

THE BRITISH FLEET.

VESSELS IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD OF THE DARDANELLES.— DESCRIPTION OF THE IRONCLADS.

The London *Standard* of the 16th March has the following:—The total effective force of the British Navy at present consists of nearly 400 vessels—including ships specially constructed to take part in great naval engagements, and others adapted for the purpose of cruising and coast defence. This aggregate does not include any in course of building, and 134, either laid up or permanently employed in harbour service, are also omitted. When it is remembered, however, that six armour-plated war ships and a single wooden despatch vessel constitute the entire naval detachment ordered from Besika Bay to the Sea of Marmora, and that this small number includes no turret-ships of the first-class, or breastwork monitors, it will be admitted that, in proportion to the complete naval strength of Great Britain, the demonstration which the Government has deemed it expedient to make before Stamboul in the present menacing aspect of events, is of a comparatively moderate character. But it may assist the public to realize the stupendous naval force at our command, and the unrivalled supremacy we are consequently justified in claiming upon all waters, to know that even the limited portion of the fleet now quietly guarding British interests before the Turkish capital, possesses destructive appliances which the collective navy of Russia could not possibly withstand. The six fighting ships now told off for duty at the Bosphorus are the *Temeraire*, the *Alexandra*, the *Sultan*, the *Swiftsure*, the *Agincourt*, and the *Achilles*. The despatch boat which attends them is the *Salamis*. If the strenuous efforts of the English Government to preserve peace should unhappily fail, and the honour of this country should demand that Great Britain must declare war, the present squadron would soon be reinforced by a fleet of invincible ironclads whose fighting power would cast into obscurity that wielded by the wooden walls which twenty-five years ago gallantly attacked Sebastopol.

Four of the vessels we have mentioned as anchored in the Sea of Marmora belong to the category of armoured broadside ships of the first-class; and as the *Temeraire* carries the largest number of heavy guns, she is entitled to precedence among them. The feature in her construction which essentially distinguishes her from all other armour-plated vessels in the British Navy, is an upper-deck armament with two fixed turrets open at the top, instead of the ordinary arrangement of a central battery. At each end of her upper-deck is a pear-shaped tower, measuring about 33 feet fore and aft, by 21 feet 6 inches across. On a turn-table which this battery contains is mounted a 25-ton gun, worked by hydraulic machinery, by which it is raised to be fired over the edge of the tower, and lowered under cover immediately afterward to be reloaded. The foremost turret is protected by iron plates 10 inches thick, and the one situated aft by armour 8 inches thick. The guns have a clear sweep all around the ends of the ship. That fire may not be obstructed in action the bulwarks are only allowed to rise four feet above the deck. One of the 25-ton guns can be fired straight ahead and another straight astern, but both have a wide range over the broadside. Again on the main deck is a battery in two divisions, the foremost of which contains two more 25-ton guns, with angles of training extending about the beam, on each side, across the fore and aft line, so that a converging fire at some distance ahead of the ship is secured. This latter pair of guns are fired from corner ports, and the sides of the ship are set back several feet above the main deck, to afford the requisite facilities for handling them; so that this vessel fires three guns right ahead, two on either bow, one on each quarter and two on each beam—all of the calibre we have specified—besides two 18-ton guns on each beam, making four 25-ton and 12 18-ton guns. The guns of the *Temeraire* are more efficiently protected than those of any other broadside ship in the service.

Her most vital parts are plated with 14-inch armour. To guard her from exposure to the raking fire of the enemy when she is pitching in the trough of the sea, the armour is carried down over the sharp point of the ram, and equal protection in a similar emergency is given to the magazines by an armoured bulkhead across the hold, plated with 5-inch armour. The hull has the usual double bottom, and is divided into numerous water-tight compartments. The engine and boiler rooms are so constructed as to prevent the entrance of water in case of contact with hostile rams or torpedoes. The gross weight of the armour and backing is about 2,300 tons, and the guns, ordnance

stores, engines, boilers, and other equipments weigh 2,200 tons. The aggregate weight of her broadside fire amounts to 2,600 pounds; of her bow fire, 1,800 pounds, and of her stern fire, 600 pounds. In common with all our great war ships of recent construction, the *Temeraire* is fitted with an apparatus for discharging Whitehead torpedoes under water through openings in her sides.

The *Alexandra* carries a central battery, and her construction admits of a satisfactory all-round fire; she can dispense with gun-towers at stern and bow. Her battery is furnished with two Woolwich rifled muzzle-loading guns of 25-tons each, and 10 of 18-tons each. She is 325 feet long, being 40 feet longer than her sister ironclad already described, and is worked by engines of 8,000 indicated horse-power, being 1,000 horse-power greater than those of the *Temeraire*. Her tonnage reaches 6,050 tons, and the total weight of her armour and backing 2,350 tons. In many characteristics she resembles her companion, so that the necessity for repeating details is superseded. The *Sultan* is the same length as the *Alexandra*, but mounts eight 18-ton and four 12-ton guns, while her armour-plating ranges from six to nine inches; the force by which she is propelled exceeds that of the *Alexandra* by 629 horse-power, and the peculiar formation of her ram renders that vessel one of the most formidable of sea-going vessels in the fleet. The *Swiftsure*, though a ship of similar dimensions and inferior armament to those hitherto described, is nevertheless capable of inflicting incalculable injury on hostile ships. She is 280 feet long, carries ten 12-ton guns, exclusive of others of smaller size, and is covered to the water-line with iron plating from six to eight inches thick. Her engines work with a propelling force equal to 4,913 horse-power. The *Agincourt* and *Achilles* are classed under a different head from the four vessels which have been noticed. They come under the designation of iron broadside of the old type, of which the *Warrior* is a prominent example. Though lacking the advantage resulting from the most recent application of science to navigation and the art of naval warfare, they are, nevertheless, still commanding vessels. The length both of the *Agincourt* and the *Achilles* is much greater than that of the longest of the preceding ships. The former is 400 feet and the latter 383 feet. Seventeen 12-ton guns are mounted in the *Agincourt*, and ten 12-ton guns and sixteen 6½-ton guns in the *Achilles*. The engines of the one vessel exert a force equal to 6,621 indicated horse-power, and the registered propelling power of the engines of the other is 5,723 horse-power. Yet the glimpse of the naval power of England conveyed by an analysis of the dimensions of these few vessels in on an extremely limited scale. If we attempt to exhaust the long list of vessels belonging to the classes which include the ships already enumerated, and then advance to a consideration of the still more formidable characteristics of such turret-ships as the *Dreadnought*, the *Thunderer*, the *Devastation*, the *Agamemnon*, the *Ajax*, and the *Monarch*—to say nothing of the *Invincible*, which latter is destined, when ready for commission, to carry four 81-ton guns—the combined navies of the world sink into insignificance before this unparalleled array of naval might controlled by the British Government. It is also satisfactory to know provision has been made for the protection of our ships, when at anchor, from all risks of attacks from torpedoes. But even the list and description of the Admiralty does not exhaust the measure of British naval power. The British mercantile marine possesses 419 steamers over 1,200 tons and under 5,000 tons register—not a few of which are capable of high speed. In the event of war a considerable proportion of these ships would be placed at the disposal of the Government. They could readily be armed with light rifled-guns and torpedoes, and may always be relied upon as a reserve naval force. If the "decisive battles of the world" in future were to be fought at sea, the enormous naval advantage enjoyed by England over all other nations would infallibly constitute her the undisputed arbiter of the destinies of nations.

GIGANTIC ADVERTISING.

Probably the largest advertisement in the world is that of the *Glasgow News*, which displays its name on the slope of the Ardenlee, Scotland. The length of each letter is 40 feet; the total length of the line is 323 feet, and the area covered is 14,845 feet. The borders of the letters are sown with a pure white flower, the center is set with dwarf beet, the dark purple of which shows well at a distance, and on each side of this there is a row of light purple candytuft.