

## 190 Heligoland to Keeling Island

relish the shells of the warships dropping in their rear. Now actually caught between two fires, their line began to waver. As the determined infantry pressed onward, slowly the enemy gave way. It became apparent that they were not present in as great numbers as had been first reported. The cannonading from the sea increased. The infantry fire redoubled. The whole German line resting on the sea was now in full retreat."

Some surprise was occasioned by the allusion in the first official announcement to the "monitors" which were taking part in the bombardment. Few people had previously known of the existence of these three vessels, which had been built by Messrs. Vickers for the Brazilian Government, under the names of "Javary," "Madeira," and "Solimoes." At the outbreak of war they were purchased by the British Government and respectively named "Humber," "Mersey," and "Severn." They were built after designs prepared by Mr. T. G. Owens, the director of construction to Messrs. Vickers (Limited). Events have shown that the purchase was a singularly sagacious move, and that it was a very wise head which triumphed over all the technical difficulties which the requirements of the Brazilians—who ordered them originally—presented.

They are vessels of extraordinary efficiency. They cost probably not much more than three large destroyers—say £150,000 each. Consider the return for this outlay! Each monitor displaces about 1,250 tons, and is so flat, drawing only  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet of water, that she can go right into shoal water and fire. About one-third of