

SHIPPING.

EXPECTED DEPARTURES.

Troopship departs—?

Feb. 29th. OFFICIAL (perhaps Court-house.) The Asst. Asst. police commissioner (you know, the thin one with the freckles), has it from the coolie who clears the pig tin at headquarters, that the probable date of departure is as above.

Feb. 31st. (Popular rumour). The bosom pal of the stoker at the Wireless engine room reports that among the charred ashes from the furnace, was found a NEARLY half burnt code message which has been deciphered by Snowey as possibly meaning Feb. 31st as the date of departure.

GUESS DATE OF DEPARTURE.

First prize, 2 Beers.

Second prize, 4 Beers.

Third prize one rod, pole, or perch.

TIDES.

Rather rough, especially on Sunday after a dirty Saturday night. They didn't clear up the incinerator stuff, but left it lying all over over the beach. Bad Sanitation!

WEATHER.

Quite a lot of this lately—sort of variety entertainment on 20th and 21st Feb. But as long as it brews something to clean our teeth with, what's the odds?

We have been told that the Rev. Kinnersley's garden that used to be in front of the river, is now underneath it.

If it's only to give those poor water-cart chaps a spell—like Olive's husband—"We hope it pours."

The Pull-Thro'

TUESDAY, MARCH, 9, 1915.

A RETROSPECT.

IN the dim light which is at present available, it not easy to discern the course of events. With our attention constantly drawn to violent eddies, we may miss the movement of the broad stream. Six months have passed in which there has been fighting more severe than any that history recalls, with combatants and losses on an unparalleled scale. How does the situation now stand?

In the first place, it has become clear that Germany has been reduced to the strategic defensive. From the East she must contemplate, and in East Prussia she is experiencing, invasion. In the West, she is striving to retain occupied territory on the Bismarckian principle of *beati possi-*

dentis. The entire plan of campaign, of which time was a vital element, was shattered when the retreat to the Aisne began, and in spite of immense efforts the initial failure has not only not been redeemed, but the German strategists, once their carefully elaborated scheme for crushing France was foiled, showed loss of military judgment and indecision. They ignored the great principles laid down by Napoleon, and they forgot the teaching of their own professors of the art of war. Among them there must have been some who saw that, after they had retreated before the Allies in France, it would have been wisest to hold the line of the Rhine, and to throw every man who could be spared into the Eastern theatre of war. Instead they allowed political considerations to dominate strategy, with the necessary result that they have failed on both fronts. The first dash for Warsaw, like that for Paris, entailed a rapid retreat, and whatever the issue of the great battle brought on by the second advance, a decisive German victory is now impossible. Austria received no effective aid in her first great effort in Galicia, and in spite of her gallant rally the effect of the tremendous blows she received could not be remedied without strong support, which was not forthcoming, and she is now nearing the end of her resources.

Meanwhile obsessed by the futile—because political and not military—idea of reaching Calais, the Great General Staff ruthlessly expended the equivalent of more than five Army Corps without any result except inflicting wholly disproportionate loss upon the Allies, who are stronger in numbers, positions, and artillery than where the fighting in Flanders began. The keen edge and more of

the sword of Michael have disappeared, and the shining armour is cracked and dulled. The wonderful machine will continue to grind out brigades and divisions; but improvisation must now replace calculated mechanics, and the Allies are at least equally able to improvise, while they have far more material at their disposal. It would be rash to assume the *moral* of the German Army is severely shaken; but its special prestige and the pride of a generalship, won in 1870-71, have gone, not to be regained in the present war. Time is on the side of the Allies, and already writing on the wall has appeared in the great German cities even though the truth is still concealed.

On the sea, also, the German calculations have been falsified. At the end of four months, the relative naval strength of Great Britain remains unimpaired. The The Grand Fleet, riding out the winter gales in unknown waters, and the flotillas in ceaseless activity, are prepared for action as no harbour-keeping forces can ever be. The raid, expected in some quarters, has not yet arrived and the long days and calm seas have passed, while preparations for overwhelming invaders have been completed. The enemy's submarines have not approached the achievements which have been claimed for these craft, and we have learned—at too heavy a cost of gallant lives—the conditions which provide them with opportunity. The mine, surreptitiously laid under a neutral flag, is not a weapon of honourable warfare. It has taken heavy toll; but it has not swayed the balance of our increasing naval strength. The naval air service has shown pre-eminence in skill and daring. Trade under the German flag has ceased, with result of economic pressure becoming steadily more

acute. Our losses have proved less than in sailing days, and it is now clear, as I have always maintained, that commerce can be better protected in the age of steam. Our command of the sea has not yet been challenged, and has been so completely effective that great numbers of men and vast quantities of stores have been transported across the waters without a single mishap. Our one reverse, of which Admiral Cradock seems to have had a presentiment, was due to delay in making a suitable distribution of naval force. The Royal Navy has done all that could be expected, and more. It has exercised a controlling influence on the Western campaign, in which it was able to take a direct part as soon as the mad project of reaching Calais assumed practical shape. Indirectly it has helped to limit German naval activity in the Baltic. In more complete readiness and efficiency than when war began, it awaits any service which the national cause may demand.

Such, in broad outline, are the results of four months of war by sea and land. Greater efforts and sacrifices may be required; but the Allies, with full confidence born of experience in their supreme commands with strength steadily increasing, and with the consciousness of the full mutual support between East and West, which has already been strikingly demonstrated, can calmly face the future.—*Sydenham*.

Brothers in Adversity! Some are born editors and some have editorial duties thrust upon them. The present staff of the *Pull Thro'* hope that if they haven't managed to meet your expectations in this issue, at any rate you will give them the credit of trying.

When things are rushed censors are blue pencilling, and copy is short. (Look here, why don't

some of you chaps lend a hand with writing "your own" paper?). The unfortunate birds responsible for the perpetration of this effusion don't have the time of their little lives when the only man on the printing plant that can read manuscript is away with a pain in his sash, and every line (most of it written on scrap paper with the bluntest of pencils) has to be typed out, or set by the Editor himself. (He is at it just now, and the atmosphere around him is the limit.) It's "cruel ard" to expect anyone to turn out decent reading and keep merry and bright.

So bear with our limitations and send plenty of stuff for the "next issue." One last word, don't waste your own and the censor's time writing stuff that you could not expect *Truth* to print.

P.S. Ingredients:—Clean paper (why not writing block?) and "sharp" pencil.

Chinese Opera

I had the unique privilege of witnessing a Chinese play on New Year's day. The entertainment was held in a barn-like structure near Vaea Camp, with seating accommodation for about 100 persons, but when I drifted in, there were 500 Chinese at the least packed into this small space. The atmosphere of the "theatre" was impregnated with tobacco, smoke, flies, dust, and that peculiar effluvia that is like unto nothing earthly, but savours more of a fertilizer factory in Sheol. The audience included, in the words of the immortal Omar Khayyam.

"Shapes of all sizes, great and small
That stood together ranged along the wall—
And some, loquacious vessels were, and some
Listen perhaps, but never talked at all."

Some wore smiles that were childlike and bland, whilst others had a settled look of melancholy and gloom, which the most ludicrous antics of the chief comedian failed to dispel. The au-

dience was one that would have delighted the heart of Rudyard Kipling, whilst an analysis of the atmosphere would have kept a dozen bacteriologists busy for months. The show had started at 10 a.m. and it continued without interval until 4 p.m. when a short adjournment was called for tea, after which it went on uninterrupted until 2 a.m. the following morning, at which time the first act was concluded.

The orchestra was weird, wonderful and awful. It was composed of tom-toms, drum, cymbals, whistles; a one stringed fiddle emitted sounds like an ungreased wheelbarrow, clappers, and a peculiar oboe-like instrument with two keys. It played all through the dialogue, and at times the noise was so deafening that not one word could be heard from the players. The hero or lead appeared to be taken by a Celestial made up to represent the venerable Confucius. He wore a silken robe and about £10000 worth of jewellery distributed liberally over his capacious person. A rather amusing incident occurred during a duel between the two soldiers. One of the duellers made a swipe at his antagonist who side stepped, and Confucius got the end of the sword under his venerable ear. The hoary old deity promptly responded with a half hook (*a la savate*) and the show took sides and a riot seemed imminent. The chief comedian, however, with great presence of mind, stepped in and saved the situation with a comic song in a high falsetto voice and peace was restored.

I was invited to take tea, with the Chinese through the good offices of a half-caste friend of mine who had obtained permission for me to be present at the function. The meal was composed of roast duck, pork, taro-root, breadfruit, jelly made of a peculiar kind of seaweed, and salad made from raw potatoes, cabbage and cocoanut beetles. The mixture was served up with layers of dried minced shark uncooked. There were several varieties of drinks, the most popular being a concoction composed of French brandy, kava, gin, and methylated spirits. After a Chow