

THE RAID ON TONDERN.

Captain Bernard Smart's Great Feat.

German Pilot's Story.

The destruction of Zeppelin sheds at Tondern, for which Capt. Bernard A. Smart, D.S.O. (son of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Smart, of Luton) received a bar to his decoration, is recalled by the publication in the "Times" this week of a full narrative by a member of the Allied Naval Commission recently in German waters. Under the armistice agreement, the Commission had the right to visit any of the German naval stations, and this provided an opportunity to see at first-hand what damage was inflicted upon the Tondern sheds.

The writer tells in detail of the subterfuges employed by the Germans in endeavouring to persuade the Commission that a visit to Tondern would be unprofitable—that the Admiralty raid, carried out by aeroplanes from H.M.S. Furious, "though it was well-planned and executed, had been a great waste of effort."

But the pith of the recital is contained in the account given by von Butlar, Germany's most famous surviving airship pilot, who has many remarkable flights to his credit and who was at Tondern at the time of the raid. He says:—

"We always recognised from the time that we learned that the British were developing swift flying-machine carriers, that Tondern was especially vulnerable to an attack of this kind, and we prepared against it as best we could. We had expected, however, that it would come in the form of a raid by seaplanes, which would, of course, have been comparatively heavy and slow, and which would have had to return to the sea to land, and against these our defence would probably have been effective. Where we deceived ourselves was in underrating the risks that your men were willing to take, such as, for instance, that of landing in the sea in an ordinary aeroplane on the chance of being picked up in the comparatively short time such a machine will float.

"We were not prepared for such a raid at any time, but especially at the moment at which it occurred. We had had a protecting flight of light fighting aeroplanes at Tondern, but the landing ground had never been properly levelled. There had been many accidents, and a number of the machines were always disabled. The trouble became so bad toward the middle of last summer that it was finally decided to withdraw the protecting flight, which was badly needed at the moment elsewhere, until the landing ground had been improved.

"As usual, your Admiralty seem to have learned of this within a few hours and to have decided to take advantage of it at once. From the way your machines were flying when they appeared, I am practically certain that they felt sure of being opposed by nothing worse than gunfire.