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## FLOATING BATTERIES.

BY GEN. O. O. HOWARD, U. S. A.

The naval defense of harbors requires another class of fighting vessels in addition to the torpedo boats spoken of in my previous article. These being armed with the heaviest guns, are generally known as "floating batteries" or "coast defense vessels." It is the province of these vessels to contend with armored vessels of the first class which may seek to enter our ports, bombard our cities and lay them under contribution. They must be able to keep the sea in all weathers in which an enemy's ships could make an attack, but they are not intended to make long voyages or for offensive operations on foreign coasts. They are therefore relieved of the necessity of carrying large supplies of coal and ammunition, and less machinery is required for them. The saving thus effected in weight and space can be utilized in increasing the armor and armament without making the draft equal to that of seagoing battle-ships. The result is a vessel of fair speed, of good maneuvering ability, and which, according to a high authority in naval matters (Admiral Simpson) "can be made almost absolutely invulnerable and irresistible."

The board on fortifications and other defenses, appointed a few years since under an act of congress, recommended in its report the construction of two classes of "floating batteries" for coast defense vessels. The vessels of the larger class are to be protected by armor varying from 16 to 18 inches in thickness, and their armament will consist of two 107-ton guns in a turret and two 26-ton guns mounted in barbette. The smaller class of vessels will carry two 75-ton guns in turret, two of 26-tons in barbette, and have armor of 11 to 16 inches. A third class of vessels, intended for harbor defense alone, will have two guns or 44 tons, two of 26 tons, and armor of 10 to 13 inches thickness.

A fleet of such vessels must constitute the main line of the naval defense of our coast. While unable to act aggressively at a distance remote from their ports of supply, they could encounter on even terms the most powerful fighting ships that foreign powers may send against our seaboard cities, and encounter them at such a distance from the coast as to save these cities from the horrors of a bombardment from which even the best of our shore batteries would be powerless to save them.

At present the United States possesses a few ancient monitors of low speed, poor armor and worse armament, which form the only fleet available for harbor defense. Other monitors of greater power have been for fourteen years under construction, or under suspension, which, if ever completed, would in many respects answer the purpose of coast-defense vessels.

