

SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 1898.

CLEARING SHIP FOR ACTION.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE LIFE-AND-DEATH STRUGGLE.

SUPERFLUOUS OBJECTS THROWN OVERBOARD. ENGINES AT WORK. CREWS AT THE GUNS—ENERGY AT A HIGH TENSION, AND DEATH THE ONLY REASONABLE PROBABILITY IN SIGHT.

The first thing to be remembered by the people on shore who may ere long be reading of a sea-fight between two modern ironclads is that modern vessels will fight under way. There is no longer any grappling of two ships, for one or both of them will be destroyed before they can come to such close quarters, or else one of them will be helpless and will have struck her colors. All steam will be put on the moment that the two combatants desery each other on the far horizon. Then the monsters will begin to switch themselves about in the water and lash the waves, and the great frames will tremble with the engines' vibrations.

A late trial of the Cincinnati in battle trim occupied ten minutes going and coming over a measured distance, with a floating target at a distance varying from three-quarters of a mile to a mile and an eighth. Her whole battery was fired as many times as possible, one of the 5-inch guns being discharged 36 times in the ten minutes, and the others nearly equalling this rapidly. She was a flying cloud of smoke and flame. The ship herself was not visible. The gunners could often only guess at the position of the target, or had to wait a few seconds for a little momentary rift in the cloud to take advantage of it. As a matter of fact, the target was completely wrecked, owing to the skill of the officers and gunners' mates. Here let it be said that the lateral sighting of a great gun is more important than the vertical. Get your tangle working on a line with a target which is parallel with the horizon before you try to train the gun up and down.

The suppressed energy which is apparent in the very frame of a vessel when she sights an enemy is her quick response to the brains on board of her. Could a spectator be poised in midair above two battle-ships approaching each other he would be struck by the similarity of actions of the human beings aboard them both. What seemed a moment ago an idle five hundred men, in harmony with the inert monster they inhabit, spring into a living interdependent organism like the works of a watch.

THE GHASTLY EXPECTATION.

"Clear ship for action" is the command from the executive officer. In modern battle every one must expect injury or destruction; he who does not had better not go to sea in a modern ironclad. Some will escape death, but not many. In the engagement between the Peruvian ironclad Huascar and the Blanco Encalada only fifty of the Huascar's crew were uninjured out of two hundred. One hundred were killed and fifty wounded. And so if Uncle Sam's executive officers give this command next week or next month the fearful seriousness of it will be felt to the core of every man who hears it.

Continuing the survey of the inner, human life of the ships, the spectator would first note the bugle-call, and the subsequent instantaneous rush to his appointed station of every officer and man. The great end in view is the quickest possible use of the weapon-throwing power. The magazines and the breeches of the great guns are the centres of action. The conning-tower, or little round room made of metal a foot thick, with slits for observation, is the centre of thought, for the captain stands there with his aid, and directs the battle by means of speaking tubes and electricity.

First of all, the decks are cleared of every obstacle that would embarrass the rapid passage of ammunition from the magazines to the guns. All ships are full of objects that are to be thrown overboard before going into action. Tanks of turpentine, alcohol, varnish, carboys of acid, must all fly over the side. Then the ship's hose is to be attached to all connections, and when action has begun the steam pump is started and kept running. All movable bulkheads and lockers which might interfere with the working of any portion of the battery are put out of the way. Only those ladders which are absolutely necessary are left in place, the others being hung over the side or carefully placed apart. All compasses and binnacles except one are sent below. Hammocks are furled; awnings are wetted and used in certain exposed places as barricades or shields, but it is not expected they will do much against modern bullets.

THE BRAINS BEHIND THE GUNS.

Each great gun and small gun has its officer and group of men behind it to work it. Its big iron covering, like a large hood, shield some of the men (but not all) from the fire of the enemy. They must expect their own death or that of their opponents. All the ammunition hoists are immediately put to work. Shell and charges are hurried like lightning to every breech-loading gun. Boxes of ammunition are whisked up aloft into the fighting tops of the military masts. The

endless mechanisms of the great guns and their turrets must be set going like a flash, whether by steam, hydraulic, pneumatic or electrical power. The lower decks, being dark, are often whitewashed, if there be time to do so, in order to make all objects on them more visible. Cots or chairs are rigged for lowering the wounded below, where the surgeons' operating tables are covered with lint and steel instruments. The engineers are below, doing their human best with the ships' fires, and if a shell should reach one of their boilers Heaven help them!

And now, with the big crew on the upper deck separated into small groups behind the various guns, all expectant, training the glistening brass sights on the enemy—the centre of the opposing mass near the water is the best place to aim for—the battle is on the point of beginning. Uniforms are not worn with neatness or

most illustrious corporations of Europe. I thank you and the other members of the University for having taken into consideration that since several years I sent members of my family and young men of my kingdom to receive a scientific education in Oxford, this renowned centre of learning and wisdom. Believe me, sir, your very sincere friend, Chulalonkorn R."

APPLAUSE IN SPANISH THEATRES.

From To-Day.

If, when travelling in Portugal or Spain, you go to the theatre and wish to applaud any performer, be very careful how you do it. Do not hit the ground with your stick, or kick against the woodwork of your box, or stamp with your feet. A few years ago I was in Portugal, in Lisbon, to be exact, and went one night to one of the theatres to see a Zarzuela, as the comic operas imported from Spain are called. I was with a party of friends in a stage box. Now, in Portugal such a box is, as the name implies, on the stage itself, and you could not be nearer the

GUARDING THE CHESAPEAKE.

OLD FORT MONROE AN IMPREGNABLE MODERN FORTIFICATION.

HER ARMAMENT OF GREAT GUNS, MORTARS AND MINES—A PLACE THAT NO HOSTILE SHIP CAN PASS.

"The watchdog of the Chesapeake," as Fort Monroe is fittingly termed, is rapidly nearing that stage of completion when it will be able to repel the advance of an enemy's ships, if not by the work of powerful guns mounted on its lofty ramparts, surely with the aid of the many submarine mines which can in time of war be operated from a keyboard directly under the observation tower in one corner of the fort.

The original structure is one of the best examples of the famous type of fortification designed by Louis XIV's celebrated engineer, Vauban. The main stronghold is constructed of huge blocks of granite, and is probably the largest masonry fortress in the world. Of late expert engineers of the United States Army have been industriously at work, both within and without the formidable, grass-plotted walls, and day by day old Fort Monroe, believed by many to be obsolete, ineffective and an ideal resort for "Fourth-of-July" soldiering, is being strengthened to such a remarkable degree that when war is declared the cities and communities whose chief protection lies in its large guns and death-dealing submarine mines will be absolutely safe from attack by an enemy's ships.

Situated at the extreme point of the Virginia peninsula, the fort commands the full range of the two Virginia capes—Henry and Charles—which are the common approach from the Atlantic to Washington, Baltimore, the Newport News shipyard, Portsmouth Navy Yard, Norfolk and Richmond. It is generally admitted by Army and Navy officers that, in the event of war with Spain, the shipyard at Newport News and the Navy Yard at Portsmouth would be the two principal objective points on the Atlantic Coast. With the guns of Fort Monroe working satisfactorily, these two important naval stations will be well protected against the advance of hostile men-of-war.

The main armament of the fort consists of eight 10 and 13 inch breechloading rifles, sixteen 10 and 12 inch seacoast breechloading mortars and four disappearing guns, three 10-inch and one 8-inch. In addition to the converted rifles mentioned there are also two large 15-inch guns of old pattern on the higher ramparts which have been moved back to make room for a rapid-fire rifle battery, emplacements for which are now well under way.

The upper ramparts command a splendid view of the whole of Hampton Roads, and the guns thereon can be trained either down the bay in the direction of Capes Henry and Charles, or up the James and Elizabeth rivers, with Newport News on the former and Norfolk and Portsmouth on the latter, all only within a few miles of the fort.

At the foot of these ramparts is a wide moat and on the outer side of this, entirely surrounding it, is a thick wall behind which are a large number of old, unimproved guns that can be effectively used in checking landing parties.

In the lower extremity of the fort is the new disappearing gun stronghold, or pit, as it is termed at the post. In this elevated emplacement are three up-to-date disappearing guns of 10-inch calibre, which easily have an effective range of one mile for each calibre. If Spain sends warships to the Virginia capes with a view of entering and advancing on the cities within, these modern rifles will be the first to be used in repelling the attack. They have been thoroughly tested, and are now in splendid order.

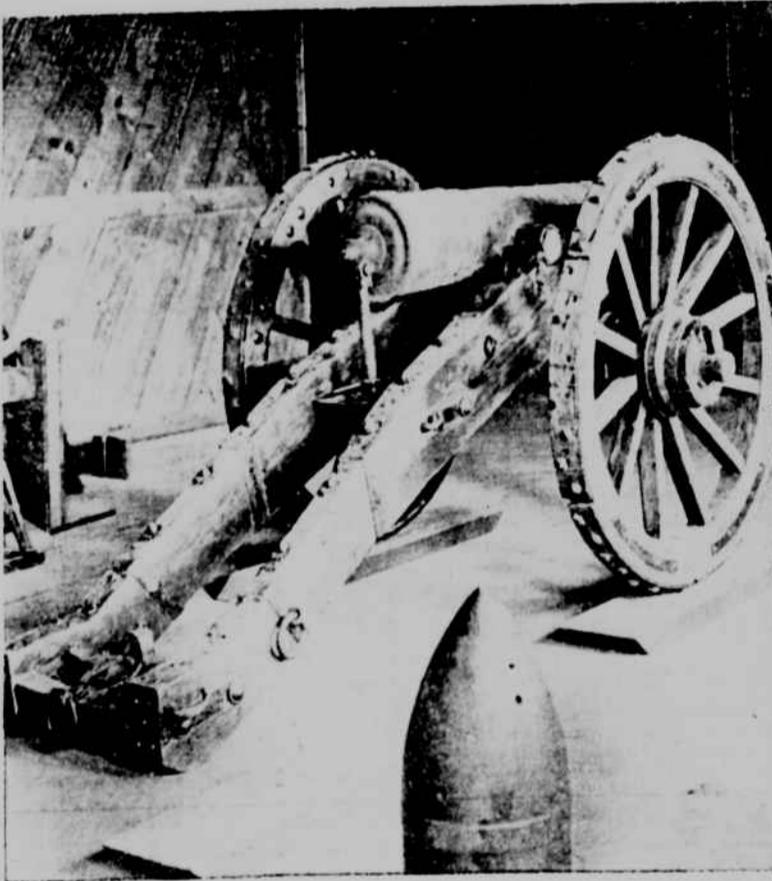
THE MORTAR STRONGHOLD.

Between the main fort and the mammoth mortar battery is a long strip of beach on which is built a connecting railway. This strip is a mile in length before it widens into the "pines," where the sixteen mortars are located. The name Pines Battery is derived from a clump of tall pines which marks the mortar stronghold. This is one of the finest batteries of its kind now held by the United States. Instead of being built of solid masonry, after the customary manner, the works are a combination of cement, small gravel and sand, the latter, which is used as an outside coating, having been proved to be the most effective material to resist shot and shell. The mortars behind this impregnable wall throw projectiles of the enormous weight of 100 and 800 pounds, and have a range of from two and a half to six miles. These valuable engines of war are mounted on revolving carriages, having a swinging radius of 130 degrees, and can be trained on ships either above or below Fort Monroe.

The batteries of rapid-fire rifles to be placed in position at once will form a valuable addition to the heavy armament heretofore described. They will comprise 6 and 5 inch guns of English make, which will be used chiefly to defeat landing expeditions and sink torpedo-boats if they should venture to pass Hampton Roads for the purpose of sinking the two battleships Kentucky and Kearsarge, now in the



CASEMATE AT FORT MONROE



A CANNON CAPTURED AT SARATOGA FROM THE BRITISH. Now in Fort Monroe Museum.

precision on these occasions. Some men are stripped to the waist and officers are in their shirt sleeves. The ships have approached within the radius of accurate fire, and the command is given for the battle to begin.

All this description will fit, with small changes in details, the exercise known as "Clear ship for action" in all modern navies, and what appears an invincible preparation on one side is exactly reproduced on the other. The skill of the marksmen must determine who will emerge as victor from the coming great clash.

CHULALONKORN R. D. C. L.

From The London Globe.

As Chancellor of the University of Oxford, the Marquis of Salisbury has received the following letter from the King of Siam: "To the Most Honorable the Marquis of Salisbury, Chancellor of the University of Oxford: Sir: I had the greatest pleasure of receiving the diploma for the honorary degree of Doctor of Civil Law, which you, sir, with the masters and scholars of the University of Oxford, have been pleased to confer upon me. I highly appreciate this great distinction bestowed on my person by one of the most ancient, most learned, and

performers. Needless to say, you are too near for comfort; the light blinds you, the dust and powder cover your clothes, the defects of the performance are glaring. In Spain and Portugal, too, so far as I have ever been able to observe, the women who grace the stage are not very remarkable for beauty. To write the truth, they are very ugly; so that there is little temptation to be near the stage. On the night to which I specially refer a woman came upon the stage and sang a ballad with much taste and feeling. When she had finished some of my party applauded, and I knocked on the floor of the box with my stick. The woman did not accept an encore, and as she went off threw a reproachful glance at me. "It was not so bad as all that," remarked one of my friends, a good judge of music. "So I thought," I replied. "Then why did you condemn it," he asked, and then began to laugh. "I see you don't know the custom of the country," he went on; "when we find a thing very bad, indeed, we do as you have been doing." Needless to say I felt very foolish.

THE DISEASE.

From The Boston Traveler.

"I think it's absurd to say kissing is dangerous," gushed Mrs. Lilytop. "What possible disease could be spread by the simple act?" "Marriage, madam," grunted Grumpy.