

King Edward's Visit to the "Drake."

THE cruiser Drake, which is the flagship of H.S.H. Prince Louis of Battenberg, will be visited by His Majesty King Edward within the next few days, prior to the flying visit of the cruiser squadron to America. There is no keener sailor in the service than Prince Louis, who was, up to the recent redistribution of Great Britain's naval forces, Director of Naval Intelligence at the Admiralty. Nor has it been forgotten how, during the manoeuvres of the Mediterranean Fleet some years ago, he was the hero of a brilliant operation at Suda Bay, when he completely outwitted the attacking force. The Prince, who is in his fifty-second year, has been a British subject since he entered the Navy as a cadet in 1868; twenty-one years ago he married at Darmstadt his cousin and King Edward's niece, Princess Victoria of Hesse, and at the same place he saw his eldest daughter married some eighteen months ago, to Prince Andrew of Greece. Of the four sons born to Prince Alexander of Hesse, Prince Louis, the eldest, and Prince Francis (whose wife is a sister of Queen Elena of Italy) alone survive: Prince Alexander after a stormy career as Prince of Bulgaria, was kidnapped in 1886 and died twelve years ago; whilst Prince Henry's death after his campaign on the Gold Coast was deeply regretted by the nation that had come to know his worth.

The Drake, which was built at Pembroke, belongs to the first class of armoured cruisers, and has a complement of 900. Her armament comprises two 9-inch guns in barbettes, sixteen 6-in. guns, and fourteen 12-pr. quick-firing guns, besides smaller arms and two torpedo tubes. Her

length is 500 feet, and she measures 71 feet beam. She can attain a speed of 23 knots, her coal capacity is 2,500 tons, and her displacement is 14,100 tons.

The journey of the cruiser squadron to America is the first evidence of Sir John Fisher's plan for the better organization of the Navy. Not only are the vessels of the fleet on active service to be properly ready for any emergency, but also the ships composing the reserve squadrons, and the regular seagoing cruisers of the reserve fleets will do much to secure the proper equipment of our defences. Following upon the removal from the active list of a large number of old vessels, many officers and men have been released for the staffing of the seagoing fleets, which will thus be able to carry out operations with their own crews, and not with specially detailed men as before.

The King, during his visit to Portsmouth, will stay the night at Admiralty House. Many Royal visitors have been entertained at Admiralty House, notably during Sir John Fisher's tenure of the Portsmouth command. King Edward will dine with Prince Louis of Battenberg, and His Majesty's visit is a signal example of the keen interest he takes in all that pertains to the senior service, and to the efficiency of the Navy. The King has all along believed in some such steps as those made clear in Lord Selborne's Memorandum as to the distribution of the Fleet, and the Royal visit of inspection to the Drake sets the seal of general approval upon a well thought-out scheme of national defence.—Black and White.