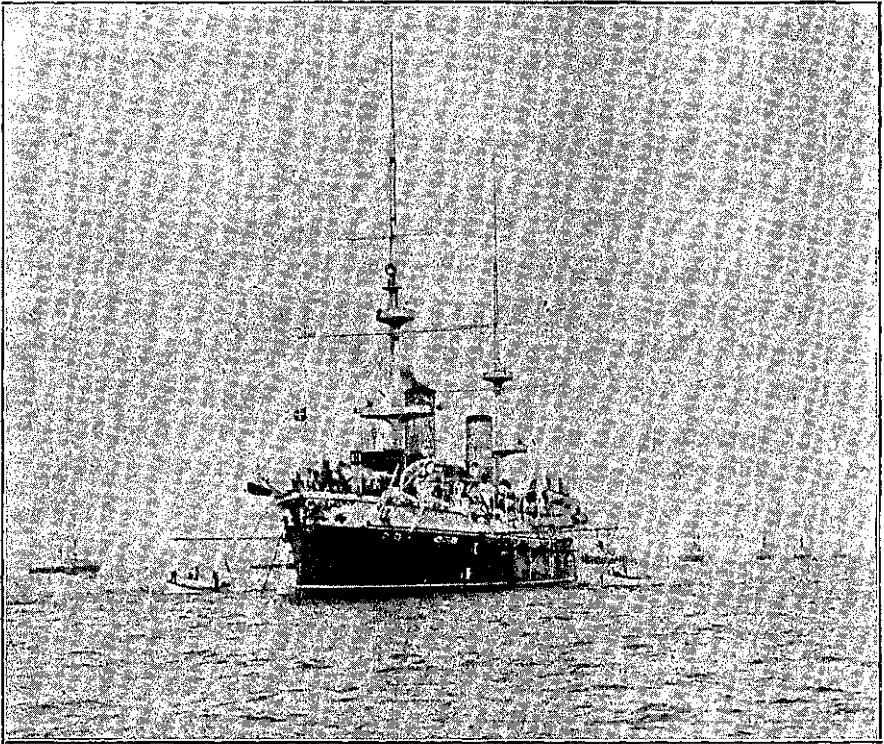


neared the common the force of the wind became terrific, then for one brief moment the inky blackness was scribbled across by one vivid flash of forked lightning. It was followed up by an appalling crash of thunder, which literally seemed to burst over our heads. With the thunder came the rain, such a downpour as I have never witnessed, save in the Tropics.

For over two hours we sheltered in a porch and saw those huge

only enhanced the beauty, by adding the magic touch of prismatic effect. The sea was spanned in every direction by rainbows of a gorgeousness indescribable, and the whole culminated in a mysterious canopy of rays of search-light, red, blue and green, which converging immediately above the royal yacht, formed a vast Gothic roof of colour, absolutely transparent, weirdly, strangely beautiful.

Suddenly the mast-head of the



Italian Armoured Cruiser "Carlo Alberto," 6,500 tons, 12 guns.

battleships outlined in pure white light, so vivid, so intense that, spite of the obscuring rain, we could distinguish every flag on every mast-head. Now I was reminded of so many aerial Tower Bridges and anon of a dream city of fairy palaces.

The illumination of the ships was followed by a display of coloured search-lights, and here the untimely rain, instead of spoiling,

Royal Sovereign flashed a signal, and the other three flagships—the Revenge, the Majestic and the Invincible flashed a reply.

A minute later and a gun was fired from the Royal Sovereign, then another, and then the whole of that vast fleet took up the challenge and gave utterance to one magnificent, thunderous salute. The roar and the crash of the detonations reverberated down the long