

more thoughtful care was spent than on that of the Royal Sovereign class. The discussions of the previous years had prepared the minds of both classes of Admiralty authorities for a proper consideration of the problems involved, and the distinguished naval officers who decided the military features of the vessel were assisted, or, perhaps we should say, held in check, by a chief of the constructive staff, not only thoroughly competent to form opinions, but able to express those opinions clearly and without reserve; in fact, he was a man of the type whose word always commands respect. Under these circumstances it would be disappointing indeed if the design proved defective in so fundamental a way as has been attributed to it. After a long and severe criticism of the alarming character of the newspaper statements, letters written by officers on board the ship to their relatives and friends (subsequently appearing in print); and the absurd questions and replies in Parliament; the article concludes as follows: "To sum up the view we take of this matter, we would say that though the Resolution undoubtedly passed through exceptionally bad weather, the statements as to her behaviour are proved by the facts brought forward; but even if she rolled 45 degrees each way, she had still a fair margin of safety before she reached the point of vanishing stability at 60 degrees heel. We would however, be far away from saying that her captain was ill-advised in using the discretion vested in him, and returning home to refit. With his upper works damaged, and a ship newly commissioned with a strange crew, who appear, however, to have behaved admirably under what were certainly very trying circumstances, the step may have been a wise one; though certainly not to be defended on the score of shortness of incl. one of the reasons advanced. The little torpedo gunboat Gleaner got through safely, and without doubt the Resolution would have done so also had she been put to it. Whether it would have been wise to put her to it is quite another matter; for our ships are so designed that they remain seaworthy long after they have ceased to be safely habitable. The statements as to rivets leaking, etc., have been contradicted on good authority, and the large quantity of water that got below was apparently due to deck openings not being properly secured at first."

### THE NEW NAVAL PROGRAMME

No definite decision has been come to by the Cabinet on the subject of the new naval programme. The Admiralty scheme was, it is true, considered at Tuesday's meeting, and certain points determined upon, but the final revision may bring modifications. The main idea of building five battleships in the Royal Dockyards has generally been approved, but as to the exact amount of progress to be made next financial year with these ships no decision was come to. The amount of work to be given out to contract was the principal difficulty. The

desire is to give two or three large orders to private firms, but owing to the shrinking of the revenue the difficulty of squaring accounts operates, and this largely explains why no decision was arrived at. These contract vessels will be in addition to the Dockyard battleships. Encouragement, however, is given by the low prices prevailing just now. One point which has been decided is that no scheme similar to the Naval Defence Act will be produced. Such a scheme for a programme extending over five years was sketched out two months ago, but it was officially departed from, and there is no other foundation for the statements appearing in the papers. Indeed, it is understood that some members of the Government are annoyed at the reports in the press, which reproduce proposals that had been handed down to Portsmouth a couple of months ago. Even then they represented only part of the Admiralty's scheme, but now the conditions are altered. Some of the work then contemplated has been given out, and the next year's programme has been augmented, but no information of this is given in the reports now published.

It is stated that the proposed new battleships will cost about £1,000,000 each, and although the plans for their construction have not yet been actually approved of, they will probably, roughly speaking, be of the following dimensions: Length, 390 feet; extreme breadth, 75 feet; mean load draught, 28 feet; displacement 15,000 tons. With natural draught a speed of 16½ knots and with forced draught a speed of nearly 18 knots will be obtained. The armament will include four 12-inch breech-loading guns of a new type, mounted in pairs, twelve 6-inch quick-firing guns, sixteen 12-pounder quick-firing guns, twelve 3-pounder Hotchkiss guns. There will also be five torpedo dischargers for 10-inch torpedoes, four being submerged tubes and one above the water. The 12-inch guns will be mounted in two strongly-armoured barbets, and these mountings will be so arranged that they can be loaded in any position by manual power, and at fixed loading positions by hydraulic power. The large coal-bunker capacity with which the new ships will be provided will enable them to keep the sea for longer periods than any other battleship at present afloat. It is estimated that from the time of being laid down on the respective building ships the vessels will take about three years to be completed for sea.

In addition to the four battleships a new type of gunboat, to be known as the Linnet class, will, there is reason to believe, be introduced. As far as can be learned at present, four of these vessels will be laid down, and they will be very similar to the Torch and Alert, recently begun at Sheerness. They will be termed "Station gunboats," but, instead of being composite, their hulls will be of steel sheathed with wood and copper. Their dimensions will be: Length, 180 feet; breadth, 32½ feet; mean load draught, 11½ feet; displacement, 960 tons. With natural draught their engines will be capable of realising an indicated horse-

power, when a speed of 13¼ knots is anticipated. The armament will consist of six-pounder Hotchkiss guns, and two Maxim machine guns. The vessels will cost about £60,000 each. It will be seen that the speed of these gunboats will not be great, but the character of their construction, together with their modern armament, will make them specially suitable for the purpose for which they are intended. Two of the four are to be built at Devonport, and will be laid down early in the financial year on the slips from which the gunboats *Haleyon* and *Hussar* are shortly to be launched.

The new Estimates will make provision for the construction of the cruisers *Pow-erful* and *Terrible*, and for the progression of the battleships *Renown*, *Majestic* and *Magnificent*, and the cruisers *Eclipse*, *Minerva* and *Talbot*. In addition to the twenty torpedo-boat destroyers which (at the beginning of this year) it was intended to have built, another twelve are to be constructed of the same type.

The vessels now in course of construction, which are to be completed during the next financial year, are the *Revenge*, first class battleship, 14,150 tons, begun at Palmer's Shipbuilding Yard, Jarrow-on-Tyne, in February, 1891; the second class cruiser *Charybdis*, at Sheerness; the *Forte*, at Chatham; the *Fox*, at Portsmouth; the *Flora*, at Pembroke; and the *Hermione*, at Devonport. All these were laid down at the end of 1891 or the beginning of 1892.—United Service Gazette.

### THE LEE-METFORD RIFLE.

The ever-green subject of the Lee-Metford rifle was made a peg whereon to hang a parliamentary question one evening last month. On this occasion the query had reference to the sea service. Commander Bethell asked the Secretary to the Admiralty whether it was intended to re-arm the Navy with the new weapon? The reply was to the effect that the question of introducing the magazine rifle into the Navy will be fully dealt with in the explanation to Parliament in next year's estimates, and that it was now anticipated that it will be possible in 1894-95 to proceed with the re-arming of the Navy with the magazine rifle, and to carry it out in subsequent years as originally intended.

Commander Bethell then asked whether, before the Lee-Metford rifle was decided upon, the Admiralty would take into consideration the claims of another rifle by the same inventor, which appeared to be more simple in construction and a good deal cheaper? He would like to ask whether that rifle, which had been called the Lee straight pull rifle, had been brought before the authorities? The only answer the Commander could get was that the question was one which should be addressed to the Secretary of State for War.