

## 214 Heligoland to Keeling Island

speaker's voice inaudible—which suggests that Admiral Cradock's message was not received.

This was the situation at eighteen minutes past six o'clock. We are told further three important facts :

First, " the sun was setting immediately behind us from enemy position."

Second, " while it remained above horizon we had advantage in light."

Third, " the range was too great " for the British vessels to open fire effectively.

While they had, or thought they had, the benefit of the light they could not fire, because their guns were not sufficiently powerful. When the sun had sunk, and the British vessels could have brought their guns into action, because the range was shorter, not only was the light gone for them, but the advantage of visibility had been transferred to the enemy, " our ships," we learn, " being silhouetted against afterglow." Anyone who has looked from the flagstaff on Hampstead Heath when the sun has set behind the church at Harrow will appreciate what the conditions were like. The British vessels must have stood out in relief, sharp and clear, while the opposing squadron, in the failing light, was " difficult to see."

Nor does this complete our information. Evidently the action took place in what amounted almost to a gale. It is stated that " there was a strong wind," that the sea " was considerable," and that the " heavy spray of head sea made