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The Volunteer Review,

AND

MILITARY AND NAVAL GAZETTE

"Unbribed, unbought, our swords we draw,
To guard the Monarch, fence the Law."

OTTAWA, TUESDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1875.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.—Letters addressed to either the Editor or Publisher, as well as Communications intended for publication, must, invariably, be pre-paid. Correspondents will also bear in mind that one end of the envelope should be left open, and at the corner the words "Printer's Copy" written and a two or five cent stamp, according to the weight of the communication, placed thereon will pay the postage.

LIEUT. J. B. VINTER, of Victoria, and Captain H. V. EDMONDS of New Westminster, are our authorized Agents for British Columbia.

It appears the Court Martial on the loss of H. M. S. ship *Vanguard* has closed with a censure on the conduct of her captain and dismissal from his command.

As it is our intention to publish the proceedings of the Court Martial, we shall make no comments on this unlucky affair just now, but will offer some comments from our contemporaries on the accident and its lessons. The first is from the *United States Army and Navy Journal*, as follows:

"The sinking of the *Vanguard* by having a hole punched in her side by a blow, delivered at nearly right angles, by the underwater spur of her sister ironclad, the *Iron Duke*, seems on the face of it to be strongly corroborative of the arguments used by those naval writers who advocate the use of rams, to the exclusion almost of every other mode of naval attack. No one who had the knowledge necessary to form a correct judgment on such matters ever doubted that an underwater spur on the bow of a ship weighing some seven or eight thousand tons would punch a hole, when propelled at a moderate speed, in the side of any armored ship below the armor; and that if said armored ship, when so punched, had such defective internal arrangements, in the way of 'double bottom' and water-tight bulkheads (?), that the water could fill a sufficiently large portion of the hull to overcome her flotation power, she would sink, as a matter of course. This is exactly what happened to the *Vanguard*, one of the *chef d'œuvres* of Mr. Reed. A hole was punched in her side below the water; the doors were open in the bulkheads, and the 'double

bottom' utterly inefficient to afford the protection that Mr. Reed has boastfully claimed for it. As a necessary result the water entered in such quantities as to sink the ship. In nine cases out of ten, the so-called water tight bulkheads have failed to save the ship when the emergency arose. The chief reason of this is not that the bulkheads are not water-tight, but that they have doors out in them, which are almost always left open to allow passage through. When the crash of a collision is heard, sometimes no effort is made to close them, and often when such effort is made, it is found that they are jammed or stuck fast in some way, so that they cannot be moved. As a general rule those safety appliances on board ship—men of war not excepted—which are but seldom called into use, are found to be out of order when wanted. The *Ville de Harve* and the *Americ*, first class iron ships, fitted with numerous so-called water-tight bulkheads, were abandoned in mid ocean, without any collision, but simply springing a leak. The *Ville de Paris* was sunk by collision with a sailing vessel, the bulkheads doors being caught open, and it being found impossible to close them. As a rule, the only bulkheads that have been found efficient have been those near the bow—which have no doors in them—and which are properly called collision bulkheads. The iron steamer *Vesta*, which sunk the Collins' steamer *Arctic*, is an example of a ship having been saved by a collision bulkhead."

The second is from the *Broad Arrow* of 11th Sept., entitled, "The Power of the Ram," deals with the question as one out of which valuable lessons may be deduced with reference to a new warlike engine, which have yet to be proved. Our contemporary says:

"Five years ago a thrill of horror ran through the country when the placards of the evening papers announced the loss of the *Captain*; and it was, no doubt, with similar feelings the announcement in extra large type on the newsbills of the evening papers on Friday of last week of the loss of the ironclad *Vanguard* was read. On a summer afternoon, in a dense fog, while our Coastguard fleet was, at no hurried pace, making its way round the Irish Coast, one ironclad quietly, without malice prepense, and, we may say, almost gently, sends its bow into the side of one of its companions, and in less than half an hour sinks it. The *Iron Duke*, with no great force or impetus, ran its spur into the side of the *Vanguard*, and sank the latter in so short a space of time that it was only just possible to transfer the crew to the offending vessel. But, thank God, all hands were saved, and a catastrophe was averted which would have been second only to that of the *Captain*. Such a sudden and shocking event must necessarily lead to an inquiry of an unusually interesting and serious nature; as it must lead to another inquiry of an outside character as to what precautions are taken to guarantee the safety of these brittle but expensive weapons. When the loss of such a vessel as the *Vanguard* means the loss of half a million sterling, we are bound to insist that the precautions against accident shall be exceptionally minute and satisfactory. Probably both these points will be dealt with and settled at the court-martial which is to be held at Plymouth. The most important fact this accident reveals is the power of the ram. In time of war, with such experience as has been afforded by more than one collision, it is impossible to doubt that the ram will take a most important place. What is the use of

throwing away powder and shot, when a carefully planted blow from the head of a vessel will be sufficient to send its enemy to the bottom in no time? Ramming, however, has not been taken up seriously, as a branch of naval instruction, but it is increasing in importance every year. We have, it is true, built two rams, the *Hotspur* and *Rupert*, in which armament and size are sacrificed to the ram. It is evident, now, we want more of such vessels, and the sooner we get them the better. It is, of course, well known that our principal ironclads are provided with rams, but they are intended rather for defence than attack, and are built for speed or armament rather than for being handy in using their spurs. What, however, we do not want are any further experiments of this kind with our fleet. It is bad enough to have to pay so much for keeping up what we are continually told is a surprisingly weak Navy, but it is worse, after having spent the money, to send the unfortunate vessels to the bottom. It was a great misfortune that this accident did not give the opportunity for trying fairly the value of the water tight bulkheads; but, as the door of one compartment was left open, this could not be. At present, however, we are perfectly satisfied in the matter, and do not throw out this hint as a suggestion to make any more of these costly experiments."

The third is too long for insertion in this article is to be found on another page from *Broad Arrow* of 18th Sept., and is entitled "Rams, Guns and Torpedoes," the drift of which would lead us to suppose that *Torpedoes* as being "unseen" are the most formidable weapons.

If the results of all experience gained in actual warfare, or under conditions similar thereto for the past fifteen years, were tabulated and analysed, it would appear that the use of exceptional weapons, such as *Rams* and *Torpedoes* were just where the sixteenth century left the first—the era of the battle of Lepanto, and the second—the era of the siege of Antwerp under ALEXANDER FARNESE—while the value of the gun had been steadily and constantly increasing in all necessary, as well as possible requisites, mechanically and scientifically, as the principal engine of war.

The value of monster artillery would seem to be confined to an exceptional class of vessels and important forts, because the amount of machinery requisite to work them cannot be placed on board ordinary cruisers or line of battle ships. It is doubtful even if their value in a defensive point of view, i.e. as an armament of land forts, is not in danger of being greatly over-rated—vessels engaged in offensive operations are not now obliged to come to anchor abreast of the works they should attack, constant motion will be the rule of their tactics and the eighty one ton gun has no more chance of hitting an antagonist under steam than the 6½ ton gun, probably not as much—while it is subjected to all the casualties of shell fire at long range.

It is well known that the *Dardenelles* was at one time defended by a species of artillery which threw stone shot of 600 lbs. weight—yet it did not prevent the passage