

SWAN OF THE EAST AT WAR

CAPTAINED BY A MAN OF INTEGRITY AND DARING, THE SMS EMDEN AND ITS STALWART CREW CAUSED HAVOC AMONG ALLIED SHIPPING DURING THE FIRST YEAR OF THE GREAT WAR

BY GENE T. ZIMMERMAN

When Bismarck unified Germany in 1870 under Kaiser Wilhelm I, he advocated German strength on land and relegating sea power to Great Britain. However, the Kaiser's son had other ideas which he began to implement upon his succession to the throne. With Germany's growing industrial power, the German monarch felt impelled to enter the scramble for overseas colonies to act as suppliers of raw materials and purchasers of finished products.

Bismarck strenuously opposed these acquisitions because they demanded an increased navy which would drain monies from the vital army. Furthermore, he felt the colonies could only be liabilities in any confrontation with Great Britain, and such a confrontation was expected within the Kaiser's lifetime.

Deeply annoyed with the old chancellor's interference, Kaiser Wilhelm II forced Bismarck's retirement, and proceeded, unhindered, to plan for a strong German Navy and a glorious overseas empire. However, Bismarck or not, there still remained the unpalatable fact that the Royal Navy far outstripped the small German coast defense force. To this problem, Wilhelm and von Tirpitz put the best German military minds.

In the opinion of the military council, it would take many years to

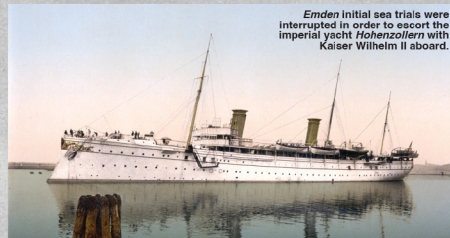
build a *Kaiserliche Marine* capable of rivaling the British fleet and expense would devour an untold number of marks. They felt that a sufficient number of battleships could be constructed to defend the coastline without impoverishing the country, but to follow Capt. Mahan's theory that large battlefleets were needed to attack an enemy's supply lines would be to invite fiscal calamity. However, armored cruisers were, in theory, the best raiders for they could destroy anything that they couldn't run away from. But the cost was prohibitive for the number needed. Protected cruisers had originally been designed for such work and they were of a more reasonable cost. Protected cruisers it would be!

The cruisers were to be small and light

with only a minimum of armor and armament. In fact, they might well be weaker gunned than some of the expected auxiliary cruisers of the enemy, but they would be faster. The navy called for a light shipboard gun that could compete with the British 6-inch gun and the gunmakers took it



With her sleek lines and bright white paint, *Emden* was a favorite visitor to may pre-war ports.



Emden initial sea trials were interrupted in order to escort the imperial yacht *Hohenzollern* with Kaiser Wilhelm II aboard.

up. Some bright fellow in the German admiralty came up with the idea of naming the cruisers after cities instead of men, and then asked that city to help sponsor the ship by covering some of the construction costs. And so, in 1906, the coastal city of Emden was chosen to be the sponsor of the second (and final) *Dresden*-class cruiser.

Laid down on 1 November 1906, she was launched as the *Emden* on 26 May

1908 at the *Kaiserliche Werft* (Imperial Dockyard). Completed in June 1909, the *Emden* was commissioned in the *Kaiserliche Marine* before completing her final trials in late summer. She became a full commissioned warship in the navy on 1 April 1910. The *Emden* was 388-feet long on the waterline with a beam of 44-feet 3-inches. She displaced 3606-tons and carried a normal complement of 321 men. *Emden's*

"The Swan of the East" — SMS *Emden* was a ship beloved by officers and crew. Considered obsolete, the German warrior would do huge damage to Allied shipping.