

**THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR.**

**Port Arthur Over-Fortified.**

**WEAK POINTS IN DEFENCES.**

**BENNET BURLEIGH'S OPINIONS.**

Writing to the London "Daily Telegraph" from Tokio recently Mr Bennet Burleigh, that journal's special correspondent, describes what he saw at Dalny and Port Arthur a month or two prior to the outbreak of the war. "Forts of no mean kind and of great magnitude can be counted," he says, "not in units, but by tens, between Dalny and Port Arthur. The industry displayed upon every hand in railroad construction, house-building, the erection of fortifications, the making of docks, roads, and the improvement of the harbour was admirable and commendable. Nor do I, nor can I, easily enumerate all the works that were being pushed forward with, perhaps, ruthless, but unflagging zeal, and much prescience. A day in Port Arthur, apart from the talk of the Russians, is enough to convince anyone that the Czar's people have a grip upon Manchuria they intend never to slacken. Day and night operations go forward, designed to make Port Arthur a commercial emporium and a great naval arsenal. A new paper printed in English, which will be issued from the 'Novri Krai' office at the beginning of the New Year, public waterworks, electric trams, electric lighting, and much else—these are all upon the card, and are being got ready. At the same time the Russian Government, as represented by Admiral Alexeiff, is feverishly busy laying mines, preparing the fleet for war, and searching for contractors who will deliver Cardiff coal in lots of 70,000 tons, less or more, up to 200,000 tons, early in 1904.

**AN ATTACK FROM LAND SIDE.**

"Port Arthur is over-fortified. Its frowning works, mounds of earth, and bastions of granite rick, its glacis and its trenches, circling and crowning some score or more of often remote and disconnected hills that can be dominated from other heights, render them open to attack and capture in detail. And to such a form of assault they are further peculiarly exposed, for the scorings of the soil are numerous and deep. Gullies traverse the hills in all directions, and there is magnificent cover for riflemen, often to within 300 yards or less of the nearest outlying defences of the main works. Again, scarcely half the forts are completed or have any guns in position to check an attack delivered from the land side. It is different towards the sea front, but even there the harbour may be reached, though there is a boom nightly spread across the entrance to the inner basin, and the mouth of the haven can be blocked by the big old Chinese boom, with its 'chevaux-de-frise' of projecting spars, shod with iron. And, of course, the Russians have laid down torpedoes and mines to protect the channel and entrance. Should the forts fail them, the mining expert is expected to touch the button and blow any too daring enemy's craft into fragments.

**LAZINESS OF NAVAL OFFICERS.**

"There is a rise of 8ft to 12ft of tide at Port Arthur. The two latest battleships out from Europe found no difficulty in getting into the harbour, although they were said to draw over 28ft of water. They were at once taken into the basin, where they were touched up and painted in black within two days, like the other warships in port. For some reason the Russians have divided their fleet, keeping the best part of their fast armoured cruisers at Vladivostok. It is stated that the powerful steamer ice-breakers there can keep that fortified port an open harbour throughout the severest winter.

"The Russians rarely go out either for target practice or for steaming man-

oeuvres. From such information as I could gather, as well as what I saw for myself, they are slack in their sailor duties, for the officers spend much of their time ashore, and the ideal of Russian life seems to be finding enjoyment and solace in such amusements as a very 'fairy' town affords—a circus, a wretched theatre, and dissipation of the Cossack or Tartar kind. And the army men are quite as 'spreed' as their brothers of the brine. But it is no worse, mayhap, than Portsmouth was a cycle or so ago, when prize-money was plentiful, and man-o'-war-men took life as Hogarth has painted for us. Yes, and the British sailors fought well enough in those times. Again, it may be that as the Russian ships are not taken either out or into the harbour under their own steam, but are hauled by tugs, and directed by local pilots, there is an excuse for their not being out and about at sea every day. It takes much time to get them all towed out and in, but the fact that the officers do not handle their own ships under the vessel's own steam indicates either a want of confidence or a want of experience upon the part of their naval commanders.

From a frequent inspection of the fleet's targets after practice, it is evident the shooting is of a very mediocre quality. The target was never towed at any great speed, nor was the range a long one, but it was rarely ever 'hit or put in danger. Of course, I am told it is different with the artillerymen—the garrison gunners in the big shore batteries that frown from every hill—they can shoot well, and many of the cannon are of great size.

**HARBIN—A GREAT MILITARY CENTRE.**

"Russia has probably not more than seventy to eighty thousand troops south of Mukden. Therein is military wisdom, for the soldiers must be fed and the line used to carry forage and provisions for every-day use instead of for increasing the stores at Dalny and Port Arthur. Hence, also, no doubt, it is that they have few cavalry at present in that district. Not more than 4000

or 5000 troopers at most, and these, Cossacks and others, are mounted upon the shaggy but sturdy little Manchurian ponies. But the Russians are building permanent barracks and quarters to suffice, if need be, for the housing of 200,000 soldiers." The bulk of their stores, men and material, they keep back at Harbin. That has now become a great centre of military activity, and is reputed to have in and around the town about 80,000 to 100,000 troops, including many regiments of Cossacks and Regular cavalry. I take it that the railway trains, which can be safely run at an average speed of thirty miles an hour, could bring down men and supplies from Harbin at very short notice. The Russians declare that they could run through twenty trains a day if need be. But they could not do that, day succeeding day, for, say, a week. However, they have taken careful census of the population and material in, around, and south of Mukden. The quantity of food and forage available has all been tabulated, and the number of persons who are to be sent out of Port Arthur and Dalny set down.

**WAR SUPPLIES AT PORT ARTHUR.**

"I ran through from Port Arthur to Mukden in about seventeen hours, despite the evil system of long waits at stations upon the 'mightiness' of some official's convenience. The express trains are really carriages above the average of English Pullmans, the sleeping compartments being divisible so that two may share the space and a seat together, a device arranged by means of folding doors. Upon the way up I saw the whip most liberally used by the Russian soldiers upon the backs of the natives—the coolies working about the stations and the quarters. I will here add that I do not think that there are more than six months' provisions or war supplies at this date stored in Port Arthur. The garrison does not number over 25,000 men, but certainly evident efforts were being made within the past few days to hurry in reinforcements and to add to the supplies that could be drawn upon in the event of a siege."



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