

## VICTORY IN THE PACIFIC.

On the basis of reports that still give few details of the action, it yet seems definite that we can claim another naval victory against the Japanese. The battle of Kula Gulf certainly is not of the caliber of Midway or of the November battle in the Solomons, but it compares favorably with the Santa Cruz Islands fight and perhaps with some others.

Kula Gulf lies between the islands of New Georgia and Kolombangara. Apparently it was entered by our light forces last Sunday for the purpose of bombarding the Bairoko anchorage on New Georgia to cover the landing of our troops at Rice Anchorage and at Zanana for an attack on the important Japanese base of Munda on the same island. During the bombardment we lost the destroyer Strong.

In the night, Japanese naval forces endeavored to escape through Kula Gulf, but were encountered by our forces at 3 a.m. in storm and darkness. Within five minutes four or five Japanese destroyers were destroyed or set afire. Within 15 minutes more three or possibly four light cruisers came under fire, and all of them were either sunk or set afire. At this time our light cruiser Helena, dating from 1939, was lost, although many of its crew were saved.

While survivors of the Helena were being rescued, three more Japanese ships appeared; two of them were sunk and the third damaged.

Thus it appears there may have been as many as 12 Japanese cruisers and destroyers in the action, all of which are reported sunk, set afire or damaged; Gen. MacArthur's communique reports nine, possibly 11, sunk. We lost the Helena and the Strong, to which might be added the transport sunk several days ago. It is said that no others of our ships were even slightly damaged.

This brings Japanese naval losses since the beginning of the war to 146—perhaps two more—sunk, 36 probably sunk and 168 damaged.

The result of this naval action is the isolation of the Japanese troops at Munda, who must soon be overcome unless the Japanese decide to risk more ships in an attempt to relieve them.