

head of their naval department had respecting the "command of the sea," and his utter incapacity as a sea-strategist. All the naval force of the United States was powerless to arrest a single ship in her progress, simply because it was applied without reference to general principles which guide the distribution of force for the protection of communications.

It is important to observe that there is no proportion between the force used in the interruption of sea communications, as compared with the amount of force required to secure them. To cripple the action of a single steamer we find it acknowledged, by one who ought to know best, that several cruisers would be required at certain points. A regular attack upon sea communications, therefore, involves the employment of an enormous force in their defence; and as the stations and positions are necessarily fixed, so must bases of operation be at hand to supply the wants of that defending force.

There is however another lesson we may learn from the cruise of the *Alabama*, which, if we profit by, is well worth £3,000,000 to our Empire. It is the value of coal to offensive and defensive operations at sea. We find considerations regarding the consumption and supply of coal constantly regulating and limiting the action of the *Sumter* and *Alabama*. While we congratulate ourselves that "even the stores of coal needed for marine locomotion are principally ours," we must remember that they are only ours so long as we protect them from destruction by bombardment or from capture by assault. It is therefore of paramount importance that our coal depôts along the Imperial lines should be efficiently and thoroughly defended; that they should not be selected at haphazard, or situated at places in the possession of any foreign power when it can possibly be avoided.

The closing scene of the career of the *Alabama* is, however, yet more instructive to those who have the defence of the empire at heart. True, she was sunk near to our own coast, almost in English waters, by the guns of the *Kearsage*, but if we would know what it was that forced her within the