

Suddenly, the Turks opened a terrific fire of machine guns and rifles and many of the boats were filled with dead and wounded before they even made the shore.

We took up our appointed position a few hundred yards off the beach as boatload after boatload was towed or rowed past us and the Australians endeavoured to establish a beach-head.

Batteries of Turkish field guns quickly came into action and kept a heavy barrage of shrapnel over the beach and approaching boats, all of which had to pass through this curtain of fire.

Now the fleet opened a tremendous bombardment with all guns, plastering the high ground with high explosives.

The noise was indescribable as hundreds of shells of every calibre screamed overhead and burst with reverberating crashes on the scrub-covered slopes, the sky was dark with smoke and the air heavy with the bitter smell of cordite. When the bombardment ceased and the Australians attempted to storm the heights, we watched them repulsed with heavy loss.

Meanwhile, we were embarking casualties as fast as we could handle them; they came in all manner of craft: trawlers, lighters and ships' lifeboats.

Later in the morning, suddenly, three enormous water-

spouts leapt skywards practically alongside us, accompanied by a deafening roar, followed by three more just over us and short of the battleship *London*; then three more just beyond her. We were being straddled by really heavy stuff!

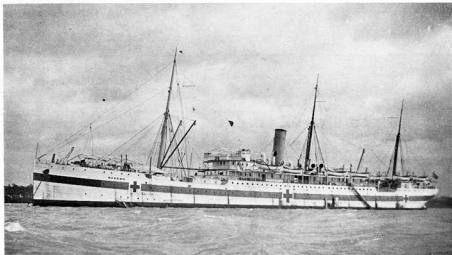
These were shells from the ex-German Battle-Cruiser *Goeben* which our observation balloon ship *Manica* now reported had sneaked down the Dardanelles and was firing over the Peninsula (here about seven miles wide) direct into Anzac Cove. Fortunately, they were her first and last salvoes, as our battleships made a heavy return fire high over Sari Bair and the hilly country beyond, and the *Goeben* retired.

The *Gascon* came in for a great deal of stray rifle fire but this did not interrupt our work and by dusk we were filled to capacity and over, all wards and available deck space being crammed with wounded.

And so, for us, Anzac Day was over. The Australians had barely obtained a foothold and their position was precarious as we steamed back to Base at full speed, to return again and again to the beaches.

This continued throughout the months that followed, occasionally visiting the English Sector at Cape Helles but mostly to Anzac, until at the end of the year all troops were gradually evacuated and the costly failure of the Dardanelles Campaign came to an end.

The *Gascon*, 6,288 tons, was built by Harland & Wolff, Belfast, in 1897



The *Gascon*, one of the famous "G's," was a highly successful vessel, and ran in the west-coast service until, some months after the commencement of the East African service in 1910, she was transferred to the Suez route between London and Durban. On the outbreak of war in 1914, when the mail service was disorganised, the *Gascon* was temporarily employed as a mail steamer, and was the first Union-Castle liner to sail for South Africa after the commencement of hostilities. From the Cape she proceeded to the east coast, where she had a narrow escape from an encounter with the German cruiser *Königsberg*. The *Gascon* was in the vicinity of Zanzibar early on the morning of 20th September, 1914, when H.M.S. *Pegasus* was sunk off the Island by the *Königsberg*. The sound of heavy firing was heard in the distance, and the *Gascon* promptly made for Mombasa. She eventually returned to Zanzibar under the Red Cross flag to pick up the wounded from the *Pegasus*, and conveyed them thence to Simonstown. The *Gascon*, soon afterwards, was taken over as a regular hospital ship, and in that capacity she served throughout the War. Only in August 1920 did she return to the regular intermediate service, in which she ran until January 1926, when she was laid up in Southampton Water. She was recommissioned, however, in September 1926, and ran again until May 1928, when she was laid up in the East India Dock, London, alongside her sister the *Gaika*. There the two oldest units of the Cape fleet lay for several months until, finally, they were sold to scrappers, the *Gascon* being purchased in September, 1928 by Ward's, the well-known shipbreakers.