

On left—A TEN-DAY BATTLE BY TWO
TUGS DURING AN ATLANTIC GALE, whilst
towing a 2,750-ton floating dock
—Drawing by Wm. McDowell

Two of H.M. Rescue Tugs, *Saucy* and *Lariat*, recently towed a 2,750-ton floating dock for ten days through an Atlantic gale. During this time 18-in. tow-ropes parted under the strain of heavy seas and the dock broke adrift. The two tugs, their crews exhausted and their fuel almost expended, were recalled to the United Kingdom, and other tugs, sent out to relieve them, completed the operation. The gale blew at full force the whole time," said the commanding officer of the *Saucy*. The strain on the tow-ropes was terrific. My crew, working on the after deck, which completely submerged at times, were constantly attending to the chafing tow-ropes and repairing the worn wooden protection on the stern tow-tail." The tugs ran into the gale on the first day of their voyage. Their speed was only 2½ knots. They tried to hold the dock on their course by steaming 30 degrees into the gale. Great seas swept through the dock, which was manned by the Royal Navy, and on the second day some of her gear was washed overboard. All through one night, and the next day and night, both tugs were hove-to in the lee of the dock and then, just after enemy submarines had been reported in the area, the *Lariat's* tow parted once again. Now the dock was completely adrift. When the tugs had drifted 60 miles from their course with no sign of the gale abating, the dock crew decided to venture into the flooded dock bottom and make an effort to connect up with the tow-lines. They descended with life-lines, and every man was up to his neck in swirling seas. They worked for hours and succeeded in retrieving the *Saucy's* cable. It was an exhibition of endurance and seamanship the like of which has rarely been seen.