

The first impulse of the Canadian politicians was to consider and evolve ways and means for the protection of their coasts against possible foreign aggression, and then, as the possibilities were more carefully considered and discussed, it was urgently represented that Canada's connection with the Empire, and in fact the continued existence of the Empire itself, would depend upon ensuring the supremacy of the British Navy upon the high seas. How could that supremacy be best maintained? By Colonial contributions of money or ships for the relief of the English Exchequer, over the expenditures of which Canadians have no responsible direction or control, for the support of a foreign policy, with respect to which Canada has never been consulted, for carrying on a war of defense or of offense, in the making or the ending of which Canada had no voice? And so the discussion was prolonged until the political representatives of the Canadian people, and a large number of the people themselves, began to realize that the issue, incidentally raised by the probability of German aggression, involved a more or less complete solution of the problem of Canada's political relations with the United Kingdom, and with the Empire of which Canada forms a part.

The development of that discussion and the contributions so far made by the chief participants to a possible solution of the problem, I desire to relate, with more or less detail, so far as possible in the words of the participants themselves.

The German Scare

Early in 1909 the public men of Great Britain became suddenly awakened to a knowledge of the unprecedented progress of Germany's Naval construction, and to the possibility of its ultimate naval strength surpassing that of Great Britain.

Mr. Reginald McKenna, First Lord of the Admiralty, in the English House of Commons, on March 16th, referring to the extraordinary growth of the power of constructing ships of the largest size in Germany, said:—"To-day this productive power is a realized fact, and it will tax the resources of our own great firms if we are to retain the supremacy in rapidity and volume of construction."

Mr. A. J. Balfour, Leader of the Opposition, following Mr. McKenna, declared:—"That we are face to face with a situation so new, so dangerous, that it is very difficult for us thoroughly to realize all that it imports. For the first time there is bordering on