

The Fist of the Nation

Our Fleet a Homogeneous Unit Prepared for Any Command

Frederick Palmer in Collier's.

Among captains of industry Admiral Evans enjoys a favored position. The tighter he makes his merger the better we like it. His capitalization is more than 3,500,000 tons of muzzle energy issued at par and unwatered. In a half-hour's action he might send stocks higher than any number of dividend declarations or lower than the withdrawal of all banking support. A Harriman or Hill is only master of a section of the national esophagus, while an Evans directs the fist of the nation.

Powerful is the Admiral, but not so powerful as the President of the United States, who, without waiting on public discussion or the advice or consent of the Senate, may start the fleet toward the Pacific. And the President himself two years hence may be a private citizen with no official authority to transfer a midshipman from one ship to another; and two years hence, when he is retired, the Admiral in civilian garb might have to introduce himself to the middy in charge in order to get a ride on a man-of-war's launch. As for the Secretary of the Navy, he is a supercargo who signs official papers.

Recently we had an amiable one who never went deeper into the subject than to learn that it is the gun and not the turret which is rifled. He was a philosopher who accepted himself as a passenger and enjoyed his vacation voyage exceedingly. The naval officer

of discipline instead of accepting it as the excited prerogative of officers. Bringing him down to impersonal cog-work in a machine must be managed adroitly. Therefore, does the Wainwright Board recommend that the art of dealing with him be imparted along with higher mathematics at Annapolis. In gun discipline and in actual visible realities he is splendid. He likes the shooting, and this accounts for our wonderful target record.

Ashore, he is his own man. I watched a liberty party leaving ship on one occasion, and at the gangway the executive halted the free and glorious soul who was about to see the signs of the town.

"Now, that way of tying your scarf, my boy, is individual, but not regulation."

"As, sir." And Jacky arranged it. The instant he stepped on the quay, however, he jerked it askew again, this time to suit himself. And the way he ties his scarf, after all, is not so important as when stripped to the waist in the stifling heat of the turret he should never fall in the coolness and the promptness of the performance of his part as the human connecting current between the parts of a complicated machine of destruction.

I recall another jacky ashore waving his hand toward the starboard gun of the superposed turret. He spoke to it as a railroad engineer to his throttle—as to a living thing.

"They don't give you any leave, do they, Molly dear?" he called. "It's a shame, and still it ain't in reason

rooms of Japan have been going to war with the United States ever since Japan finished the late bloodshed with Russia. Between 1895 and 1904 the students of the Staff College at Tokio submitted over a hundred and fifty plans for the taking of Port Arthur. Now that Port Arthur is taken, it is not to be presumed that the Staff College is altogether idle. Admiral Yamamoto, visiting our navy yards, would have been strangely lacking in professional spirit if certain eventualities had never crossed his mind.

WHERE EVERYBODY TALKS WAR.

The senior mess is called the wardroom. Here sit the responsible warders of the ship. The junior mess is called the steerage. Here are the immigrant arrivals, if you please. Would you remain young, never refuse an invitation to the steerage. Though you

against any one 16,000-ton foreign ship?"

By smiling when you put the question you will escape a glare of contempt more punishing than any flight of crockery.

If the wardroom were satisfied with the navy it would be time for the country to be dissatisfied. I know of some navies where in the idle watches of the wardroom the officers roll dice, sing songs, and bombard the buffet instead of going into a committee of the whole on a mistake in electric wiring. Professional keenness of censorship is a part of professional efficiency. Our officers complain that our battle maneuvers are not sufficiently practical. Risk, they hold, is necessary to approximate warlike conditions. It is better to have an occasional collision in maneuvers than to have it in war.

The naval officers of the seventies who had no modern ships and took life easily—no new types, no improvements, no target scores to discuss—would regard the officers of today as a Spartan set of grinds. When a sack of powder takes fire in the turret of the Georgia she enters Boston harbor to leave the dead and wounded and immediately returns to the target ground. Casualties are not to interrupt the routine of practice in peace or war. And we have few, precious few, accidents considering the activity of our forces. Of course, you need have none if you keep your ships tied up to shore, as the Russians did before they met the Japanese.

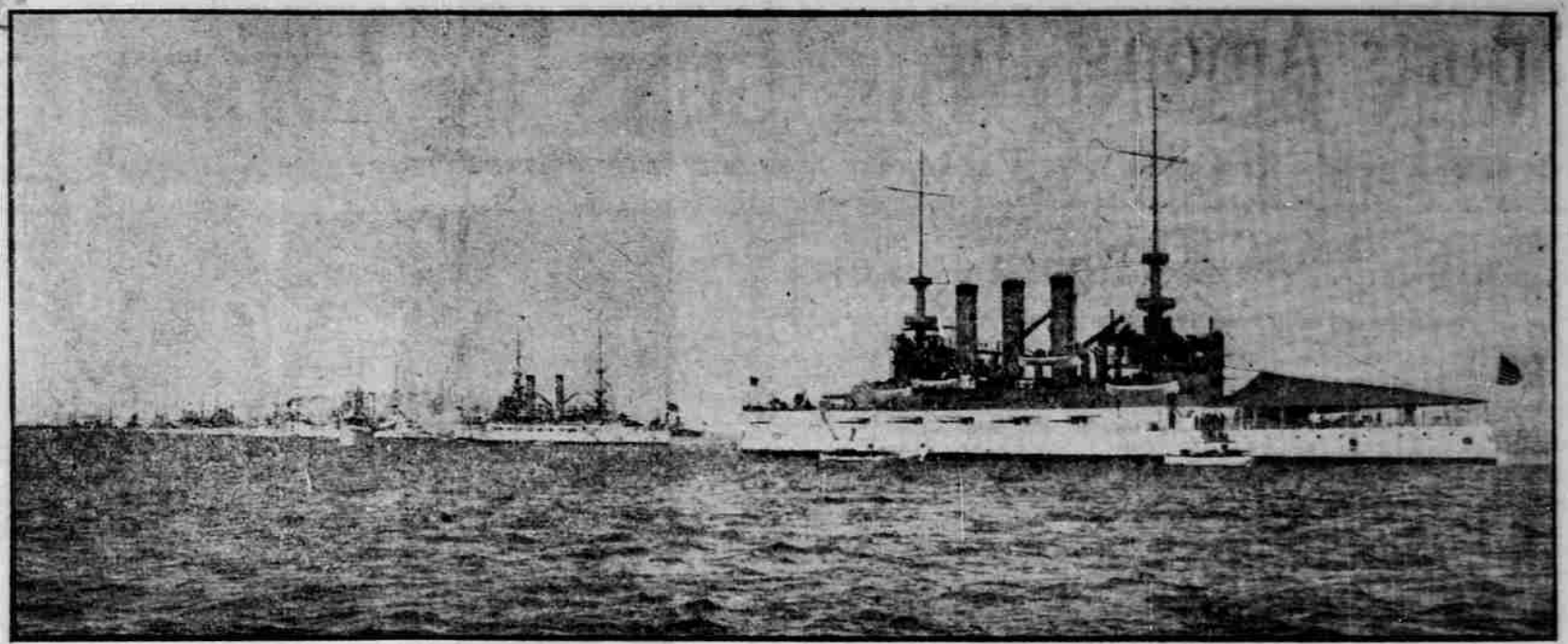
It is the ears of the older officers and the construction corps which burn when the board of strategy and inspection sits in the wardroom. The older officers were middies in the seventies. They are the hump of the

the navy's latter days, are restive under old-fashioned methods. Old officers perhaps keep the respect of the men where the younger officers would work them too hard. Jacky likes the "old man" to look his part. No one would respect Neptune if he were a beardless boy. Here the elders have sentimental precedent on their side.

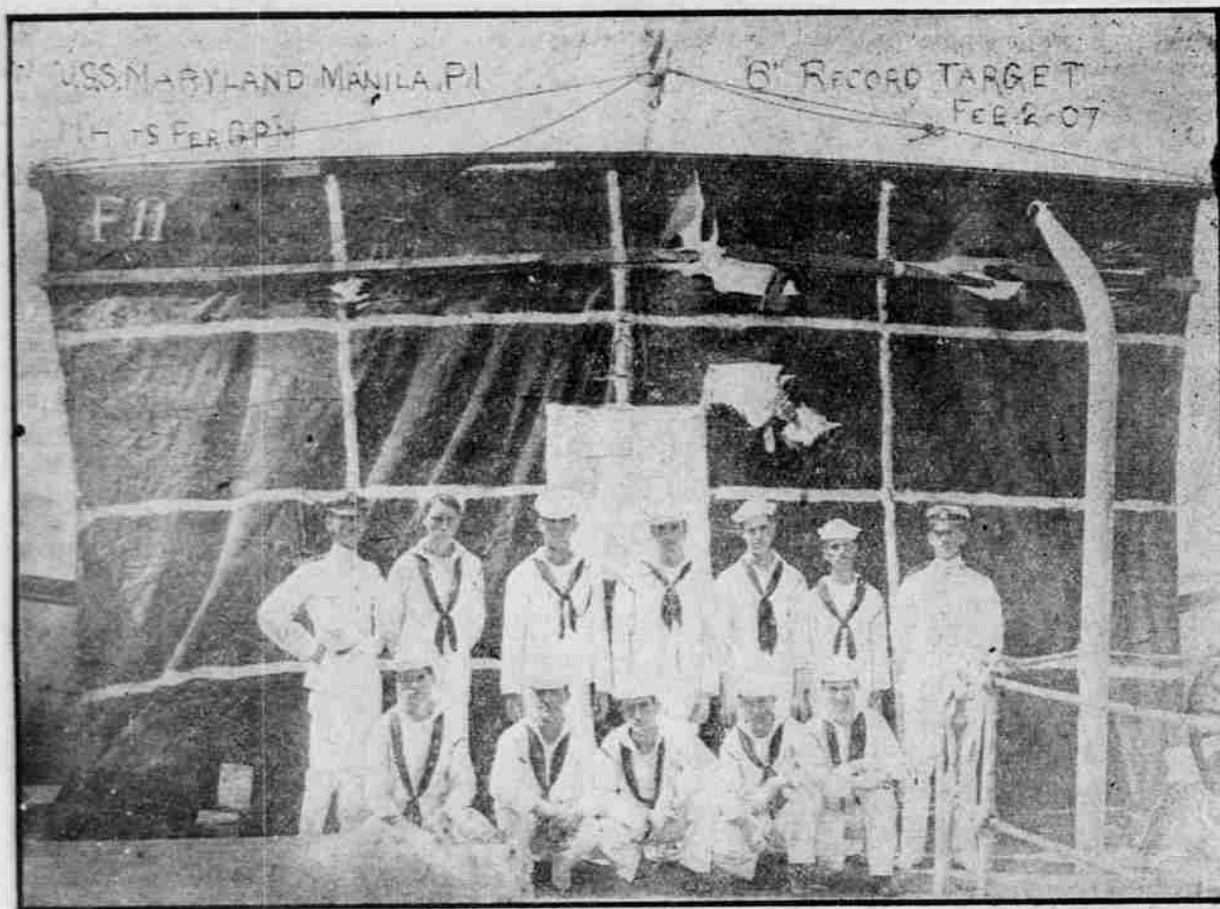
If all the suggestions for battleship changes and improvements which the constructor's corps receives were incorporated in a man-of-war, we should have an architectural monstrosity like Senator Clark's Fifth Avenue mansion, and about as capable of offense and defense or navigation. If none of the wardroom's suggestions were accepted, stagnation and self-sufficiency would result in Washington. The constructor's corps is composed of a little band of Annapolis graduates whose talents impelled them in the direction of mechanics. Love of the work keeps them from accepting higher pay in private employment. They may never reach command. No force could labor under a heavier national handicap.

A NON-MARITIME NATION'S RECORD.

We are not a maritime nation. We have no mercantile marine worth mentioning in the company of respectable Powers. The British Navy draws its sinews from a population born of sea experience. British and German shipyards turn out the mighty liners of the Atlantic and the freight ships whose courses chart the ocean and they are practical schools for constructors trying in civil competition. Most of our shipyards which build for the navy exist by navy work almost exclusively. Yet what is our record? We build a battleship as quickly as Germany. Before the Russo-Japanese war our constructors held that big battleships



Beginning from the right: Ohio, Kearsage, Kentucky, Alabama, Illinois, Connecticut, Maine, Missouri, Virginia, New Jersey, Rhode Island, Georgia. TWELVE OF THE BATTLESHIPS WHICH REAR-ADMIRAL EVANS WILL BRING AROUND THE HORN.



THE RECORD SIX-INCH TARGET AND THE MEN WHO MADE IT. CRACK GUN CREW OF THE SQUADRON, FROM THE U. S. S. MARYLAND. TWELVE SHOTS IN SIXTY SECONDS AND

cers thought him superb. He was almost as good as having no Secretary at all except the President.

YOUNGSTERS MAN THE TURRETS.

And Presidents and Secretaries and Admirals come and go, but the navy, like the nation, goes on forever. It is a world of itself, which dwells in an armored citadel at sea. We see sailors in blue on shore; we catch glimpses of masses of steel in our harbors; we hear of target practice and

ers. A civilian on the quarter-deck is as conspicuous as the cat that walks across a stage. In this wonderful youths are taken from Iowa farms and New York streets and taught to do their own sewing and washing and to handle a twelve-inch gun as if it were a conductor's baton.

The forecastle grows younger and more American. "A splendid lot of boys," by which he meant "kicks," said a British Admiral. For the British Navy still believes in the bluejacket of the thirties, hardened and tough, with his clay pipe fitting into the vacancy of a missing tooth.

"Yes, sir," said the ensign addressed, who was proud to admit they are "kicks."

Our record of target practise is held by youngsters, the average age of the best crews being between twenty-one and twenty-two. The idea of turning a sailor loose at thirty, when it is too late for him to begin any trade or civil occupation, is against the grain of our institutions, which would make every man a producer. After their four years' service the men rarely re-enlist, which is heart-breaking to our naval officers, but gratifying in another sense. Their discipline and clean living serve them in good stead. They settle down to become useful citizens. A naval officer told me of meeting on a Pullman a Jacky who had been in his gun's crew only four years before, and who was now in business and making five thousand a year.

"If there were war," said the officer, "would you come back to the forecastle?"

"In a minute, if it were a big war and the country needed me."

If officially we have no naval reserve mighty of number in paper reports, we have one in fact in the many thousands who have served their enlistment and would return on the call of the nation.

In intelligence our seaman is without equal. This one can say confidently after making comparisons. However, the young American is no clay of the Kipling song, but a free and independent citizen of the republic, and he wants to see the reason

that they should. The results would be positively disgraceful if you started cavorting around and shooting up the town."

It was the uniformity of men and material, and the utter precision of movement, which made him sympathize with the gun as a permanent fixture in that world living in a solar system of orders from above which are in the clouds for the Jacky and sometimes too near for comfort for the senior officers.

"You will observe," said Admiral Dewey, his keen gray sailor's eyes twinkling, on one occasion when there were visitors aboard the Olympia, and he was passing a group of girls to an officer—"you will observe that all the guns are shining and well-groomed and as much alike as peas in a pod. And so are all these young officers. So many guns, so many officers. This means a high and dependable level of efficiency to the Admiral."

Then he cast a wink at the blushing officer, which said: "You know the law of the navy. It's up to you. Get out of it the best you can."

One of the girls, being American, was helpful.

"They aren't all alike when they are ashore, Admiral," she said.

Aboard they seem so to the visitor, whether he is a guest in the senior or the junior mess. Aft is His Grace, the Captain of the battleship, one of the ducky heads under his Imperial

are a hundred, it will make you look down on the fellows in the wardroom as a group of ancient and heavy-weight thinkers. The juniors have just chipped the shell of Annapolis. They are new to the traveled world, where each port unfolds a panorama of things fresh and joyful for which shore leave is the open sesame. Not only do they not know that they can not control the fate of the nation, but they are not trying to. Immediate personal ambition looks no higher than the command of a mosquito gunboat in the Philippines or so light a draft that she can slip over the tropical dew in chase of a band of idrones.

The wardroom mess is serious. At the head of the table sits the executive officer. His power is really that of a British prime minister to a constitutional king. For the execution of all work whatsoever from bow to stern he stands responsible. Occasionally he gets ashore and limbers up the wrinkles of his face with a smile. Some day he may command in name and be an Alice-Sit-by-the-Fire himself.

An executive's record stamps his career. A good executive makes a good captain and probably a good admiral. Dewey and Sampson were both famous in the service as executives.

The wardroom is always talking war. It has been going to war with Japan ever since it finished the late war with Germany. In turn, the ward-

does, the interview must be "denied" or a court-martial may result.

Once you are initiated, once the officers no longer look on you as an outsider, but one of their number, then you find yourself part of as highly critical a body as any literary gathering that ever dissected the newest author to arrive. The wardroom now pays its respects to Washington. Its criticisms, all who know the navy well have heard, and frequently there is much truth in them. The wardroom uses the ships and fights them. After initiation, however, in all secret circles comes the "second degree." When the fire of criticism is hottest, and you are led to think that our fleet is the worst in the world, it is well to ask:

"Do you think that two of our 16,000-ton battleships could hold their own

old black-powder days when lieutenants reached the age of forty without ever having had charge of a landing party or a petty gunboat. Unused to responsibility in their formative years, they come to high command late in life when our navy numbers a score of battleships. Before they have had time to learn how to command a big squadron they are retired.

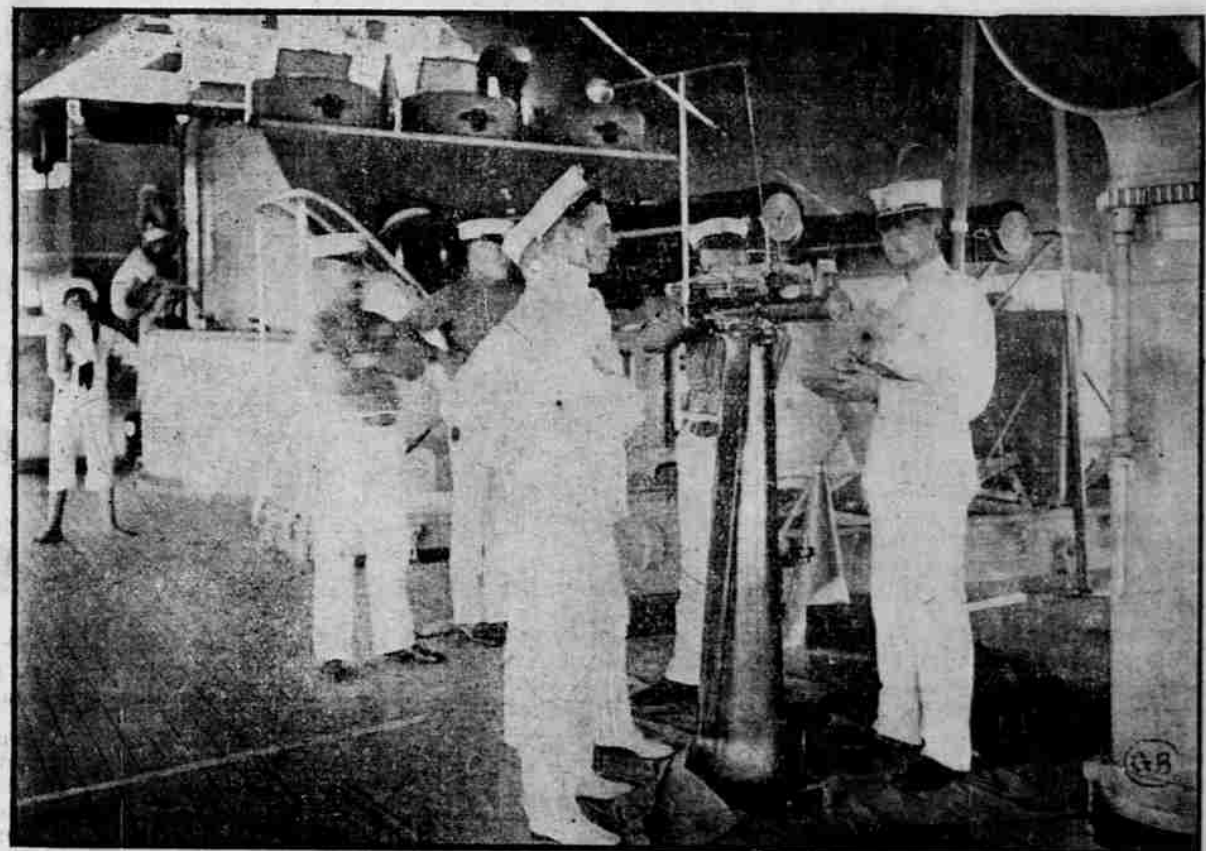
WHY THE MANEUVERS ARE RESTRICTED.

Their desire to close their careers without any accidents against their names does not favor the practice of difficult maneuvers where six or seven million dollars' worth of property might be wrecked by a slight deflection of a battleship's helm at a critical moment. The youngster's ambitions, hardened by the intense application of

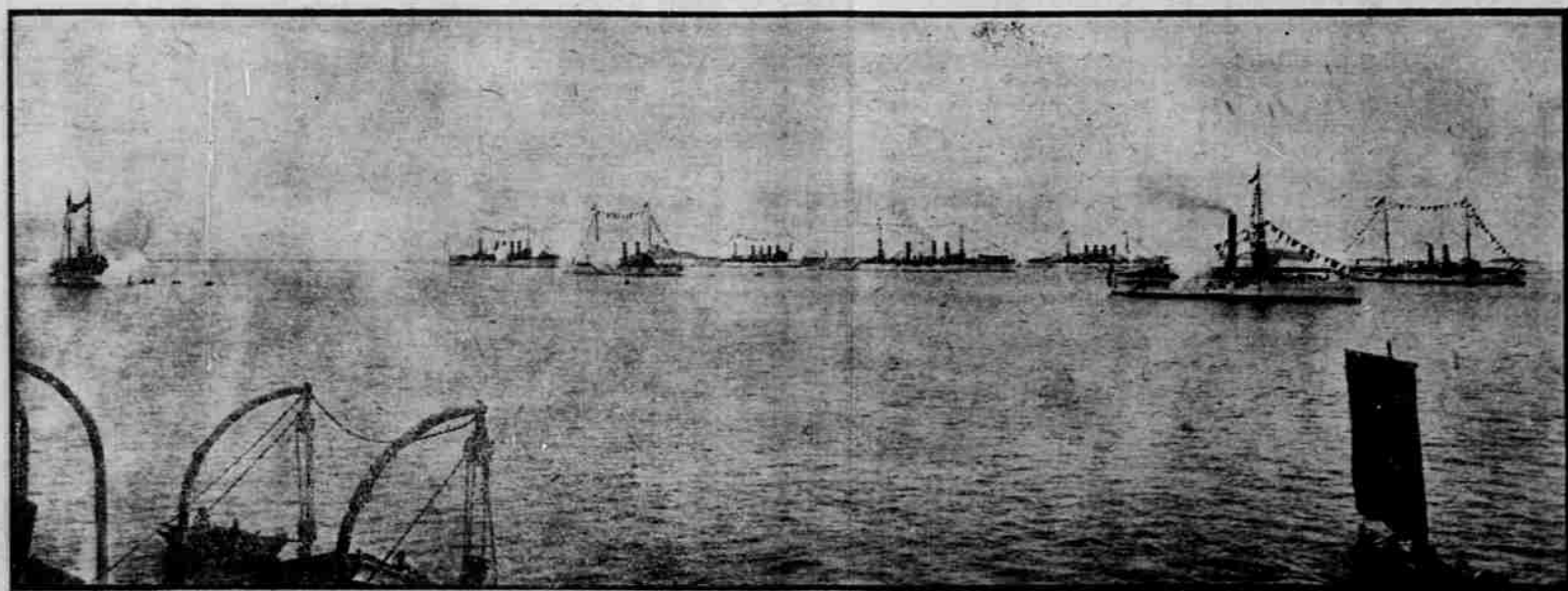
were the thing. Congress disapproved. The war showed that we were right, while the British, who, with all their facilities, had not dared a 20,000-ton vessel, hastened to put all the resources of their shipyards to building a Dreadnought in eighteen months. We held fast to the 12-inch guns which would kill when they hit. Santiago, not a complete test, convinced many foreign Powers of the other view taken so enthusiastically by all 5-inch gun crews who chased Cervera. Germany fell into the error. England was wise enough to accept the conclusion of our thinking experts, which they maintained against much opposition at home.

Our Chief Constructor, Capps, has not made the mistake of taking up with a new fashion in naval architecture before it is tried out. He has never been the victim of a fad or sensationalism. Once our navy was the home of both. We had rams and monitors and tumble-home sides. When Sampson started for Porto Rico, his squadron varied in speed from eight to twenty-one knots. He had a nine composed of some ball players, some trapeze performers, and some heavyweight wrestlers. Evans's nine is composed entirely of ball players.

In naval progress the United States has traveled a long road since 1892, when England, Germany and France already had the nucleus and the machine of a modern navy, and we had all to learn. Unlike Japan, the other Power which has risen quickly, we did not buy our ships abroad. In 1893 we laid down the Indiana. She was the first warj and the new Delaware type is the latest. Her speed was fifteen and five-tenth knots against the Delaware's twenty-one; her tonnage 19,263 against the Delaware's 21,000. She had a collective muzzle energy of 185,000 foot-tons against the Delaware's 400,000. She had four 13-inch guns against ten 12-inch.



SMALL ARM TARGET DRILL AT SEA—USING THE SUB-TARGET GUN.



THE AMERICAN ASIATIC FLEET—SALUTE AT CHEFOO, CHINA, JULY 4, 1907.