

with the old smooth bore pop-guns) out of an ocean steamer, than it was formerly to make a thirty six gun frigate out of a merchantman, a feat which, in point of fact, we suppose was never attempted. It is true that a small crew with a few of the accurate shooting heavy guns of the present day, can do more execution than a large ship's company could in former times with a number of small smooth bores; but the very fact that such is the case, only makes the former organization, comparatively speaking, the easier to establish, and, therefore, tends to diminish its comparative importance as a warlike appliance.

This leads to observe, in conclusion, that the question of the armament of our unarmoured vessels cannot be properly dealt with until the Admiralty decide what steps they are going to take in the direction of taking up and arming merchant steamers in the event of war. Attention has already been directed in these columns to the great importance of this subject, and we hope that now that we are to have a separate department at the Admiralty for Naval Reserves, that some definite action may speedily be taken in the matter; so that in the event of war we may be able to obtain from the Mercantile Marine not merely a reserve of seamen, but also a reserve of swift unarmoured corvettes and sloops. Considering the large number of war vessels which could be extemporised in this way it, obviously depends to some extent on the armaments which could be put on board them, what are the best kinds of armaments for those unarmoured vessels which we permanently maintain in the Royal Navy.

ENGLAND AND THE CONTINENT.

(From Broad Brrow.)

By no circle of English society outside the diplomatic sphere, can the rapid succession of continental events be more anxiously watched than by that class of readers to which we specially address ourselves—by the members of those kindred professions on whom the burden of maintaining the national honour inevitably devolves whenever the keener arbitration of the sword is substituted for the circuitous diplomacy of the pen. None are more thoroughly convinced of the ultimate repudiation of the non-intervention doctrine than those the history of whose existence is a direct libel upon its efficacy, and who watch with a jealous eye any line of policy which tends to the derogation of that honour which they and their predecessors in arms have so nobly sustained. English history since the date of Lord Palmerston's death presents to such observers many passages from which they must eagerly avert their gaze, and the interval which has elapsed since that grand old man was placed in Westminster Abbey beside a generation of statesmen of which he was in many senses the last representative, is associated with reminiscences other than attractive to the martial mind. It is not, however, with retrospect that we propose to deal on the present occasion. Our business is solely with the present, and the future so far as it can be divined, and few will be found to assert that the theme is from a military aspect an unfruitful one. The manifest irreconcilableness of the non-intervention theory with our ascendancy in the comity of nations has received more than one forcible illustration within the last decade, and we would only observe in passing that as a man who lives upon his capi-

tal is apt to exhaust it, so a nation which depends solely for the maintenance of its influence and reputation upon the prestige it has acquired incurs risk of suffering by a mitigation of that prestige through the destructive influence of time upon the memory of mankind. People in short are apt to require practical demonstration of the truth of equivocal theories.

No observer who explores the future by the light of the present, can contemplate without serious concern the position which England may be called upon to assume, on the arrival of that continental crisis whose premonitory indications have already been frequently discussed. Perhaps, to speak more correctly, we should say that we are actually in the midst of a revolution, the first stage of which has been completed, whilst the second is yet before us. Whatever view may have been entertained regarding the title of Great Britain to exemption from participation in the late Franco-German war, we cannot but anticipate a vast preponderance of opinion in favour of her right to act, should a like struggle prove the issue of future complications, the result of which might produce consequences fatal to her higher interests. The obliteration of France from the map of Europe, would be productive of evils which England, despite her isolated position, would be the first to experience. It would mean nothing more or less than a deadly blow at the grand principle of Liberalism, of which France was the nursing mother, and of which the Germany of to-day is the bitterest enemy. In a pamphlet remarkable for much cogency of reasoning, and addressed by Professor Beesley four years ago to the working classes of England, it was urged, with as much truth as force, that the whole Liberal sympathies of England must eventually gravitate of necessity towards that nation, which is the representative of Liberalism on the Continent of Europe, and which presents the sole formidable bulwark against the absolutism which is symbolised in the German Empire. It is to be remembered that such an issue as the annihilation of either force was not involved in the struggle so recently concluded. Of the pretexts for hostilities, such as they were, the world was at liberty to form its own opinion, and abide with curiosity the result which could at the worst be but the temporary humiliation of either: but the first shot fired upon the Rhine in a new contest would be of portentous significance to Europe. It would have an interest for England in no way inferior to that which attended the campaigns of Wellington in the Peninsula, when Great Britain was at war with that terrible usurper who had no other scheme for consolidating his power than that of conquest and extermination. The outbreak of such a war as that to which the policy of Germany is so obviously tending, would be the severest test of the doctrine of non intervention that the age could supply, and the triumph of the doctrine would, in the event of German success, have the effect of paralysing our influence in the council of nations. The effect upon our Liberal institutions would be similar to that wrought in a converse sense by the first French Revolution, with this wide difference, that the latter, notwithstanding the lamentations of Burke, was a permanent good, and the former would be a permanent evil, whilst the irreparable ruin of our reputation would not be without disastrous influence upon trade.

The large proportion of German sympathisers during the late war on this side of

the Channel was attributable to the dexterity of diplomacy which prevailed in France in the wrong, the plausibility of the plea of German unity, which, like the slavry cry of the American war, won many adherents; and above all those seductive military advantages of numbers, generalship, and organization which inspired a natural feeling of admiration in our own Army and Navy. We are not going to awaken controversy by touching further upon a subject which has passed into a chapter of history, though we might take the opportunity to test the integrity of German policy in the past by reflections upon German policy now; but in the same manner as the circumstances leading to a renewal of the struggle would be different, so English sympathy, unless we are greatly mistaken, would be widely different also. When the war of 1870 broke upon Europe, ordinary observers were totally unprepared for the storm, and having bestowed little or no attention upon the subtle current of diplomacy, the public accepted pretty readily the doctrines presented to them by the several disputants; but the appalling catastrophe of Sedan, and the unexpected humiliation of the first military Power of Europe, have clothed the relations of France and Germany with a general interest which formerly they had not possessed, and public opinion is better informed of the position of affairs between our two powerful neighbours. Hence the attempt of the German Chancellor to embroil France and Italy on the question of the restitution of Nice, the pragmatical course adopted by him in respect of the French Ultramontanes, and the eager recognition of the Spanish Government, presumably with the ulterior design of abetting its claims upon France, are all sufficiently demonstrative of the quarter from which aggression will come should the eruption of hostilities disturb the peace of Europe, and will tend, as subsidiary to the reasons already stated, to direct both sympathies and the interests of Great Britain from their former channel.

Those of our contemporaries who wilfully ignore, or endeavor to explain away, these facts in a spirit of subserviency to the strong, are the worst enemies of their country, even though their course is perfectly consistent with that adopted by them on the occasion of the Austro-Prussian raid upon Denmark. Prince Bismarck has certainly some reason to complain of his friends when, rather than justify his measures, they prefer to repudiate them and seek to impose upon the ingenuousness of the public by disavowing acts which are evident to the shallowest observer. It is quite possible that the astute German Chancellor, if he were to design an opinion on the subject, would prefer the vindication of proceedings which, in the eyes of the world, only suffer by an attempt at suppression.

The question which England will have to answer should war break out before France is on terms of equality with her neighbor, is whether she will or will not permanently abdicate her position amongst leading nations and assume a subordinate place with its concomitant train of practical evils; whether her cause is or not identified with the cause of feudalism and absolutism in Europe, with compulsory military service and the forfeiture of civil liberties; whether her interests on the continent are more faithfully reflected by French or German enterprise; and, above all, whether the absorption of either is favorable to that universal freedom, on behalf of which she has so often made her voice heard and her arm felt. These are momentous considerations