

AKIYAMA OF JAPAN MAKES GOOD AS A PROPHET

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German Submarines, Said the Admiral, Could Be Made to Operate with Ease Thousands of Miles from Their Home Base

REAR ADMIRAL AKIYAMA is passing through the United States on his way home to Tokio. He has completed a tour of observation over the theatre of war in Europe. Some eleven years ago he stood upon the bridge of the Mikasa, close by his chief, Admiral Togo, and saw the far-travelled Baltic squadron of Russia make for the bottom of the German strait.

"He was graduated from the Naval Academy in 1886," says the Japan Year Book, speaking of the rear admiral, "and is said to have been the most trusted adviser of Admiral Togo in the late war."

And, on rare and lucid occasions, even a year book is sometimes known to tell the truth.

And a few days ago, here in New York, the rear admiral talked to us about the present war in Europe, especially of its naval aspects. Against the background of the unreasonably violent red plush chair in one of the most foolishly high priced hotels in the city, his striking personality, in severe and simple attire, stood out in sharp contrast, as impressive as a line of Confucius at a dinner dance. But of that he was utterly unconscious.

"This great war in Europe," said the rear admiral, "is staging one fact dramatically. It is a time-honored one, old as the very art of war itself, but which is rarely brought home to our understanding with such convincing emphasis as in the present conflict. I mean what the command of the sea will do in a war. The military might of Germany—with her marvelous organization, her thorough and scientific mastery of details, with the whole country turned into one vast military camp—has, of course, proved itself a tremendous thing. We look upon it with amazement. But, with almost equal wonder, we watch the financial power of England and what it has accomplished.

"Three elemental factors in the present war stand out like so many leading characters in a play—the military might of Germany, the money power of England and the sea power of England. And the greatest of these, it seems to me, is the achievement of the British navy.

DESPITE THE ACTIVITY OF GERMAN SUBMARINES, BRITAIN'S NAVY IS STILL SUPREME.

"I am a sailor. This is frankly a sailor's view. Nevertheless, it is not easy to escape this conclusion for anybody who would look the facts full in the face. There is the utter disappearance of the German overseas trade; the practical isolation of the Central Powers to the desperate extent of not being able to import even foodstuffs, and then that rather pointed and obstinate fact that Germany, all victorious on land, has been entirely helpless to injure England upon her own soil. On the other hand, the British foreign trade in 1916, I am told, is even more active than in the ante-bellum days. The Allies on the Continent are drawing regularly tremendous amounts of ammunition and supplies from the United States, and both supplies and men from Canada and the other overseas possessions. German submarines craft have destroyed a good deal of enemy shipping in the last two years, but really have hardly made an impression on the carrying trade of England.

"There is one explanation for all these facts: the absolute dominance of the British navy. Here history repeats itself. A century ago, in the Napoleonic war, the conditions which were brought about by Nelson and his fellow sailors were almost identical to those of to-day. It does not take an Admiral Mahan to see what a tremendous arbiter of the war's issue command of the sea is. And I believe the present drama of Europe is not unlike the one which went through the successive acts at Leipzig and Waterloo and closed on St. Helena. I believe, moreover, that the final curtain will ring down

on this war as upon the struggle a century ago."

"America seems to appreciate the value of sea power," said I. "And they are saying here just what they think about it, in their characteristically pointed and businesslike manner; they are to spend something like \$600,000,000 within the three years to come to build up a great navy. The total amount is to be devoted almost exclusively to the construction of new ships. Heaven only knows just how much this nation will spend before it is finished with its present imposing programme."

"America is literally coining millions upon millions of dollars out of this war," the Rear Admiral remarked. "Her wealth now seems to pass all understanding of the Ancients, and the Moderns as well. She can easily afford to spend the entire amount appropriated on her navy. That is not all: from what I hear and have learned abroad she cannot afford to do less. She could not spend her money for a saner purpose. It is eminently wise."

THE LESSON OF THE JUTLAND CLASH IS THE SUPREMACY OF THE BATTLESHIP.

I wish the whole American nation could have seen the rear admiral as he said this. More particularly do I wish that all the foaming and frothing (not to say frothy) editorial writers and all the frenzied jingoists and Japo-perilists had been there to see him. It wasn't merely what he said. It was the tone of his voice; it was the lighting up of his features that accompanied his remarks. If this tremendous naval expansion programme of the United States were the iron-riveted guarantee of the peace of the Pacific, the rear admiral could not have shown a deeper satisfaction. And, indeed, what prophet is there to deny that the new and sublimated edition of the American navy does not mean just that very thing?

"Six hundred millions," I said, "is a good deal of money to spend, even for these American plutocrats. And very naturally they are interested in every little delicate hint, lesson or puzzle of the naval war; such suggestions as the great battle of the Jutland Bank has to offer to the learned of the lore, for instance."

"Well, after all the battle smoke is cleared—I do not mean the smoke of the Battle of Jutland Bank alone, but the smoke of the persistent and big naval discussions the world over to-day—it seems to me the battleship fleet is destined to say the last and deciding word. It did on the North Sea. The Battle of Jutland Bank seems to point most decisively and eloquently to this conclusion. There was a difference between the punishing power of the British Grand Fleet under Admiral Jellicoe and that of the German High Sea Fleet. And that difference sent the German ships home to their base to sleep—at least for a time—and left Britannia still in the full enjoyment of her sway over the seas. A navy is built just for that difference; there is no other reason for the construction of it but to bring about just that difference. Suppose now, for instance, Germany had had ten more super-dreadnought units at the Battle of Jutland Bank. We can hardly imagine what a stupendous change this might have brought about in the conduct of the whole war. It would have meant a complete change of conditions on the seas; of course; it would also have necessitated an entire and revolutionary alteration of the plans on land. It would have affected the economic conditions of the fighting powers fundamentally. No, there is no room for argument for the premier place of battleship fleet," concluded the admiral.

"At the beginning of the war," said I wisely—for it is a rare luxury to release your nursery information right within range of a great authority's ear—"the British superiority in

the number of capital ships over the Germans was 40 per cent, and in the combined weight of a single broadside from each of the capital ships 60 per cent. Is this considered an amply safe margin to maintain?"

"It did not seem to be inadequate at the

and wise in the astounding number of super-dreadnought battleships it calls for—thirty-three capital ships to be built and building three years hence?" I asked.

I rather thought the rear admiral might answer the question. He didn't, though. I



Battle of Jutland Bank. The same battle does not appear to give us any idea it was superfluous," remarked the admiral in reply to my display of naval knowledge.

"Then the new American programme is sane

saw nothing wrong about the inquiry. But because of the way he looked at me, in a sort of academic panic I rushed headlong to justify my question:

"British critics seem to think the American

Rear Admiral Shinshi Akiyama, of the Imperial Japanese Navy, occupies the all-important office of the Chief of the Bureau of Naval Affairs. America and the American Navy have a peculiar claim on him. As a young lieutenant he came to this country and pursued his studies at our Naval War College, at Newport. While in America he had the rare fortune of going through the Spanish-American War and observing the naval actions from the flagship of Admiral Sampson. Rear Admiral Akiyama served through the Russian-Japanese War on the staff of Admiral Togo, and with such distinction and ability that he has been called the brains of Togo's staff. He has just spent considerable time in Europe observing the development of the war. What he says, therefore, carries with it the importance of a statement from one of the greatest authorities on naval affairs.

As to War Between Japan and America, Well, "American Imagination Is Generous, and It Is Pleasant To Be Flattered"

naval programme somewhat lop-sided. When the war started, in 1914, the British had thirty-four capital ships built and building, and against that, they had 127 cruising ships built and building—a ratio of about four cruisers to every one of the ships of the first line. At that the British had quite a busy time in rounding up a few German raiders and commerce destroyers, such as the Emden, Leipzig, Dresden, Karlsruhe, etc. One British authority puts the damage done by these German cruisers in ships and cargoes captured and sunk at 6,000,000 pounds sterling. In that estimate he was not counting the cost of inflated insurance and freight rates, because of the presence of the German raiders. These items would increase the amount by \$10,000,000 easily. Now, the American programme would give the American navy thirty-one effective scout cruisers in 1919 built or building. That is less than one cruiser to each one of the proposed capital ships.

The rear admiral did not say to me, either kindly or unkindly:

"I'm sorry for you. You seem to be terrifically worried about this American naval programme!" But it was hard for me to get any other message from the twinkling light conveyed by his eyes.

A SUMMARY OF THE SUBMARINE, ITS LIMITATIONS AND ITS WEAKNESSES.

"The American navy," the rear admiral replied to me quietly, "commands the services of some of the most gifted tacticians, some of the ablest sailors, construction experts and engineers in the whole of the naval world. America is justly famous for the inventive genius of her sons. I take it, therefore, that back of the new American programme there is enough naval wisdom to astound us all if we could only find out the real truth about it."

This reply was as discouraging as a wet blanket. But, fortunately or unfortunately, I am one of those who suffer from a fit of unreasonable obstinacy on the most unnatural occasions. I refused to be discouraged.

"Well, admiral," I ventured "this war has taught the value of the submarine, if nothing else."

"It has shown their limitations and their weaknesses, if that is what you mean," answered Rear Admiral Akiyama. "No doubt the submarine is an excellent defensive weapon. Germany, it is true, developed its possibilities a good deal in the present war. She had to. It was her only practical sea weapon. Its achievements so far have been exceedingly good for the newspapers; they are theatrical and dramatic and sensational. They appeal to the popular imagination. They stir the blood of adventure. They are effective against unarmed merchantmen, and in the first stage of the war, when the British navy had not developed adequate defence against them, they accomplished notable feats even against armed ships. Those days are past now. I make the statement without reserve. The submarine can pass under the enemy line of ships commanding a sea area and it can operate in the hostile waters inaccessible to surface craft. Its operating radius could be largely extended over what it has done so far, perhaps. The submarine could possibly be built much larger; it even could be made suitable to operate thousands of miles from the home base with ease.

"But there seems to be a definite limitation to the weapons it is able to use; they are the torpedo under the surface and the gun above the water. The torpedo is a notoriously uncertain weapon to depend on for sure results, not to mention its high cost. Torpedoes cannot be carried in such quantities as gun ammunition. And above the surface the sub-

marine is the frailest of fighters. Speed is another count against the submarine. Operating opposed to armed ships the submarine is compelled to stay under the surface, and there its speed is sacrificed. It has no chance against even a moderately speedy surface craft. It may score heavily by accident—if the course of a surface ship happened to converge upon its own, for instance—as they say was the case when the Formidable was torpedoed on New Year's Day, 1915. As a defensive weapon, however, the sub-sea craft has a distinct place."

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS CONCERNING BIG GUNS AND BIGGER.

"I have been told," I said, "that the British did not have an easy time deciding what size guns they should have on their first-line ships. About one-half of their officers and experts favored the 15-inch gun, in place of the 13.5-inches, on the ground of the added power and the better chances of hits because of the flatter trajectory of the bigger guns. But the other half of their expert opinion held out for the smaller guns. The two factions were so evenly balanced that a mere layman, Mr. Winston Churchill, was called upon—or rather forced—to make the final decision. He selected the 15-inches. Now, did the Battle of Jutland Bank or any other engagements of the present war prove either the wisdom or error of Mr. Churchill's judgment?"

"Unfortunately, I was not one of the eye-witnesses at the great naval battle off Jutland Bank."

"But, admiral, is not the tendency in almost every navy for bigger ships and bigger guns?"

"All depends on the work a navy is expected to do, on the destiny which shapes its end. There are times, I dare say, in every navy when the admiral in command of the fleet yearns for 15-inch guns. And then, again, he devoutly prays for a greater number of 12-inch rifles, instead of the fewer, heavier and slower shooting pieces. It is a delicate point. A man in love with ex-cathedra dogmas should steer clear of it."

"There is one thing about the present American naval programmes which amazes us mere laymen," I went on; "amazes, in fact, more than mere laity—it almost scandalizes some of the thoroughly able British technical critics, among others. And that is the cost of the proposed American ships. Ten super-dreadnoughts are to cost about \$18,800,000 each, and the battle cruisers over \$20,000,000 each, and the scout cruisers something like \$5,000,000 apiece. The flagship of Admiral Jellicoe's Grand Fleet, the Iron Duke, cost about \$10,000,000 and the British spent, approximately, the same amount for their battle cruisers of the Queen Mary type. Of course, steel is much higher now and the shipbuilding conditions in America are much more expensive than on the Tyne.

"But, even so, why should America spend for her ten battleships enough money to build nineteen of the most formidable fighting ships afloat to-day? The same applies to their scouts; the British are reported to have spent less than \$2,000,000 for the Arethusa type. And America is to spend for a similar craft something like 150 per cent more money!"

The rear admiral looked at me quietly as if nothing particularly ridiculous had happened.

"Do you come to me for an explanation of all this?" he said. "It did not occur to you to go to Admiral Dewey and the gentlemen of the General Board? Don't misunderstand me;

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