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Have the British an 18-inch Gun?

Artillery experts everywhere are keenly interested in the report, which yet appears to lack official sanction, that the British navy will mount some 18-inch guns in the next engagement, and that these monsters will be the weapon of the new super-Dreadnoughts. Hitherto the British naval authorities have maintained that the 15-inch gun is the best in the world. While a larger gun would give a greater range and a wider destruction when it found its mark it was argued that it would be too cumbersome; that the ship carrying such a weapon would be handicapped by difficulty in manoeuvring. As far as distance is concerned, the British have calculated that to make a hit at ten miles is far enough. On this account it has been suggested that the new monster guns mounted on monster ships were intended for the batter of shore defences at a safe distance from mines and submarines. In the absence of official announcement, which is hardly to be expected at this time, and before the guns are tried out, speculation will continue upon divergent lines.

The Battle of Jutland.
Some maintain that in the Battle of Jutland the Germans with guns of smaller calibre than the British were yet able to do amazing damage because they had developed the high explosive shell to a degree unknown in any other navy. Jellicoe's announcement that the Germans had failed to spring anything new may be taken as a sufficient contradiction of this theory. Moreover, if the Germans had been able to secretly develop this high explosive they would not have waited so long before again trying it out on the British fleet. The rumor of the high explosive shell probably originated in the statement of an eye-witness of the sinking of the Queen Mary. Indefatigable and invincible, who said that these ships did not appear to go down in the sea; they went up in the air. Each happened to be struck by a shell that took the top of the turret and the explosion went down into the magazine. Ordinarily the armor on these ships would have stood any amount of shell-fire.

How Liege Fell
Those who hold to the high explosive shell theory say that the design of 18-inch guns for the British navy is for the purpose of firing shells of this kind, and not to obtain longer range or greater penetrating power. They assert that the Belgian forts which fell so readily before the German, or rather the Austrian, 16-inch siege guns were the victims of high explosive, and not of battering. While Liege, for instance, might have stood indefinitely against any projectile which depended upon piercing the walls, it fell readily before shells whose business it was not to pierce but merely to explode—the explosion and not the metal contents of the shell, doing the damage. So they say, while the German shells might have been unable to penetrate the British armor on the battle-cruisers, the wonderful explosive that they contained shattered the vessels when brought in contact with them.

A Delusion of Experts.
Until quite lately high explosive shells were not considered to be fit ammunition for the navy. The risks of premature explosion, the risk of the explosion shattering the gun and incidentally the ship, was so great that naval gunners were somewhat nervous about their use. Moreover, for a long time ordnance experts believed that a high explosive, like gun-cotton, for instance, if it exploded against the side of a ship and without having penetrated the armor, would go off like so much powder in every direction, and following the line of least resistance, which would be, of course, they assumed, away from the metal. This belief was quite general until recently. But it has been found that a properly detonated high explosive bursts with such inconceivable rapidity that it converts the air itself into a veritable mountain of granite which resists as strongly as armor-plate.
Making a Navy Obsolete.
Assuming that the British 18-inch gun is to fire high explosive rather than penetrating shells, the New York Sun says: "There is not a ship in the American navy to-day capable of surviving a salvo of 18-inch shells. If only one or two of the lot find a mark their great charges of high explosive would either destroy, offhand or wreck the craft. Not only will the 18-inch gun outrange our proposed 16-inch guns, but just as the bigger weapon brings increased accuracy of performance, so will the 18-inch rifle be able to fire further and to do its work more precisely and with a greater measure of destructive energy because of the abolition of the armor-piercing form of attack. Physically in touch with the foe at any point, the high explosive will do the work expected of it and therefore will be effective at any

range. The angle of impact is of no moment; detonation will follow instantly upon meeting any material resistance. This may be some part of the body of the foe's ship or it may be the surrounding water a few yards away. In any case there will be damage."
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Wilson Admits His Efforts Were Futile Re Poland
No Arrangement With Belligerents Regarding Relief—Wrote to Rulers of the Countries at War—U. S. President Issues Statement in Matter
(By Robert J. Bender, United Press Staff Correspondent.)
SHADOW LAWN, Oct. 23.—Because important differences still exist between the allied and central powers under which supplies may be sent to starving Poland, President Wilson to-day announced he has "not yet" been successful in inducing the powers to conclude a definite settlement.
Some weeks ago, the president wrote to the millions of non-combatant citizens of the United States—a president of France, czar of Russia, emperor of Germany and emperor of Austria, urging their co-operation in alleviating the suffering of the Polish people. To-day he issued a statement admitting his efforts had been in vain. The announcement follows:
"I have now received replies from the King of England, the president of France, emperor of Germany, the emperor of Austria and the czar of Russia, to my letter of July 20, 1916, in which I tendered the friendly offices of this government in negotiations looking to a fresh consideration of the possibility and method of relieving Poland. It appears, I greatly regret to say, that there are still important differences between allied and central powers as to the terms under which relief supplies may be sent to Poland. I am disappointed that I have not been successful in inducing the powers to conclude a definite settlement."
The President's letter to the European rulers, pleading the cause of Poland, was also made public to-day.

It is as follows:
"Your Majesty: In view of the overwhelming disasters which have befallen the millionist of non-combatant inhabitants of Poland, I feel justified by the universal and honest expressions of the sympathies of the American people, regardless of race origin or political sentiment, to suggest to your majesty that the subject of ways of these people, who still survive, be given the further benevolent consideration of your Majesty's government. While no one can fail to appreciate the sufferings and sacrifices of the people primarily engaged in the existing war no the difficulties in the way of alleviating the hardships of those who are the incidental sufferers from the war, the death by slow or rapid starvation of millions of innocent people is so awful a fact that such an outcome should be averted if it is within the compass of human efforts to avert it. In the effort to avert it, I confidently pledge the co-operation of the people of the United States. . . . If only the way can be found to make their co-operation effective, May I, therefore be permitted to suggest that an entirely fresh consideration be given the possibility and method of relief for Poland, and to tender the friendly offices of this government in negotiations to this end, it being understood that any plan proposed shall be of such a character as to be adapted to the accomplishment of no other result than that of the relief of the distressed inhabitants of Poland. In conclusion, I can only add that it is my sincerest hope that your majesty will see in this note no intention to interfere with the rights and policies of your majesty's government, but merely the attempt to express to your majesty the sympathy and compassion toward the starving inhabitants of Poland felt by the citizens of the United States—a sympathy and compassion which they do not desire shall be evidenced merely by idle words but which they hope they may be permitted to express by assisting in the actual work by furnishing need to the starving inhabitants of Poland.
"I have the honour to be your majesty, faithfully yours,
"WOODROW WILSON."

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