

But if we take into consideration the possibility of war, the statesmen responsible for defending our empire may learn the further lesson from this episode in our history, that one of the greatest securities for the independence of these islands is in a very large and well organized Militia. If that little nation of Englishmen, imperfectly armed, could determine to defend their shores against a greatly superior foe, how much more should we be able now to make them impregnable? We have five times the population, two or three times the wealth per head of that population, and the most perfect weapons in the world, to defend the same length of coastline. If we multiplied our Militia by ten, and paid them at the highest rate of labourers' wages while in training, we should be doing no more than those few ancestors of ours, who laid the foundation of all our wealth. I am not saying that it is necessary to increase our military forces immediately, but that we have lost the organization which enabled them to do so; it is not in the numbers that the defeat consists, but in the absence of the spirit of being prepared to hold our position in the world. What we want is, the will to sacrifice so much of our present wealth as they did, to ensure our security. Having got that will, we should have little difficulty in these days in arming and training them, so that every man would be capable of making the most of this weapon, and accustomed to some kind of discipline.

But there is a danger, in these days of refined organization, that we shall sacrifice real efficiency for the sake of official precision, by centralizing the administration and authority. Now, it hardly requires the record of those days to convince us that the one great characteristic of all the deeds of Englishmen is, the feeling of independent authority, and with it of responsibility; it is an essential mark of a free God fearing nation, and any organization that does not take it into consideration fails to touch the heart of the nation's spirit. But the story of the Armada shows, in a remarkable manner, how, on the one hand, the King of Spain, by concentrating all authority into one centre, stifled the individual enterprise of their people, to their own loss; and how, on the other hand, the good local organization of all ranks throughout the country in England produced success, notwithstanding the supineness of the central Government. It is in this point where I think the maxim of the old Chinese general is applicable. For, in our navy, that delegated responsibility and authority has always of necessity been more preserved than in our army. The Commander of a fleet or of a ship is necessarily, even in peace, in a more independent position and with a large sphere of responsibility than a Commander of any military force. I advocate the application of the system to a greater extent in our army than has been the case for many years—a return, in some measure, to the principles of organization of former days which were more in accordance with our national characteristics; and I would take this responsible authority low down in the ranks of officers; not only should the local Commanders of our military forces have greater power and greater responsibility in all things, but the Colonels of regiments and the Captains of companies should be allowed a greater field for the exercise of their capabilities in providing for keeping up the efficiency of their men. This idea, it will be said, is very contrary to the doctrines of administrative economy and Parliamentary responsibility which have been taught for many years. I can only re-

ply, in the words of the noble seaman whose fleet saved England from the Armada:—"Sparing and war have no affinity together;" "I must and will obey, I am glad there be such there as are liable to judge what is fitter for us to do than we here; by my instructions I do think it otherwise, but I will put them up in a bag" I believe that, by striving after this formal precision in appearance—this concentrated responsibility—you lose what is often thousand times more value to the country—the stirring of the conscience of the real workers—the hearty feeling of a share in the power and responsibility of defending the empire.

The British proprietor, when he is organizing an establishment to carry out some private business of his own, seeks for men he can trust, and then put entire confidence in them. But this is not the way in which they proceed in dealing with the business of the country; at least, of late years the idea has appeared to be, that the best security for the performance of it is to give local authorities as little power as possible, and to supervise that power with such an arrangement of checks as to take away almost all feeling of responsibility.

The one paramount lesson to be learnt by our war statesmen, from the story of the Armada, is the preservation of a race of efficient seamen. Our present seafaring population is far larger in proportion to the whole population, than it was in those days, but it is a question whether there are on the whole as large a proportion of efficient seamen among them. Then, every man who was a sailor at all, was of necessity a seaman, with a general skill in all the branches of his profession, which is more perfectly learnt with small vessels and a hazardous trade, and also of necessity having a knowledge of guns, and a resolute enterprising spirit. The parsimony of the Government prevented the employment of the best of them in the Royal Navy, but there was a large field to draw upon, and as we have seen, on emergency it was very largely drawn upon. And there was a more intimate connection between all parts of the naval service of the country, royal and private: from the nature of the ships, little alteration was required to turn a merchant into a royal man of war; and indeed there was not very much difference in the operations of each; the prizes taken by the royal ships gave a better reward to the men engaged than any ordinary trading. It was, in fact this fine prospect of fortune that made the seamen of those days; the harvest to be reaped even in the regular channels of commerce, was as tempting as blockade running, or any of our most lucrative lines of sea trade, and the prizes to be gained under a bold man of war Captain, were like gold diggings to the labourers of to day.

There are no such premiums to offer in our day to enterprising seamen: the orderly Government of the world and the use of steam are against these adventurous spirits, just as regular armies and arms of precision have done away with knight errantry; but there are still plenty of openings both on land and sea for enterprise or boldness and for skill; and there are still modes in which the seafaring population may be encouraged in their profession, and brought into connection with the higher duty of defending their country. There are confessedly improvements required in the interior economy of our merchant vessels, and in the condition of our sailors, and for the sake of humanity and for our trade, it will, no doubt, be the duty of the Government to interfere in these matters with a strong

hand; I would advocate a more extensive interference, for the sake of the efficiency of British seamen, so that they may be raised to the highest status among the seamen of the world. There is at present, no connection worth speaking of, between the merchant service and the defence of our empire and its trade, and perhaps no such connection can be made, that will be really equal to the requirements of the times, without trenching on the liberties and the profits of the shipowners and seamen of the country.

This question of the supply of efficient seamen has been given a startling interest this winter, by the representations of the Liverpool shipowners to the Government, of the deterioration of the British merchant seamen. And this conclusion has been arrived at, not by alarmist officers, but by patient and perfectly independent enquiry, by the commercial men most concerned in the matter. And as a curious corollary to the arguments I have been drawing from the story of the Armada, they couple with that announcement, an expression of the necessity of a better connection between the mercantile and the Royal Navy. Some think, and there are naval men of high authority who agree in this, that the deterioration dates from the time of the abolition of the Navigation Laws, and system of apprenticeship; but whatever the cause, all men who think seriously about the defence of their country, will agree with the shipowners of Liverpool, that it is a vital question for the existence of Great Britain. We appear to have been working for some years past on the idea, that the accumulation of private wealth by commercial enterprise, is an interest sufficient to govern the world; we seem now to be discovering, that owing to the many other conflicting interests in the world, this system fails even to govern itself; and that that country, which, like Great Britain, has devoted its energies to the realisation of the idea, has put itself very much at the mercy of those, who, not enjoying the same profits, but anxious to do so, have rival interests. Because, while the devotion to commerce has lasted, two elements of national vitality have been allowed to get into a dangerous condition. The food supplies of the people have become dependent on foreign countries, and the war spirit which would secure them, has fallen into decay. Spain would have had no occasion, now, to prepare a great Armada to invade England, in order to cripple that country; she would divert the attention of the British fleet by threats upon our colonial empire, while her cruisers intercepted the merchant fleets coming from America and Germany, laden with the food without which we can no longer exist. There seems, therefore, to be some necessity for a reconsideration of our position.

The serious question is, whether under the circumstances of the world in which we find ourselves, just now, it is not indispensable for Great Britain to sacrifice some of the enormous wealth she is annually accumulating, to effect such a connection between the labouring population and the land defences, and between the seafaring population and the sea defences, and shall not only raise the numbers requisite, but shall rouse the spirit of the people; as those of our patriotic forefathers were roused, when they determined to sacrifice all they had, rather than let the country fall under a foreign yoke.

Great Britain is now somewhat in the position that Spain held in the days of Queen Elizabeth; the great maritime and colonial power of the world. The Government of England in those days, failed to appreciate the