

Some Naval Lessons of the War.

It is too soon yet to focus all the side lights which will have been shed on the problems of naval warfare by the outcome of the Spanish-American conflict. The failure of the enemy's navy to justify many of the expectations which had been formed of its effective fighting strength precludes some of the light which might have come from a great naval battle on the side of sea tactics and strategy. This probably would not have been much greater, however, in the case of armorclads than of wooden ships, for the broad principles which won at Salamis, Lepanto and Trafalgar will always hold good.

Some things have been made clear. The apprehension felt over the power of the torpedo boat as a sea weapon has been greatly allayed. The battle which annihilated Cervera's fleet proved conclusively that a multiplicity of rapid firing guns, well served, is a pretty sure defense against such a fighting factor. The torpedo boat is, like the cobra, deadly in its stroke, but easily killed before reaching the striking distance. One mysterious terror has received a douche of cold sea water. Only by a union of great skill and daring in the service of torpedo warfare and under most favorable conditions, can it be raised to its Nth power. Again, the importance of increased speed in our battleships has been signally enforced. The Cristobal Colon would unquestionably have escaped had it not been for the Oregon, an unusually swift battleship, and the fast Brooklyn. All the foreign admiralities are planning battleships with minimum speed of from 17 to 18 knots, and yet our naval department fatuously lays out its new ships for a minimum 15 knot speed and rejects the chief engineer's recommendation for the most improved boilers and engines, because they will take up too much room. The need of a greater ratio of armored cruisers with a very high speed has also been made clear as noonday. The great Nelson's cry was ever: "Frigates, more frigates! I have sail of the line enough." High powered, armored ships with their lighter heels and greater firing radius are likely to be quite as valuable an element in triumphant sea fighting as the slower liners with their maximum battery strength. Not fewer battleships, but more armored cruisers should be the shibboleth of coming naval estimates, if we crave a well balanced navy.

The most notable lesson of all is the tremendous potency sheathed in the phrase, "The man behind the gun." More than ever now that the agency of attack involves the skillful command of the most complex, ingenious and nicely adjusted mechanism, do the discipline and intelligence of the purely human factor count. The knowledge of our men and officers, trained by practice to the most prompt and efficient work, has excited the admiration of the world.

Here we have had the biggest odds against the Spaniard. And in this element of preponderance we could probably challenge the world for a match.

The Hand of Fate.

There are certain progressive, or rather cumulative, tendencies in history, for which we can find no other name than fatality. The movement may be delayed or for a time even reversed. We do not always recognize the inevitable certainty toward a goal, as contemporary critics. It is only in the retrospect where all the relations of facts in the past as well as the present become clearly outlined that this melancholy stamp shows its deep brand as if burned in with fire. The downfall of nations always offers material for reflection of this kind. Individuals pay the penalty according to measure of long continued blunders and vices. With peoples and governments even more than with individuals

The mills of the gods grind slowly,
But they grind exceedingly fine,

and conclusions are ultimately reached, pitiless as the climax of a Greek tragedy, where the idea of doom or fate scarcely wears a mask. The decadence of Spain impresses us in this fashion with such vividness that detestation of the deeds and characteristics which have accelerated the ruin lacks bitterness to lessen pity for its completeness.

Only three centuries ago Spain was practically the dictator of Europe, the most powerful people in the world, into whose lap the gold and silver of a new world poured in a ceaseless stream and against whom other nations found it necessary to combine for safety as against a public enemy. The elements which caused Spanish decay began to do their fatal work even when the power which was welded under the great Charles V was at its height. Religious bigotry, which crushed all thought and made education a farce; political intolerance, which disdained the rights of other nations as a matter of principle and even made oppression a virtue; commercial blindness, which saw profit alone in an iron restriction of trade; haughtiness of caste, which looked on the masses as merely serviceable tools; pride so petrified as to revolt against any instruction from the contemporary progress of other peoples—all these evil factors have been dominant in Spanish life for three centuries and still show their enfeebled but convulsive energies. Spain has learned nothing, forgotten nothing. The whole world has been moving on. She has limped backward. She has lost successively her great colonial possessions and become the mere shell of a nation. Fate has chosen the newest of the great powers to deal the final coup, the stroke of the matador. Unwillingly as the United States became the instrument of destiny it may be a compensating thought that it is in the pulverization of Spanish power and

its present conditions that a new life may find its birth, as French life found its renewal from the debris of the revolution of 1789. Decay and death precede regeneration in political as in natural life.

Some of the most curious of lawsuits have grown out of inheritance cases where husband and wife have perished in a common catastrophe. The issue has been to determine whether husband or wife died first, thus fixing the line of inheritance for the relations of one or the other. Such a case has sprung from the Bourgogne disaster, involving the disposition of some \$30,000. The presumption in such cases in absence of proof is always against the wife, as being the party of naturally inferior strength.

The prize ring is still in evidence with its batteries of fists and bellowing of loud mouthed braggarts. It is a noticeable fact, however, that while nearly all trades, professions and ranks of society are represented in the ranks gallantly risking life for national dignity and honor, not a single known pugilist has gone to the front. These "flash" gentry find fisticuffs far more safe and profitable. Such vermin naturally dislike the purring of the Mausers.

Mr. Cunninghame-Graham, a well known British "crank" and an ex-M. P., has written to the St. James Gazette, charging that the admirable precision of Dewey's gunnery in the Manila battle was due to British deserters, decoyed from the China fleet by high wages. Now he will probably add that Sampson's marksmen ran away from British men-o'-war at Halifax and Nassau.

Missionaries are getting ready to sow their seed where the war plow has gone in advance. It has been said that the usual sequence is, first, the missionary and then the bayonet. The present case reverses the procedure. Let us hope that the questionable third term of the series, multiplication of rum drinking, will not fulfill the triad.

Mexican newspapers are speculating over the push of the great republic Asiaward. They believe it will make San Francisco a second New York and create a chain of prosperous ports along the Pacific coast, some of which will fatten under the Mexican eagle.

The magnificent record made by American warships in the actual exigencies of battle has greatly impressed foreign observers. Already indications of large government orders from abroad are in the air, one of the commercial fruits of war. Though we appreciate the compliment, we might hint that our achievement has been a matter of brain mettle as well as of gun metal, armor plate and machinery.