion for defence of a special area, was cut off by a terrific tank-swarm and worked all its way from 10 miles in front of Arras right to Dunkirk, fighting every half-hour of every day, meeting tanks, motorcycles and latterly masses of German infantry, and in the entire five days lost only two men. Until they reached Dunkirk and were ordered to scatter on the beaches beyond the city to escape bomb attacks, they clung to their Bren guns and inflicted losses they count in hundreds on the orderly masses of Germans they encountered swarming afoot on roads and in dorries.

**Picked off Lost Tanks** I talked to a sergeant of artil- victors.