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The Beacon

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THE RETURN OF THE PRODIGAL

I RODE into Pincher River on an August afternoon,
The pinto's hoofs on the prairie drumming a dreamy tune,
By the shacks and the Chinks' truck-gardens to the Alberta saloon.

And a bunch of the boys was standing around by the old Scotch store,
Standing and spitting and swearing by old Macallister's door—
And the name on their lips was Britain—the word that they spoke was War.

War! . . . Do you think I waited to talk about wrong or right
When I knew my own old country was up to the neck in a fight?
I said "So long!"—and I beat it—"I'm hitting the trail to-night."

I wasn't long at my packing, I hadn't much time to dress,
And the cash I had at disposal was a ten-spot—more or less;
So I didn't wait for my ticket; I booked by the Hotspur Express.

I rode the bumpers at night-time; I beat the ties in the day;
Stealing a ride and bumming a ride all of the blooming way,
And—I left the First Contingent drilling at Valcartier!

I didn't cross in a liner (I hadn't my passage by me!);
I spotted a Liverpool cargo tramp, smelly and greasy and grimy,
And they wanted hands for the voyage, and the old man guessed he'd try me.

She kicked like a ballet-dancer or a range-bred bronco mares;
She rolled till her guttering rattled; she wallowed, but what did I care?
It was "Go it, my bucking beauty, if you only take me there!"

Then came an autumn morning, grey-blue, windy and clear,
And the fields—the little white houses—green and peaceful and dear,
And the heart inside of me saying, "Take me, Mother, I'm home!"

"Here, for I thought you'd want me, I've brought you all that I own—
A lean, long lump of a carcass that's mostly muscle and bone,
Six-foot-two in my stockings—weigh in at fourteen stone.

"Here, and I hope you'll have me; take me for what I'm worth—
A chap that's a bit of a waster, come from the ends of the earth
To fight with the best that's in him for the dear old land of his birth!"

—CICELY FOX SMITH, in *Punch*.

WITH A CASTING-NET

Where fountains of sweet water run between,
And sun and shadow chequer-chased the green.
—*Jámi*

PERAK is one of the largest and most populous of the States of the Malay Peninsula, it is the one where probably the rulers can claim the clearest genealogy and the longest recorded descent, and it is unquestionably here that all ancient rites and customs have been most carefully preserved.

Whilst it was to Perak that the first British Resident was appointed, and this State is now the most wealthy, advanced, and prosperous of all these under British influence, the Malays still maintain their traditions and observe their honoured customs as though railways and steamers, education and sanitation had no more part in their lives than when Albuquerque was striving to effect a landing on the shores of Malacca.

For ages it has been a practice of the Sultans of Perak to reserve certain waters for their own fishing, and certain jungle tracts (usually surrounding a hot spring of mineral water) for their own hunting. There they would resort, annually or oftener, and with their relatives, chiefs, and followers take their kingly pleasure, as it was duly chronicled had been the custom of their ancestors.

In the lull after the first heavy rains, that is about the month of December, when the river has been swollen to flood-height for a couple of months, the *tuntong* or river-turtles ascend the Perak River in considerable numbers and lay their eggs on certain convenient sand stretches in the neighbourhood of Bota, about 100 miles from the river's mouth.

The most frequented of these laying grounds is a place called *Pásir Telor* (egg-sand), just below Bota, and it is here that the ladies of the Court annually assemble to dig up the eggs, which the Malay considers one of the greatest delicacies known to him.

The river-turtle is a great deal smaller than the sea-turtle, but it lays a larger egg, and one much more valued by Malays.

As soon as the river rises watchers are stationed on the sands, and the turtles are said to lay three times. The nests are dug between two and three feet under the sand, and contain from about fifteen to thirty-five eggs each. During the laying season boats are not allowed to stop at the sands for fear they should disturb the turtles.

When the first set of eggs has been laid and the turtles have returned to the river, the watchers open the nests and send the eggs up to the Sultan. The second set of nests is opened by the royal party, and the third is left to hatch, an operation that takes six months. There is no sitting, the young turtles simply emerge from the sand, walk down into the river and swim away.

It is said that if the first and second nests are left untouched, the turtles themselves open them and scatter and destroy the eggs; but that, after the third "lay," they take their departure, having accomplished their task.

Directly the watchers report that the turtles have made the second nests, the Sultan and his family, with the neighbouring chiefs and their families, take boat and paddle down the stream to Pásir Telor.

Fifteen or twenty large house-boats and several bamboo rafts containing about one hundred and fifty people making an imposing procession. The rafts are simply floating houses, with mat walls and a high thatched roof, and are manned by crews of from four to sixteen polers; but the boats are graceful and picturesque barges, of which the foundation is a long dug-out of hard wood drawing very little water, the freeboard is raised by the breadth of one or two planks, and over the stern-half of the boat is built a palm-thatched covering on a slight wooden frame, while curtains secure privacy. Inside this house, the roof of which rises in a sharp curve towards the stern, sit and lie on mats and cushions the owner and his family or friends. The crew occupy the forward half of the boat, where they sit to paddle down stream or stand to pole up. The steersman has a high seat in the stern, from whence he is able to see clear of the cabin-roof.

The covered portion of the barge which carries the Sultan's principal wife is decorated with six scarlet-bordered white umbrellas. Two officers stand all day long, just outside the state-room, holding open black umbrellas with silver fringes, and two others are in the bows with long bamboo poles held close together and erect. The royal bugler sits on the extreme end of the prow, and from time to time blows a call on the antique silver trumpet of the regalia. Flags are flown, other boats carry gongs and drums, and altogether the pleasure-fleet makes a brave show and a considerable noise, attracting the attention of all the dwellers on the riverside.

The journey from the Sultan's palace at Kuala Kangsar occupies two days, and on the morning of the third all the ladies of the party, with all their attendants and children (a good many still in arms), disembark for the ceremony of digging out the turtle-eggs.

The ladies are in their smartest garments and wear their costliest jewels. It is a blaze of brilliant coloured silks, of painted *sárongs*, cloth of gold scarves, and embroidered gauze veils; of bright sun-shades, gold bracelets, necklaces, and bangles; of curious jewelled brooches, massive hair-pins, and rings flashing with the light of diamonds and rubies.

The men appear in jackets, trousers, and *sárongs* of hardly less striking hues; but the horror of Western dyes and Western schemes of colour has not yet demoralised the Malay's innate sense of beauty and fitness, and nothing offends the eye as all this wealth of bravery moves slowly across the strand.

A scorching sun shines down on the gaily-clad figures with their background of dark jungle, on the yellow sands and sparkling river, with its burden of picturesque boats, and gives light and shadow to a charming picture.

The watchers have marked with twigs the various nests, and each lady of rank, with her little crowd of attendants, makes for one of these, and with her hands begins to dig up the sand in search of the eggs. But the nest is deep down, and the sides of the hole have a way of falling in on the digger, so a man or boy is desired to remove the overburden and make things easy for the lady. The overlying sand is quickly scooped out until one or two of the white eggs are disclosed, and then the lady, sitting on the edge and stooping far down, can just manage to reach the nest, and the eggs are carefully handed up.

Besides the pleasure of actually removing the eggs with one's own hand, of displaying to admiring eyes a vision of taper fingers and rounded wrist, of showing how little it matters that the costliest garments should trail in the sand, there is the rivalry of whose nest yields the largest number of eggs. Anything over twenty-five is considered a satisfactory find.

By the time all the nests have been rifled, the sands are growing so hot under the rays of the fiery sun that bare feet can hardly endure what is little short of torture. There is an almost hurried return to the boats, the finery is exchanged for simpler garments, and all the men and many of the ladies take to the river, and there disport themselves in a manner that is refreshing to sun-scorched bodies and the eyes of the Western spectator who is fortunate enough to see how it is possible to be unconventionally natural and yet perfectly modest.

It is only on such occasions as this that a strange man can see these ladies unveiled, and even so, he is not expected to look at them or go very near them; but their bathing-costume differs hardly at all from that which they commonly wear, and they thoroughly enjoy this opportunity of revelling in the clear waters of the sand-bedded stream.

Then every one scrambles back into the boats, which are pushed off into deep water, the rowers seize their paddles and with beat of gong and the musical notes of the silver *serúnai*, with jest and laughter, pennons waving, and bright eyes sparkling behind the rainbow-coloured blinds, the picturesque flotilla glides on its course down the long sunny reach, in and out amongst the islets, round a heavily-wooded, deeply-shadowed headland, past the riverside hamlets and the orchards, the stately palms, the clusters of bamboo that overhang the water like great plumes of pale green feathers, and so ever onward through sunlight and shadow till another bourne is reached.

The grateful turn of the leading barge towards a sand-spit flanked by a long inviting backwater, the roll of a drum and every prow is headed for the shallows of the bank that divides the *ayer máti*, the "dead water," from the living hurrying stream.

The boats arrange themselves in divisions, the crews land, make fires, and boil the rice for their mid-day meal, while the cooking and breakfasting of the members of the "court" is done on board the varl-our barges.

In this feudal and conservative country when the people eat they *mákan*, but the Raja does not *mákan*, with him it is *santap*. When "the masses" bathe they *mandi*, but the same operation in the case of a Raja is called *séram*; a chief or a beggar may sleep and that is *tidor*, but when the Raja sleeps he is said to *bér-ádu*. This does not mean that a wide gulf divides Malay classes, there is rather that communion as of the members of an old Scotch clan, but respect and courtesy are characteristic of the race, a prized legacy which it is not yet considered a sign of either independence or good manners to despise. People of the same class, rajas and chiefs, children and parents, brothers and sisters, speak to each other with studied deference and never forget the little distinctions that mark fine shades of rank or age. Boys and girls are as careful in the observance of these courtesies as are their elders.

Education and contact with Europeans will alter all this, and in the next century there will be more equality and probably less politeness and fraternity. But then also there will be no royal preserves, no class privileges, and no State junketings where noble and peasant meet in generous rivalry of skill with a single desire to snatch from the toil, the disappointments, and the sorrows of life one week of pleasure wherein individual joy may grow greater in the knowledge that it is shared by many.

Future possibilities do not disturb our friends, whose guiding principle is rather "insufficient for the day is the pleasure thereof." They have attacks of hatred and gloom, and then they kill, if the desire is strong enough, but these fits are rare, and when not actively engaged in amusing themselves they are lotus-eating, sometimes figuratively, sometimes in reality.

This is a time for action, and, the mid-day meal disposed of, all the men of the party get ready their casting-nets and don the garments that will least hamper the free use of their limbs and will not be injured by a thorough wetting.

The backwater has a narrow and shallow entrance on the river, and this entrance is staked across to guard it from what in the West would be called poachers. Through the stakes a way has now been made wide enough to admit of the passage of boats. The Sultan's barge and a few other house-boats have passed the barrier, and these are accompanied by a fleet of fifty uncovered dug-outs, each with a light grating of split-bamboos over half its length, and each carrying two or three paddlers, one of whom steers and one man standing on the extreme end of the bow ready to cast the net.

These nets are of local make, the mesh is small, the thread of twisted strands of finest cotton, and the length varies according to the ability of the owner to cast it. A very short net is five or six cubits in length from centre to edge, a long one is twelve or thirteen cubits, and to cast that with accuracy so that it reaches the water perfectly extended requires a very skilful hand. The bottom or edge of the net is weighted with small leaden rings that sink it rapidly through the water, while a fine cord from the centre is attached to the right wrist of the thrower. The net is usually dyed a dark brown with a solution made from the bark of the mangrove.

The backwater where this annual netting is done is a long narrow strip of fairly deep water widening slightly in the centre and contracting at the ends. On one side it is bordered by a low grass-grown shore and on the other by a jungle-covered bank from which the overhanging branches cast dark shadows on the glassy surface, stirred here and there into tiny wavelets by every passing zephyr.

By 3 P. M. all is ready; some of the oldest and most skilful netters stand in the bows of the royal barges, a dozen young rajas are in dug-outs and the others are occupied by their owners, men from the neighbouring villages who have come to join in the sport.

The Sultan gives the signal, and the boats move off slowly and at once form themselves into a crescent, with the royal barges in the centre. The horns of the crescent draw towards each other, the boats make a simultaneous in-turn, the circle is completed, and at the moment when it becomes sufficiently circumscribed every net is cast, covering the whole surface of the water within the ring of boats. Directly the nets have been cast they sink, the paddlers back-water, and each net is slowly drawn to the surface and the fish taken are disengaged from the fine meshes and thrown into the boat under the bamboo grating.

Almost every net contains fish, and the numbers vary from two or three to fifty or sixty bright silvery fishes, weighing from half a pound to a pound each.

The operation is then repeated, and the fleet of boats works its way slowly from end to end of the back-water, a distance of about a mile.

Sometimes every net makes a good haul, sometimes only one or two do very well, and all the rest indifferently. It is no easy matter with such an insecure foothold to cast a long and heavy net, but well done, the act of casting is graceful and attractive. First the slack of the cord is taken up in loops in the right hand and after it the net, until the leaden rings clear the boat and reach to about the thrower's knee. Then with his left hand he takes up part of the skirt of the net and hangs it over his right arm and shoulder. This done he seizes the balance of the skirt in his left hand, swings his body backwards and then forwards with a strong propelling movement of arm, shoulder, and back that sends the net straight out over the water to fall perfectly extended, like a huge brown cobweb, the outer edges sinking instantly, under the weight of the leaden rings and drawing together by reason of the resistance of the inner surface of the net.

The game *looks* easy enough, but try it and you will probably find yourself in the water at the first cast with the net tied up into an inextricable knot.

Watch the experienced hand. The boats are now at a bend in the middle of the backwater, the circle is formed, the in-turn is given to the bows, the ring narrows, and at this moment the scene is picturesque to a degree and strangely weird.

Atmospheric changes come quickly here; the sky has become suddenly overcast, a heavy rain-cloud is being rapidly driven before a rising wind, and the water is now dark and gloomy. This *cordon* of low black boats, so close to each other that they almost touch, on every bow a half-bent, quaintly-clad form with the net hanging in graceful folds from arm and shoulder, while fifty dark earnest faces gaze eagerly on the narrowing space. In that instant it flashes across the spectator's mind that some mystic rite of fell intent is to be performed within that magic zone. Then heigh! Abracadabra!

The word is given to cast, and from fifty boats the nets fly out with a swirl and settle on the water with a gentle hiss.

But the skilful thrower waits for a second or two, knowing that the fish, frightened by this rain of lead, will dash for the only spot where there seems to be a gap. Then deftly he casts a net with a diameter of forty feet, and the moment he strains the cord he realises that he has made an extraordinary capture. He pulls the net up a little way, and then, plunging his arms into the water, grasps the meshes on either and calls for help to raise the struggling mass of fish. All eyes are fixed on the lucky Raja, and as the take is lifted into the boat there are shouts of delight and congratulation and clapping of hands from the ladies, who are keenly interested. By this single cast the thrower has secured one hundred and twenty-one fish, and his contribution for the afternoon is over seven hundred "tails."

Just as the furthest end of the backwater is reached the rain, which has been long threatening, comes down in torrents and there is a race for shelter and dry clothes. The dug-outs with three or four paddlers easily beat the barges with a dozen, but long before the river is reached the netters are as wet as the fish, and have a swim in the warm water of the river before changing into dry clothes.

Then there is a lull in the storm, and the more enthusiastic return to the netting and, unmindful of hunger, darkness, and rain, still cast the nets till 10 P. M., when they return thoroughly tired out, but happy in the knowledge that the bag numbers over ten thousand fish.

Amongst these late comers and most ardent sportsmen are several ladies who, not satisfied with the ease and dignity of a royal barge, have braved the elements and gone fasting to share the excitement of the netting in the discomfort of the dug-outs.

That is how the Sultan of Perak's annual fishing party takes its pleasure, and about the very same time His Highness of Páhang will be leading a similar expedition in the quiet waters of an old channel of the Páhang River.

There, however, the method is rather different—the water is poisoned with the juice of the *tuba* root, and the stupefied fish are speared and netted as they float and swim aimlessly about. The fun is much the same, perhaps, but the pursuit is less sporting than by the means employed in Perak. It is not however, perfectly easy to spear even drugged fish without both skill and practice.

In Páhang, also, the pageant is conducted with much state and ancientry, and, as the nature of the pastime requires only a moderate effort, the ladies of the Harim smile on the proceedings and, armed with silken nets on hafts of gold, themselves essay to scoop up the scaly quarry. Amongst the ladies of the Court are some the exceeding fairness of whose skin, the perfect oval of their faces, and the glances of their liquid eyes so embarrass the men of the party that many a spear flies wide of its mark.

There are some things still hidden from the ken of Cook and the race of Globe trotters, and I do not fear to reveal the secrets of this remote corner of the earth, for, if any be thereby induced to visit the Peninsula in search of such displays as I have tried to describe, he will meet with disappointment.

You cannot, in the language of Western culture, put a penny in the slot and set in motion the wheels of this barbarous Eastern figure.

From *Malay Sketches*, by Sir Frank A Swettenham. London: John Lane.

LESSONS FROM TSINGTAO

[*North China Daily News*]

THE military lessons of the siege of Tsingtao are mostly connected with artillery and are as a whole, therefore, of too technical a character to be satisfactorily handled by anyone but an expert. With one or two, however, the civilian may be allowed to deal, for example the comparative harmlessness of common shell when used to hamper siege operations. From the time the defenders of Tsingtao were driven out of Litsun valley and the Japanese had obtained control of it, the Germans bombarded with common shell incessantly. On one occasion, as our special correspondent told us, they fired no fewer than 2,015 in twenty-four hours, their object presumably being to impede the construction of gun emplacements, and to damage supply columns and light railway lines. They had all the advantage of knowing the country thoroughly and yet on that particular day they hit absolutely nothing and throughout the period did far less harm than the rain. Common shell does not explode and if it misses by an inch misses by a mile. The light railways were pushed forward, supply columns filed across the valley from and towards Changtsun, and the guns were placed in position with astonishingly small loss of life. Naturally, the effect of common shell fire on the individual becomes, after a time, almost negligible. As soon as he has realized, as he very quickly does, the immense discrepancy between its bark and its bite he ceases either to hear the one or to think about the other. With high explosive shells the case is very different. Had the Germans used shrapnel with half the same generosity, they would have done very much more to delay the final assault. With that, however, they appear to have been but poorly provided.

Comparatively harmless as a great deal of their shell fire was it would have been still more ineffective but for the use they made of aeroplanes. Telegrams from Europe have afforded abundant evidence as to the enormous change which aerial navigation has introduced into modern warfare. The siege of Tsingtao confirms it. Morning after morning the German bird of war hovered out of the blue, circled over the Japanese lines, peered down at General Kamio's headquarters and returned safely, singing over the brow of Iltis. When the general bombardment began, it was very soon evident that the exact position of some of the Japanese batteries had become known. They suffered accordingly. A few years ago that would, in the special circumstances of the case, have been impossible, for the isthmus that runs down between Kiaochou Bay and the sea measures, between the points linked together by Prince Heinrich's arc of hills, little more than five miles. The Germans were hemmed in south of the arc without the smallest possibility of egress, while the chances against a Chinese spy getting through to them with information were ten to one. Without aeroplanes, therefore, they could only have fired at random; by means of them they were able to get the range to a nicety. Given a clear atmosphere, military operations, however hedged about by censors, have, to a very large extent, been robbed of secrecy, the anti-aeroplane gun, judged by results attained at Tsingtao, being practically useless. It is an extraordinarily pretty sight to watch this gun being employed, to see little clouds of smoke, like puffs from a tobacco pipe, bursting apparently all round the aeroplane. But the shots are harmless: the bird continues its inspection undisturbed.

Another point worth emphasizing is the scope still left to cold steel. One frequently hears the lament that in "the good old days" moral qualities counted for more in warfare than they do now, because fighting was less scientific and took place at close quarters. To some extent, of course, that is true and the tendency probably will be more and more to rely on mechanical contrivances, until, perhaps, the terrible day may come when whole areas will be blown up by an anaemic professor pressing a button. But that day has not come yet, as news from Europe and what happened at Tsingtao shows. The five German redoubts were shelled mercilessly for a week. In some cases, the earthworks were hammered almost out of recognition. But the concrete below the earthworks and the wire entanglements in front of them remained practically intact, at all events in Redoubts 5, 4, 3, and 2. In order to get a determined enemy out of forts that cannot be left invested and have to be taken, it is still necessary for infantry to assault. Then the bayonet gets its chance, and a very good chance, too. The Germans at Tsingtao did not use it—whether they were right or wrong is not worth while discussing. But had they used it with real determination the Allies' losses would have been very much heavier. Science and money count enormously in war, but they have not by any means displaced moral rights to victory.

The fact which impressed itself most forcibly, perhaps, on the minds of spectators and of British officers who took part in the operations against Tsingtao was the thoroughness of Japanese organization. According to recent reports on the Germans' point of view, the defenders were surprised at the elaborate nature of the preparations made against them. They expected, apparently, to be rushed at a very much earlier date than the one on which the final assault was actually delivered. There is no doubt that had the Japanese chosen to throw away lives with the recklessness which they displayed at Port Arthur, Tsingtao could have been taken with a very much smaller expenditure of time and forethought. That, however, is not the Japanese way. They can be the most extravagant people in the world as far as life is concerned when necessary, but it is wholly against their nature to embark on any scheme which has not been thought out down to the smallest detail. Accordingly, their army in Shangtung was provided for with a clockwork precision which drew expressions of admiration from every European there. It is true, of course, that they had everything in their favour. There were practically no contingencies for which they could not prepare beforehand. Yet the very knowledge that this was the case might have made them slipshod. There have been, at all events, not a few instances in which similar circumstances have had that effect on Great Britain's War Office. No such effect was observable in Shantung—the Japanese could not have been more cautious had all the chances of the campaign been against them. Absolute disregard for death and an infinite capacity for taking pains are, it will be admitted, two of the finest ingredients of military success. Port Arthur proved that the Japanese possess the former, Tsingtao has shown that they have the latter quality. From an international point of view that is, perhaps, its most important lesson.

The siege illustrated one or two other points in the Japanese character which are worth emphasizing. One is their quite amazing sense of duty. A young and distinguished artillery colonel was appointed to act as censor to, and to assist, the two European newspaper correspondents at General Kamio's Headquarters. It is difficult to imagine any post more irksome to a keen soldier not in the least interested in journalism, yet never by look, word or gesture was any hint ever given that even during the most interesting hours of the siege the most important business of the day was not the reading of descriptive letters or the discussion of news and ways of communicating it. And the sense of obligation, of doing thoroughly the particular task assigned, which was evident in this direction, was equally plain in others, so much so that it became part of the environment to an extent quite impossible to exaggerate. A second characteristic is not of an admirable character, the arrogance, namely, of the average Japanese private and his want of honesty when dealing with people whom he considers of no account. The stories of harsh treatment which came to Shanghai at the beginning of hostilities proved, on examination, to have very little in them as far as the Japanese authorities were concerned. To the best of their ability they dealt fairly by the inhabitants of Shangtung. But notwithstanding their desire and their efforts to be just, there were undoubtedly cases in which Chinese suffered, and for which the private soldier must be held responsible. The fault is mentioned here because it points to a danger which threatens Japan, the danger namely of allowing militarism—the idea, that is to say, that the soldier's interests come first merely because he is a soldier—to get as firm a grip upon the country and its ideals as it has gained in Prussia.

In some of the cases in which Chinese suffered they had, to a certain extent, themselves to blame. It is not wise, for example, when a hungry soldier offers money for food to endeavour to raise the price by fifty per cent. As likely as not, he will get annoyed and go off with what he wants without paying anything. That kind of thing happened not infrequently. Had the Chinese fairly faced the situation their losses would have been considerably smaller. They might, as far as the necessities of life were concerned, have met the Japanese with offers of help. Acting through their village headmen and guilds, they could have gone to them with reasonable price lists and declared their willingness to trade. Instead of that, the Japanese had to make out the price lists and get them accepted after prolonged negotiations. It is surprising, when one comes to think of it, that no such method of meeting the situation was suggested from Peking, and the fact that it was not is yet another lesson from the siege. The Government contented itself with pious exhortations to neutrality, and the people faced the problem of a Japanese invasion with bluff and individualism. They might have met it with nothing but advantage to themselves, with a frank recognition of facts expressed through a committee of mutual aid.

ADVISABILITY OF HOLDING IMPERIAL CONFERENCE

London, Jan. 14.—Discussing the advisability of holding an Imperial Conference, the Standard of Empire says that there need be no fear that any conference sitting at such a time would attempt to grapple with the final settlement of great questions of Imperial governance. It asks whether the advisability of holding a conference should not be considered because of, rather than in spite of, the crisis now existing, in view of the desire of the Overseas Dominions that they be consulted on the terms of any peace settlement.

VICE-ADMIRAL NARES DEAD

London, Jan. 15—Vice-Admiral Sir George S. Nares, R. N., retired, is dead. He was born in 1831.

*** Sir George Nares will be remembered as Commander of the "Challenger" from 1872 to 1875, and of the Arctic Expedition of 1875-6. He had been in previous exploring and surveying expeditions. He was never a fighting admiral.—Ed.

GIVES BIRTH TO FOUR

Prince Albert, Sask., Jan. 12.—Mrs. Ernest A. Mathews, this city, gave birth to three girls and one boy. All are living and quite strong and healthy.

Mrs. Mathews is 35 years of age, and these are her first children.

St. John N. B.—New Brunswick, during the game season which closed November 30, well sustained its reputation as a paradise for big game hunters. During the season, the total number of moose, deer and caribou killed and accounted for was 4738. Probably the largest moose head taken out was one of 64½ inches, which was secured by Otto Warman, of St. John. Three other splendid heads were brought out, measuring 63 inches, 60 inches, and 59¾ inches respectively. Two of these were secured by New York sportsmen. Eight bears are reported as having been killed. There is no return of other fur-bearing animals, or of wild fowl, or of game fish, such as trout and land-locked salmon, for which the Province of New Brunswick is famous.—*News Letter*, Board of Trade.

Together with a decrease in population, which, according to the assessment office returns, now numbers 106,110, Vancouver faces a diminution of $5,025,458 in the assessment on land for 1915, as the total amount is $145,603,952, as compared with $150,629,410 for last year. It is on the land value that the tab rate is based. The value of improvements, buildings, that is, is $79,137,378, this being an increase of $2,921,595 over the value of last year, which was $76,215,783. The totals are $224,741,350 for this year and $226,845,193 for last year, a net decrease of $2,103,863.

St. John, N. B.—The lumber shipments from this port to British ports during the year 1914 were as follows:—Spruce, 84,027,826 sup. ft.; birch plank, 7,651,181 ft.; birch timber, 1,411 tons. During the previous year the figures were:—Spruce, 80,714,861 sup. ft.; birch plank, 5,823,761 ft.; birch timber, 2,307 tons. The lumber and timber exports from St. John to the United States in 1914 were $1,470,030.10; 1913, $1,525,468.59.—*News Letter*, Board of Trade.

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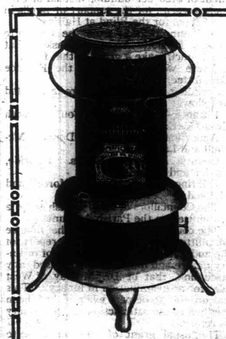

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