POOR DOCUMENT

MC2034

FOR GREED OF GOLD.

(Weekly Irish Times.)

It was a bleak wintry day; heavy clouds hung low on the horizon, and a bitter wind swept over the small farm lying in a rugged valley, shut in by lofty mountains, on whose crests the snow lay thickly, while swollen streams hurried down from their steep sides, foaming through the dark ravine till they are lost in the gloomy lough to the south of Glenamona.

On the north the glen suddenly opened out into a great bog, which bore evil reputation in the district, for not only was it supposed to be haunted by such malignant beings as pookas and will-o'-the-wisps, who lured travellers to destruction in its deep pools and quagmires, but twice already a portion of it had moved through the valley, which at one time had been thickly inhabited, sweeping away houses, inhabitants, flocks, and crops, and never stopping till it plunged into the lough beyond.

According to tradition, the bog would move once more through Glenamona, bringing death and destruction as of yore, and the farmhouse in the glen—the one dwelling that had escaped the last bog-slide — was supposed to be doomed. Everyone shunned it, and it had been unlet for many years, when Shaum M'Guire — "the miser," — as he soon came to be called in the neighborhood — appeared in Glenamona, whence nobody exactly knew, nor what brought him from that mysterious outer world "beyant the mountains."Finding that the farm of Gortnamona was to be had for a song, the new-comer took it, laughing at the prophesies concerning the moving bog, and the tales of evil spirits and ghosts who were said to haunt it, and, repairing the tumble-down house and farm buildings after a fashion, he began to cultivate the land assisted by his wife—a gaunt, silent woman, who baffled the curiosity of her kindly talkative neighbors, who declared at last that "The craythur was apt to have something on her mind," when she had rejected all their well-meant advances, and never stopped in to have a cup of tea and a gossip, or stopped to "pass the time o' day" at cottage or farmhouse as she stalked by, a thin grim figure, in a worn cloak, that had once been blue, but was now patched and stained, and faded, till it resembled the dull browns and greens of the hills and bogs. A smile never curved her thin lips, she rarely spoke, and her black eyes gazed out mournfully from her haggard face as if they were heavy with some untold sorrow.

She was inoffensive and hard-working; when she was not toiling in the fields, or carrying heavy baskets of country produce across the hills to the nearest town, the whirr of her spinning-wheel might be heard continually. The neighbors met her occasionally at mass or market, but she made no friends, and the curiosity concerning her died out, to revive a few years later, when she disappeared from the glen for a month, returning with a pretty, dark child of eight, whose accent and manner were totally unlike those of the inhabitants of the district, or those of her grand-parents.

By this time Shaun Maguire was doing a thriving business as a moneylender, and, sooner or later, most of his neighbors found their way to Gortnamona, for difficulties continually pressed upon them.

A few of his clients ventured to question him about the child, and the old man vouchsafed the information that her name was Kathleen, that she was his grand-daughter, and that both her parents were dead, but where she came from was more than they could discover. Though she attended the school in the nearest village, even her young companions failed to learn where she had lived before she appeared at Gortnamona. "She had come a long way," she said, and then closed her rosy lips, having evidently been forbidden to give any further information.

Till Kathleen was nineteen, however, her life was not altogether unhappy. Her grandmother was devoted to her, and did all in her power to make things endurable for the girl, often permitting her to visit the neighbors, inventing errands which would take her to the scattered cottages or farm-houses around, when Shaun was at home, and even sending her to dances and "patterns" when the old man was safely out of the way on one of his periodical journeys connected with some mysterious business. She never objected when Terence Maher, whose mother owned a large farm at the end of the glen, came down to Gortnamona about the hour when Kathleen drove down the cows and goats from the hilly pastures, and strolled by her side to the very door of the house. If Shaun were away, Mrs. M'Guire would ask the young man in, and the love affair was progressing very smoothly when, one day, nearly two years before my story opens, the old woman died suddenly, and from that time Shaun made Kathleen's life a burden to her!

Kathleen went no more to fair or market, dance or pattern. She never had a penny of her own, or a new dress, or even a fresh ribbon to tie in her dusky curls from the day her grandmother died till this cold afternoon when she toiled wearily through the glen with a heavy pail of milk, which she was carrying to the village a mile beyond the Lough.

Suddenly a quick step echoed upon the rocky ground, a voice exclaimed "Kathleen, jewel! it's a sight for sore eyes to see you!" and Terence Maher appeared, a fine looking young fellow, with a fair complexion and merry blue eyes. "Why do you never step up to see us now?" he asked, taking the big milk pail from her cold and trembling hands. "Mamma and the sisters do be wondhering why you don't come nigh us!"

"I'm afraid o' the grandfather," the girl said timidly, glancing towards the distant farm-house, as if she feared that Shaun's sharp face might appear at the window which looked out upon the glen. "He's very quare these times, and spinds most o' the day shut up in the room with his ould papers, and I've an amount o' work to do since granny died."

"But why should you be killing yourself, whin the ould man can well afford to pay for help?"

"Sure he says he's very poor," Kathleen said doubtfully; "I don't know what to say to him! 'Tis impossible to get a farthing from him, and we have hardly enough to ate these times—the last two boys he hired to work on the farm ran away, and said they were starved, and he's always moaning and groaning, and saying he's lost all his money—I wondher is there any truth in it!"

"Sorra the truth girl! Isn't he linding money to the whole counthry side! I'm thankful to say me poor father kept out of his clutches, or maybe 'tis sold out o' the land we'd be now! As it is, I'm comfortably off, and I'll shortly have only the mother to support, for both the girls will be married this Shrove. Kathleen, dear, I'm in want of a wife—will you marry me, asthore? Sure you know I have a fancy for you this long time!"

"Oh, but Terence, dear! grandfather would never consint, and I daren't say such a thing to him!" Kathleen said nervously, twisting the fringe of her worn and faded plaid shawl in her thin brown hands. "He'd be mad with me and he won't give me a pinny o' fortune, I know!"

"I don't want the fortune if I get yourself," said Terence coolly. "Oh! I'm not saying a few pounds wouldn't come in handy, but if ould Shaun won't give thim why we can do without his money!"

"But, Terence, dear, he'll never allow me to marry you," faltered Kathleen.

"Arrah, thin, we'll only have to do without it," laughed the young man. "But maybe he will. Sure he'd have one less to feed!"

"But—but I do the work. He'd have to keep a servant and pay her wages besides her food—and—begging your pardon, Terence, he hates you all, I don't know why.

"Because we never borrowed from him," answered Terence shrewdly. "See here, Kathleen, it'll kill you to go on like this—doing the work of a horse with no pay, and starved into the bargain. Make up your mind and lave him. I promise you'll never regret it, and don't mind what the ould man says."

"Oh, how can I do that?' 'the girl said, tears filling her dark eyes. "But maybe I'll say a word to him some of these days when he isn't very cross. I must go on, Terence. I have to hurry to the village with the milk, and I wouldn't say but we'd have the snow before night. I'd like to be home before it."

"That reminds me, Kathleen, they say the bog is going to move agin, and if it does it's sure to come down this glen—there's no way else for it to go, for it couldn't run up the mountains. They tell me it's boiling and bubbling up just the way it did before the last slide, and this northerly wind will be apt to give it a start. You should warn the grandfather, Kathleen, and make him move out of Gortnamona, or maybe the bog will be in on ye before you know where you are!"

"Ah, Terence, you might as well be talking to the wall. He doesn't believe in the moving bog at all at all. Anyway he's that headstrong he wouldn't stir from Gortnamona if he was to see all the bogs in Ireland running down the glen."

"But, girl alive, you'll be smothered in the mud!" expostulated the young man.

"Well, if we are, sure we can only die once, I suppose," Kathleen said wearily. "It would be an aise for me to be dead whatever! I'm jaded from the world!"

"Sure 'tis your own fault that you won't marry me. Say you will, jewel, or I declare but I'll run away with you, so now for you."

"Don't be raving that way," the girl said. "We're just at the village; give me the milk can, Terence, and thank you kindly."

"It's mighty heavy; I'll carry it round for you."

"'Tis no heavier than usual," she replied, sighing. "I'm obliged to you, indeed, but if you were to carry it round all the village would be talking, and if the news was carried up to grandfather he'd kill me dead."

"Didn't you tell me you could only die once, and maybe he'd give you an aisier death than being drowned in the bog," said Terence rather huffily. "However, plase yourself. Goodbye, and remember what I tould you. I will be expecting to marry you at Shrove!"

So saying, he turned away, and Kathleen entered the village, where she received further warnings about the moving bog.

Sad at heart, Kathleen turned homewards. Already the wind was rising higher, and wailed like a lost spirit through the gloomy glen. Large flakes of snow began to fall, slowly at first, then with blinding swiftness from the lowering sky, and long before Kathleen reached Gortnamona, her thin dress and shawl were soaked through, and she was shivering with cold and fear.

Raising the latch she entered the dark kitchen, where a scanty handful of furze branches smouldered on the open hearth. Throwing a few sods of turf on the open fire and stirring them to a fitful blaze, she put down some yellow meal stir-about, which was the only fare Shaun allowed for supper. Then she resolved to go in search of her grandfather, and warn him about the bog. He would probably be very angry, and more than probably would take not the least notice of her remonstrance, but at least she would have done her best, and then she must only hope that the neighbors were wrong and that the bog would not move again.

In response to Kathleen's timid knock a harsh voice called, "Come in," and pushing open the door, she saw the old man seated in the fireless room, which was lighted only by a dip-candle, set in an empty porter bottle by whose feeble glimmer Shaun was pouring over a heap of papers which lay before him on the table.

He looked up angrily as his granddaughter appeared, and his claw-like hands clutched an iron box which stood beside him on the table.

"What do you want here? Haven't I often told you I can't be disturbed at business?" he said loudly.

"Oh, but, grandadda, the —the supper is just ready—and——"

"Ready at this hour? Why, 'tisn't long since ye ate the dinner! You are aiqual to a cormorant, so you are! How dare you get the supper till I told you to do so! I'll be ate out of house and home."

"Oh, but—that isn't all," faltered Kathleen. "I—I hurried the supper o' purpose, because I wanted to spake to you. They're saying in the village that the bog is goining to move again, and that we ought to get out o' this while we can."

"Get out o' this, is it, and lave me property behind for some o' those scoundrels below to come in and stale it! That's why they have med up their stories about the moving bog, and 'tis only a fool like yourself that would be tuk in be thim! Get out o' me sight, Kathleen, and never dar' to say such a thing agin! I'm twenty years here, and fools have been talking about the moving bog and the quare things in the glen all that time, but sorra the glimpse of anything worse than meself did I ever see! I don't believe the bog ever moved, any more than I think there's a pooka, or a ghost, no, nor a divil for that matther!" chuckling with delight as he saw the girl's horror-stricken face, as she crossed herself, and ran back to the kitchen, where she threw herself down on the hearth, and burst into tears.

The interview with grandfather had been even worse than she had expected. She had rarely heard him say such dreadful things, and to her superstitious mind, a visit from a ghost or some other uncanny being, would be the natural result of such a daring avowal of disbelief in their existence, accompanied by this statement that he believed in nothing. What if the pooka, or a sheeted ghost were to appear at the window now, and summon the inmates of the lonely farm to meet some awful doom! Was that a white form tapping at the pane? No, it was only the driving snow, whirling ever faster from the dark sky. Was that the rumble of the death-coach through the glen? No, it was only the roar of the wind round the old walls and down the wide chimney of the ancient house, and Kathleen cowered close to the fire, while ever and anon a flake of snow fell hissing into the blaze.

She was just wondering whether she would ever dare to venture to suggest to her grandfather that she wished to marry the young man, when she heard his shuffling steps crossing the floor of "the room." He flung open the door, and hobbled into the kitchen, muttering angrily.

"Is that the way I find you, you good-for-nothing lump, sthretched be the fire as if you hadn't a sthroke o' work to do?" he shouted, shaking his stick at Kathleen, who jumped up hastily. "Is the shtirabout biling all this time? Sure it must be gone to nothing. One would think I found money undher the rocks in the glen—you careless wretch!"

He finished his speech with a volley of curses and bad names, which made the poor girl tremble, as she hastened to set the stir-about and a jug of buttermilk on the table; seating herself to the very uninviting food, which he grudged her.

Shane gobbled up his own share — which was a large one, needless to say —growling and muttering all the time, while Kathleen found it hard to swallow even a few mouthfuls of the coarse porridge. The moment the old man had finished, he rose, took the sods of turf off the fire, and threw the embers far and wide over the hearth, and bade Kathleen go to bed, saying that she would want to keep the fire burning if she stayed up.

The girl wearily climbed the ladder to the chilly loft, willing enough to go to bed, for she was very tired, and anything was better than her grandfather's company in his present mood. She hurried into bed, and, covering under her scanty coverings, she listened to the howling of the storm, and wondered if the bog had already started on its grim progress.

Tired out with her long day's toil, she dozed off at last, and was sleeping soundly when she was aroused by her grandfather's harsh voice calling to her from the kitchen:

"Get up, lazy-bones! See, the bog hasn't come to us afther all, but the snow is over the doorshtep! Come down and shovel it away and get me some brekquist—I must go get someone to help me find the sheep, and bring them down from the hill fields—you'd be no use for that—sure 'tis little good women are for anything but talk—so I'll lave you here, and you can take round the milk, and get about your other work, so look sharp, I tell ye!"

Kathleen was soon in the kitchen, where as yet all was darkness, for although a stormy red dawn was breaking, the snow lay thick against the small uneven window panes, shutting out its glimmer. She soon lit the fire and prepared the breakfast, and then shovelled the heavy snow from the doorstep before the miser, clad in an ancient skin of oilskins, set off for the village in search of assistance to save his sheep which he had obstinately refused to bring in from the fields when the neighbors warned him that the snow was coming.

Kathleen fed the poultry and milked the cows and was just wondering how she was to get through the snowy glen with her milk cans, when she heard the sound of wheels in the yard, and looked out to find Terence at the door with a jennet and cart.

"The top o' the morning to you, Kathleen!" he said cheerily. "I saw the grandfather below in the village, looking for some one to help him with the sheep—I'm thinking the poor bastes are all buried in the snow — but anyhow, he'll be some time looking for them, so, as I knew you could never walk through the glen this morning, I drove down the jennet to carry you to the village with the milk."

"It was very kind of you, Terence, but what'll I do if the grandfather hears of it?"

"Why should he hear it? I'll drive you to the end o' the glen, and you can get out there, if you like, and carry the milk around the village, and I'll wait on the road and take you back. If he does hear it same, what harm? He wouldn't like it if you fell in the snow and spilt the milk, or couldn't get down to the village at all—sure he'd lose the sale in either case!"

Thus urged, the girl consented and climbed into the cart with her big cans. A drive was a great novelty to her, and notwithstanding her dread lest Shaun should suddenly appear, she thoroughly enjoyed her outing and Terence's company, as the sure-footed jennet scrambled on through the snow drifts, and the young man laughed and joked as merrily as if there were no "Shaun the Miser" in the world.

"I'm afther telling the mother you'll marry me o' Shrove Tuesday, and she's proud to hear it," Terence said, as he helped Kathleen out of the cart, close to the village.

"It's a dale more likely I'll marry you o' Tibbs' Eve—naither before nor afther Christmas!" the girl said with a sigh, as she lifted her cans and trudged off to the village.

When she had finished her rounds she found her lover waiting for her near the place where she had left him, and they got back to Gortnamona without meeting Shaun. Kathleen went about her work, and was just boiling food for the pigs when the door was flung open violently, and her grandfather rushed in, and brandishing a heavy blackthorn stick.

"So this is the way you spind your time, you brazen crathur, driving over the country, with that blagard of a Torence Haher! Cocked up in a thrap no less, as bould as brass, and I slaving and killing meself to support you in idleness, going round on me poor ould feet thrying to find me little handful o' sheep, that were buried in the snow! How dar you, an impident lump that I tuk out o' the gutther when your good-for-nothing mother—that me fool of a son had the ill-luck to marry — died on ye! It was like Tim M'Guire the omadhaun, first to go sojering and thin to marry a shtrap without a pinny, because she had a purty face, if you plase! Sure 'tis kind parents for you to be quare! Whatever med me take you in at all, at all? Wasn't I the misguided man to listen to me ould fool of a wife!" and he aimed a blow at the girl with his stick.

To his amazement, however, she sprang forward, and wrenched the blackthorn from his hand, her tall figure drawn up to its full height, her great dark eyes flashing fiercely.

"Don't lay a finger on me! she cried passionately. "How dar' you miscall me poor father and mother, and your own wife that was tin times too good for you! Can't you lave the dead rest? It's well I know you would never have taken me in if it wasn't for your own advanced age! Maybe you have money of mine all the time," she added, looking hard at the old man, who turned deadly pale and shrank away from her. "Where was the harm of getting a lift to the village whin the glen was full o' snow, and a decent boy that I know all these years offered to convey me? Was I to lave the customers without a dhrop o' milk to color their tay? You'd sing another tune if you lost the price of it, tell you, and, be the same token, I'm goining to marry Terence at Shrove, so you can look out for another housekeeper.

If the brown hen, that perched sleepily on settle, had suddenly attacked him with beak and claws, Shaun could hardly have been more surprised than he was at his granddaughter's sudden revolt. Cout it be true that he was really going to lose her, that she was goining to marry Terence Maher of all people. How unlucky that the young man had happened to fix his heart on Kathleen! He was startled too by the girl's suggestion that he had money of hers, which was quite true, for his soldier son had been thrifty, and after his death in India, the young widow had earned a comfortable living as a dressmaker, and had a nice little sum for her only child. Indeed it was this that had made Shaun send back his wife to claim the little girl, not daring to venture again into his native place, which he had made too hot to hold him. They had frightened the child by telling her that her father had been a bad man, and that she would be put in prison if she told where she came from, and as the girl had never asked any questions he had fancied she had forgotten her parents, but apparently she remembered them well! How awkward it would be if she demanded her money! He must conciliate her and prevent the match in some way—how he did not exactly know, unless he could get Terence into trouble! If everything else failed perhaps he could get rid of the girl! If she were found drowned in the swollen stream one of these winter nights, who was to say how she had come there! Still, that would be a last resource, he would first try to conciliate her, and retain her valuable unpaid services. So he said craftily:

"Aisy now, girl! Sure I meant no harm, but I didn't like to think Terence would be fooling you, and sure he's after foxy Polly Canty, that has a big fortune! Troth and twas worse for meself than anyone to have a foolish, son, but we'll say no more about that only put that stick out o' your hand—'tis an unshuitable thing for a woman to be handling."

Kathleen threw down the blackthorn, and left the kitchen, resolving that she would marry Terence at Shrove, as he wished. She did not believe that there was any truth in the story about Polly Canty, but she felt sure that she would have an utterly wretched existence during the rest of the time she was under her grandfather's roof, and she wondered if nay of the neighbors would take her in till Terence was ready to marry her—the idea of asking him to hurry the marriage would never have occurred to her.

Directly his potatoes were finished the miser went into "the room," banging the door violently, and Kathleen sat down to spin by the kitchen fire. The snow was falling swiftly once more, and the wind howled round the old house, which rocked and creaked with each furious blast. The dusk gathered, and still the girl spun on in the flickering fire-light, not daring to light a candle lest she should be scolded for her extravagance. The storm grew worse every moment—it was useless to think of getting to the village this evening. Suddenly there was a still more violent gust, which burst open the shaky door, sending a shower of snow over the floor. Immediately after there was a deafening crash, and then a brief lull—more alarming than the storm. Kathleen sprang up and ran to the door in terror, wondering what had happened. Was that a loud peal of thunder that echoed through the glen? It was strange that she had seen no lightning, and strange too that thunder could accompany the snow! As she gazed out into the darkness there was another crash, as if the very earth was rent, and the hills were falling. Then the miser rushed into the kitchen, screaming hoarsely:

"Shut the door, you fool! The roof will be whipped off. Then you can come along and help me to pack up some o' me papers and things, in case the house would come down about our ears —it seems ricketty like!"

So saying he hurried back to his treasures, and the frightened girl was vainly struggling to shut the door, which was burst open again after each attempt, for the storm had returned with renewed fury, when Terence came running in.

"Kathleen! For heaven's sake, don't lose a minute! Save yourself! Didn't you hear the noise? There has been a land-slip, and tons o' rock and clay have fallen into the bog and set it moving in airnest this time! The turn o' your hand would have shtarted it in any case, but now 'tis racing like mad down the glen. Call your grandfather, and come at once. Where is the ould man?"

"In there," gasped Kathleen, pointing to "the rooom," and Terence hastily flung open the door and saw the miser sitting by the table, his lean fingers clutching feverishly at a mass of gold which lay scattered before him, while bags, boxes, and a number of papers littered table and floor.

"Come, Mr. M'Guire, get out o' this as fast as you can," cried Terence. "The bog is moving, and 'twill be in on ye before you can turn round. For pity sake, hurry, sir. Catch up as much as you can o' your money and run for your life. I hear the bog coming now!" as a dull rushing sound was heard without.

The miser started up, his eyes blazing, his grizzled locks standing almost on end.

"Run away," he screamed. "Lave the money that I toiled and shtarved—yes, and sinned, and robbed, ah! and murthered to get! Never! I'll die with it! Get out o' me sight! You've come to rob me! Oh, the illigant gold to be swallowed up in the black mud! Kathleen, save this," pushing a heavy box towards the girl, who had stolen timidly into the room." Don't go out o' me sight though!" he shrieked, shaking his fist wildly at her. "I'll carry another box meself, and I'll come back for more! I won't lave it—the beautiful money!" wringing his hands.

"Come on, sir!' exclaimed Terence, seizing him forcibly in his strong arms, while the old man clutched fiercely at a handful of gold. "Bring your box if you like, but you'll not shtay here! I won't lave you to be dhrowned before em eyes!" and he dragged the struggling miser from the room, and out through the kitchen into the darkness of the stormy night, turning his steps towards the boreen leading up-hill from the farm, in the hope of reaching safety on the higher ground before the bog overwhelmed Gortnamona. Kathleen followed them, and they had just reached the boreen, when a louder noise in the valley below showed that the rushing torrent of mud was almost upon them. With a yell of rage, the miser twisted himself from Terences' grasp, flinging the box he carried on the ground, and rushed back to the doomed house. Kathleen tried to follow him, but was held back by Terence, who said gently:

"Sure, 'tis no use, girl! You can't save him! He'll not get to the house, I'm thinking! The bog is close to us now," and he drew her up to the top of the high hedge which bounded the boreen.

A moment later there was a rush, a roar, then silence, and the young people fell on their knees.

"Sure his money was the ruin o' the poor man! May the Lord have mercy taking off his hat, while Kathleen burst into tears. "Maybe 'tis well the most of it is gone with him," he added. "It would hardly bring luck!"

He led the frightened girl home by the hill paths to his own home, where his mother soothed her to the best of her ability, and tried to persuade her that perhaps the old man had escaped after all, but when morning dawned the farm of Gortnomona lay deep beneath the bog, and Shaun M'Guire and his money with it. No one ever knew the secret of his life, nor what crimes he had committed in his greed for gold. The boxes that were saved contained merely papers and a few bank notes, but neither Terence nor Kathleen regretted the treasure that lay deep beneath the tons of mud, peat, and gravel that almost filled the hollow glen! Gold had brought no happiness to Gortnamona, and they had enough without the ill-gotten gains of Shaun the Miser.

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WHAT TYPE FOR NEW WARSHIPS?

Difference Between Battleships and Cruisers is Fast Disappearing.

The appointment of the committee on Naval Designs is regarded in dockyard circles as tolerably certain to be followed by radical changes in our big warship types, writes Herbert Russell, in the London Express. It is a gratifying token of the progressive spirit to find that this committee of fourteen members (including Sir John Fisher, as chairman) embraces the flower of civil designing talent, numbering as it does such names as Lord Kelvin, Alexander Gracie, of Fairfield; R. E. Froude, of experimental tank fame; W. H. Gard, a leading authority upon warship construction, and Prof. Biles.

This inclusion of civil members in the new Design Committee is unquestionably a tribute of recognition to the part played by the private shipbuilders of this country in the evolution of the modern warship. Heretofore the Admiralty constructor has been beset with an endless succession of restrictions.

The result has been that he has been forced to run to very big displacements in order to produce a ship of the required fighting standard. No country in the world has got less value for tonnage out of admiralty design than Great Britain. When Sir E. J. Reed, free from the handicapping conditions under which he had worked as director of naval construction, undertook to design an ideal battleship for Chili, he produced the Triumph class, and concentrated a degree of fighting value into a burden of 11,780 tons, the equivalent of which he could not have attained, under admiralty exactions, upon less than 14,000 tons.

The natural progress of warship evolution has brought us to the eve of various striking changes, already foreshadowed in dockyard circles, which will be materially accelerated by the work of the committee.

DOCTRINE OF HOMOGENEITY.

In the first place, the doctrine of homogeneity is being established as a rigid principle in future naval design to a degree never before contemplated. In its inception this quality was applied to warship classes only. But the ideal condition which is already being tentatively aimed at is to carry the homogeneity of our big fleet units to the length of determining upon one type of warship only, carrying but one pattern of main armament, and embodying all the essential qualifications for the waging of ocean warfare.

This will be the warship of the future. And now comes the question—What form will she take, and how shall we classify her? it becomes easier to anticipate progress by having regard to the deductions of retrospect. Let us briefly consider the evolution of the warship for the past ten years.

In the first place we have already converged to two definite types only—the first class battleship and the first-class cruiser. The light or protected cruiser, built in large numbers a decade ago as a response to foreign "commerce destroyers," remains now only as a survival.

We shall build no more protected cruisers. Neither shall we build any more small armoured cruisers of the Encounter class, because it is impossible to crowd into such restricted displacements the engine power, coal endurance, armament and armour necessary to that high speed, radius of action, aggressive and defensive powers which are now the primary essentials of a naval unit.

What we shall continue to build, then, are first-class battleships and first-class cruisers. But in the opinion of naval construction experts, even this duplicity of types cannot be long maintained. The line of demarcation differentiating the relative fighting values of the two classes has already been reduced to such slender limits as to be very difficult to determine. The manifest issue of this progressive condition must be the early merging of the armoured cruiser into the battleship.

Indeed, in many respects this process of merging has been accomplished already, the only justification for any distinctive classification lying in the difference of speed. The new Minotaur class of cruisers will possess substantially more formidable powers of aggression than the Majestic battleships of a decade ago. Their powers of resistance are slightly inferior, but this is more than compensated for by the immense tactical advantage of five knots better speed.

The improvement in the penetrative power of naval artillery of late years has immeasurably outdistanced the increased ratio of resistance of armoured plates.

This posture of affairs renders a reduction in the calibre of main armaments once again possible. We have seen this process of reducing bores illustrated several times during the past fifteen years, the 16.25 in. guns of the Sans Pareil class giving place to the 1.35 in. weapons of the Admirals, which in turn were superseded by the 12 in. ordinance of the Majestics.

And now a 10 in. gun is being freely talked about in well-informed naval circles as likely to form the standard weapon of battleship main armament.

The immense saving of weight that would be effected, not only in guns and mountings, but in ammuntion storage (100 rounds of 12 in. projectiles weigh 42.5 ton), would enable the displacement of the ship to be reduced and her speed to be increased. It necessitates an engine power equivalent to 18,000 horses to drive the King Edward VII., of 16,350 tons, as 18.5 knots, whereas the Canopus class, of 12,950 tons, have done better than 19 knots on 13,500 horse-power.

The Italians, to whom Sir William White has frankly confessed his indebtedness for many excellent ideas while Director of Naval Construction, are well in the van of warship development at the present time. Signor Cuniberti has combined the battleship and the armoured cruiser in the Vittorio Emmanuele III. class, and in the view of no less an authority than Admiral Sir John Hopkins this vessel stands as the prototype of the warship of the future. A comparatively small, powerful, and highly mobile battleship, embodying all the qualities of the armoured cruiser, and therefore absorbing her as a separate class, is likely to be the nature of the fighting unit which the committee on Naval Design will presently evolve.

On tactical and economic grounds there is everything to recommend a modification of the existing type battleship and cruiser. Moreover, is tolerably certain that this radical change of design can be effected without any sacrifice of fighting efficiency, even in these qualities in which it is not accompanied by absolute enhancement of strategic utility.

CORPSE RINGS ARE CURIOUS.

Sailors Often Wear Them for Identification of Their Bodies If They Are Drowned.

"Corpse rings, eh?" said the visitor. "It's a curious, a grewsome name. What are corpse rings?"

"Corpse rings," the collector answered, are rings found on the dead bodies of drowned sailors—identification rings.

"Look at this thick gold one. Running around it on the outside, you see, there is carved in big, plain letters 'William Ratline, born in Camden, Me., 1865. Home Malabar.' Ratline was lost off the Needles in the big storm of '97. Malabar was communicated with, but it appeared that he had no relations there.

"Nearly every sailor, when the blues overtake him, imagines he will die of drowning. He hates to think of his body washing up on a strange shore, of his nameless grave, and of the anxiety of his friends when he doesn't return and no news comes of him, and therefore he buys himself an identification, or corpse ring.

"Some of these rings are costly, beautiful, strange. Here is an antique Egyptain one—a ring of green bronze from a rifled tomb. Here is a wooden one, carved with little demons, for the thumb; it came, I think, from Senegambia. This ring of ivory is Japanese! It is of beautiful workmanship; the monkeys, holding each other's tails, that go around it in a circle, are quite perfect."

To cure Headache in ten minutes use Kumfort Headache Powders, 10 cents.

THE COMING OUT.

The Housemaid — There'll be grand doin's over to Mrs. Cashley's nixt wake. Her eldest daughter is comin' out. The Cook—Faith, that remoinds me. Casey's son ought to be comin' out soon. He's been in over a year.

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