

194 Heligoland to Keeling Island

four such shells in less than one minute, while her 6-inch quick-firers were pouring in 100-lb. projectiles as fast as the guns could be worked. Moreover the 12-inch guns had a range greatly in excess even of the much-vaunted giant howitzers of the enemy.

The fire from the "Venerable" must have inflicted terrible losses in the German trenches. Now and then the 12-inch guns would find the range of a German battery, and annihilate it at one salvo. The gunlayers of all the British ships engaged are reported by eye-witnesses to have excelled themselves. The ranges were at once picked up with marvellous precision, and the Germans as a result were compelled to evacuate a large extent of the country after suffering terrible losses.

The monitors and torpedo craft frequently, by steaming up rivers and canals, got to such close quarters that their crews even exchanged rifle-shots with the Germans. Later on the enemy brought up every gun he could spare and concentrated their fire against the ships, but the speed and skilful manœuvring of the latter resulted in their sustaining very little damage.

On October 29th the Admiralty, reporting on the work of the flotilla, said that accounts received from the shore testified to the effect and accuracy of the fire, and to its galling character. "The flank is thus thoroughly maintained." On the 27th and 28th the enemy replied vigorously to the fire of Admiral Hood's ships, but the vessels received only trifling