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ST. JOHN STAR.

ST. JOHN, N. B., NOVEMBER 21, 1904

THE BALTIC FLEET.

General Stoessel declares he can hold

Port Arthur till the Baltic fleet reaches

the Far East, and events of the past

eight months have shown him to be

a man who can make good his declara-

tions. But when that fleet will arrive

at the scene of war and what it will

be able to do when it gets there are

questions which are puzzling impar-

tial observers of all nations.

The squadron has divided, one di-

vision going by way of the Suez canal

and the other around the African con-

tinent. The first is about passing the

canal, if it has not already passed.

This is reported to consist of the bat-

tlehips Sissoi, Veliky and Navarin,

five cruisers, eight torpedo boats and

several transports. At the same time

the departure of the other division

from the French port of Dakar on the

west coast of Africa is announced.

That is near Cape Verde, so that this

division has got little more than a fair

start on its long voyage around the

continent and has not reached much

farther on that side than the first di-

vision on the east side. Luckily they

have friendly French and German ports

to resort to nearly all the way around,

though how they can take on coal at

these without violation of neutrality is

not plain.

Though the first division will be able

to reach the Yellow Sea long before

the second, it is improbable that any

action will be ventured until the two

have joined. But even after they do

meet, what will the combined fleet do?

They will certainly be short of coal

after their long voyage. Fuel is as im-

portant to warships as ammunition and

it will be absolutely necessary for

them to have some Russian port which

they can use as a base and where they

can obtain the necessary supplies. But

there are only two such ports in the

East, Port Arthur and Vladivostok,

one blockaded and the other, by the

time the fleet can reach it, probably

blocked with ice.

Considering these difficulties and the

straits of Stoessel's garrison for whose

salvation he is sent, it is evident that

Stoessel's plan is not an immediate

defensive battle with Togo's fleet, prob-

ably reinforced by Kamihara's squadron,

and an attempt to unite with the rem-

nant of the Russian fleet in Port Ar-

thur. It is possible also that the Vla-

divostok squadron may join Rojeste-

vensky in time to help in the fight.

Should this be the Russian admiral's

policy, and it is difficult to see what

other course is open to him, the naval

experts of the world will witness what

they have longed for since the war

began, a sea fight between two great

fleets, battleships, cruisers and torpe-

do boats, of not unequal strength, a

battle which will mean more to both

sides than any yet fought. For should

the Russians fail to move a decisive

victory, it would probably mean the

capture or destruction of every

ship in the fleet. Even should any

escape from the battle they would be

out of reach of any friendly port and

could only dodge from one place to

the other till their coal was exhaust-

ed. It would also mean the fall of

Port Arthur, the practical annihila-

tion of Russia's sea power, and a blow

at the nation's confidence that could

hardly fail to end the war. On the other

hand, if the Japs were defeated, it

means that all the lives they have

fung against Port Arthur's walls will

have been wasted in vain, and that the

command of the Yellow Sea, their only

means of transporting supplies to their

Manchurian army, will be wrested from

them. There can be no doubt that such

a battle would be the greatest sea

fight of history.

It is a wonder Russia hesitated long

before waging so tremendous a stake

on one throw. The world will await

the outcome breathlessly though, judg-

ing by the comparative records of Rus-

sian and Japanese sailors in general,

and of Admirals Togo and Rojeste-

vensky in particular, those who sym-

patize with the Japs will not worry

about the result.

RUSSIA AWAKENING.

The czar is evidently temporizing in

his choice between the liberal and the

reactionary sentiment in Russia. He

refused official permission to the pro-

gressive senators to meet, but allowed

them to assemble privately and pre-

pare a memorial on the interior con-

dition of Russia, that under Plehve's

regime would probably have sent many

of them to Siberia. This memorial is

to be sent to the new minister of the

interior, Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky, the

leader of the liberal movement, who

will endeavor to have it placed before

the emperor. Should he succeed, and

should Nicholas be convinced of the

truth of the representation radical im-

provement in conditions should fol-

low.

The czar, though in the hands of evil

counselors, undoubtedly has the inter-

est of his people at heart. He is kept

in absolute ignorance of the true state

of affairs and if, through the influence

of the new minister, his eyes are open-

ed, there must be results. The fact

that he so far went against the wishes

of his reactionary advisers as to allow

even secret meetings of the provincial

representative bodies shows that their

power over him is not what it was.

♦♦♦

If the workmen expected any re-

sults from the Factory Act commis-

sions there might be entered some pro-

tests against the very leisurely and

careless way it is doing business. But

under the circumstances there will be

little complaint if the business is al-

lowed to drop right here.

♦♦♦

The private inquiry into certain pub-

licly made charges against some North

End street boys today, Friends

of the accused and of some of the

heads of the fire department who, it