

to learn how to resist it; we take no notice of his elaborate arrangements for the capture of our strategic points abroad, particularly St. Helena, then strongly garrisoned and defended. So little do we value it now, that though at the outbreak of war with Russia in 1854 a heavy Russian frigate was known to be in the South Atlantic on passage to the Pacific, no official notice that the English Empire was at war was sent to the Government of our most important outpost in that sea.* It is important to remember this in connection with what I have previously stated, viz. that the seizure of St. Helena means the partial investment of the United Kingdom, the lock-out of all our Colonies whose lines pass round both Capes, the loss of our command in half the world. Though the United Kingdom is first and chiefly concerned in the defence of St. Helena, every portion of the British Empire is vitally interested in its security.

If we do not value such places because they are ours, let us remember what we suffered when they were in an enemy's hands. Take the Mauritius as an example of this. Napoleon recognised the importance of that strategic position, and amply provided for its requirements. De la Bourdonnais, some sixty years before, had developed its resources as a naval base. As a French post it was a thorn in the side of British India and British trade in the East. The Marquis of Wellesley resolved in 1800 to take it, and a military force 1,800 strong was collected for the purpose at Trincomalee, commanded by Colonel Wellesley, afterwards the Duke of Wellington. It could not go without a naval escort, it was helpless without the fleet, and there it had to wait for Admiral Rainer's squadrons. When they arrived the Admiral objected to the proceedings, and the expedition had therefore to be abandoned.† Now those who think a fleet can go anywhere and do anything without a movable army, or that naval bases can be left unprovided with fortifications and garrisons, should carefully study history. I submit one passage from the secret and private despatch of Marquess Wellesley, 5th February, 1801: "A naval war of the most destructive nature is now actually waged by the enemy against the commerce of India by the aid of those French Islands, and cannot be terminated without their reduction." It is generally supposed

* I have this on the very best authority.

† It is worthy of note than in 1794, at Bastia, the same description of administrative difficulty arose, but with the conditions reversed. General Dundas would not do as the Admiral (Hood) and Nelson wished. In this case, however, the navy did what the general "after mature consideration" considered to be impossible. No one, however, was more astonished at the successful result of the naval siege of Bastia than Nelson himself.