

Current Topics

Our Admirals' Despatches

Our cables are now giving us details of the despatches forwarded by Admiral Sturdee after the Falkland Islands naval fight on December 5, and by Admiral Beatty after the North Sea fight of January 24; and they make interesting and thrilling reading. After reading these two reports, and the earlier despatches of Sir John French, one cannot help reflecting what admirable war correspondents our present military and naval leaders would have made. All the essentials of engagements that lasted the better part of a day are given in a few swift strokes; and the absence of anything in the way of embroidery or embellishment only serves to render the narrative more vivid and effective. A feature of both fights was the superior skill in manoeuvring shown by the victors. In the Falkland Islands fight the German ships from the first had apparently little chance, and the result was only a matter of time. The Germans appear to have fought with the utmost bravery; but apart from being outclassed they had little luck, and the damage sustained by the British was merely nominal.

In the North Sea clash, the Germans apparently tried every device—Zeppelins, submarines, seaplanes, and destroyers emitting vast volumes of smoke—to cover their escape, but the 'Beatty touch' was too much for them. An article in the Christmas number of the *Windsor Magazine* thus hits off the characteristics of the Wexford fighting man—characteristics which were again exemplified in the North Sea contest: 'We looked for courage and dash in Rear-Admiral Sir David Beatty, who won his rank as commander for gallantry on the Nile, and that of captain for conspicuous skill and daring in China two years later. During the action in the light of Heligoland his reputation was finely vindicated, when on board the Lion he led in the battle cruiser squadron to the assistance of the smaller vessels fighting against odds with German cruisers and destroyers amid a sea of mines. Happiest in the hour of strife, Sir David was a joyful man that day.' Joyful again, doubtless, on January 24, but with a joy tempered by the reflection that but for one lucky German shot he would have 'sunk the lot.' It is gratifying to note that the New Zealand played an active and really useful part in compassing and completing the victory, and that three of her men are singled out by Admiral Beatty for special honorable mention. Spite of the critics, our Dreadnought—if we may be allowed to mix our metaphors—has proved itself anything but a white elephant.

Archbishop O'Reilly on the War

Dr. O'Reilly, the genial and universally beloved Archbishop of Adelaide, has been playing the rôle of war prophet—not willingly, indeed, but perforce, under pressure from the insistent interviewer. His Grace does not, of course, claim to speak as a military expert; still less does he pretend to any preternatural power of prevision. In addition to his natural gifts as a capable and shrewd observer, he has, however, certain credentials which entitle him to speak on the subject, the chief of these being that in his comments and predictions on previous wars covering the very lengthy period of 35 years—he has invariably proved a good 'guesser.' 'I hate wars,' said his Grace, to the Adelaide *Mail* representative. 'If I had my way there would never be one drop of human blood shed in war again. . . . Yet when war comes, in the actual study of the campaign, I find a grim fascination, only equal to the fascination I used to feel in working out complicated mathematical problems, when I was a growing lad. For certainly 35 years I have followed every campaign with the keenest interest. A campaign had never started, but almost from the start I had my mind made up as to what the issue was to be. I was often

laughed at for my pains. I was often challenged in my statements. Yet I cannot remember—I speak with reluctance but with honesty—that I was even once wrong in my forecasts. Sometimes I allowed a margin in my prediction, but within that margin my words always proved true.' After such a record, his Grace's opinion in regard to the outcome and duration of the present war must be listened to with some measure of respect. On the latter point his opinion is quite definite and decided—the war, Dr. O'Reilly declares, will end between October and December of this year.

As to the lines along which the struggle will proceed, and, in particular, as to the development and denouement of the naval situation, the Archbishop is perfectly clear. So far as the latter is concerned, three hours will settle it all. After illustrating, in homely fashion, the obstacles which make it impossible at present for Admiral Jellicoe to attack and make an end of the German fleet, his Grace continues: 'The Brandenburg fleet has its nest in the Kiel Canal. That nest is fenced in with mines and torpedoes. Jellicoe cannot go in. But when the Allies, having crossed the Rhine, begin their advance towards Berlin, while the French take their way by the south, the English and the Belgians will advance by the north. Their advance will cut off completely the communication of the fleet with their capital city. For the Brandenburg fleet there will be no reinforcements, no fresh supplies of provisions or ammunition. The Brandenburg fleet will perforce leave its nest. Then will come a three hours' fight and the fleet's history will be over. Some of the ships will flutter back with broken wings to the shelter of their guns and of their loved torpedoes; some will go to the bottom; some, manned by English sailors, and commanded by English officers, will be next heard of when they make fast to the Admiralty wharfs at Rosyth, Sheerness, or Devonport. When next they go to sea they will go flying the white ensign with the stately cross of St. George displayed thereon.' We think the three hours estimate is rather optimistic; but for the rest there is a smack of reasonableness and probability about these predictions, and it will be by no means matter for surprise if, when December comes round, it is found that the Archbishop has made a fresh addition to his laurels.

Germany and Poland

Mr. Raymond E. Swing, war correspondent for the *Chicago Daily News*, has just made public his analysis of the war situation and his views regarding the probable outcome of the struggle, formed after three months' travels in France, Germany, Belgium, and England. The general tone of his utterance gives one the impression that he is more than friendly to Germany, but at least he makes some attempt to be fair; and his pro-German sympathies give an added value, of course, to such admissions as he feels himself compelled to make. He frankly acknowledges that England is now facing the war in a spirit of entire confidence. 'I was very much impressed,' he says, 'with the difference in the British attitude toward the war, which developed from September to December. When I was first in England, the British were not at all alive to what the war meant, the sacrifices and problems which it involved. There was less knowledge and there was less confidence. London to-day seems much more quietly confident, the people now seem to realise what is going on, and they are facing the facts. So far as I could gather, England expects to win the war with her navy, and one of the important factors will be in preventing Germany from getting supplies. England will go just as far as the neutral nations will let her in trying to stop all contraband of war. She is determined to get the most out of her sea power, in this respect. She will not go so far as to provoke serious trouble, and I gather from what I heard that she is now feeling her way as to just how far she can go in the matter of stopping neutral cargoes.' That was written late in December. If it is a correct account of England's plans and policy, it

Motor Cars for Hire

Our Hire Service is available for any distance day or night. Comfortable, roomy cars driven by competent drivers. Hire a car for early morning trains—save time and worry.

Phone us and get our price—No. 3267 (day & night)—PACIFIC MOTOR CO., LTD., 81 OCTAGON, DUNEDIN.