

During the next session, the Liberal government reduced the ship-building programme of their predecessors, at the same time assuring parliament that

"The Board of Admiralty was satisfied that the modifications of the programme would not impair British naval supremacy" (a).

The reduction was, of course, attacked, and although in the following years large additions to the expenditure were made, the insufficiency of the navy and the consequent danger of German invasion was, for several years, part of the Unionist election material (b).

The effectiveness of the agitation may be gauged by the ready credulity with which the silliest yarns was received. For instance *The Times* (c) published a letter from its military correspondent declaring that the German Emperor had addressed a letter to Lord Tweedmouth (First Lord of the Admiralty),

"amounting to an attempt to influence, in German interests, the minister responsible for our navy estimates";

and *The Times*, editorially, demanded production of the letter. During the discussion in parliament, Lord Rosebery said:

"I am quite sure that it never entered his" (the Emperor's) "head, or the head of any educated person outside an asylum in Germany, that by a private communication to my noble friend, he could exercise any influence whatever on the progress of British armaments" (d);

and Lord Tweedmouth having given satisfactory explanation, Lord Landsdowne

"declared that the Unionists would not press for publication of the correspondence" (e).

But the damage had been done; and by the commencement of the following year (1909) nervousness had been raised to such a height that a play "An Englishman's Home" depicting a successful German invasion of England was received with enthusiasm. It met with some success even in Canada.

The climax came with the debate on the navy estimates (16 March 1909), when either consciously, for the purpose of placating the

(a) Ann. Reg. 1906, p. 194.

(b) The increase in the annual expenditure on the navy during the last 5 years is nearly 13 million pounds. The scare is still sometimes made use of.

(c) March 6, 1908.

(d) Hans., 9 March 1908, p. 1076.

(e) As given in Ann. Reg. 1908, pp. 59, 60.