

strict blockade of the enemy's ports. Now Singapore was a neutral port, and therefore afforded protection to the Federal vessels; but where are the available ports likely to be neutral, along our lines, to afford protection to our commercial fleets under similar circumstances? The natural rendezvous of commercial fleets are in our possession, and could only afford protection in proportion to their means of defence.

By securing bases of operation for our war fleets, we also provide safe refuge for our traders at places where it is most required. If ever we are in real danger of invasion, we shall be actually engaged in a naval war; we shall not have the excuse that the tactics we have then to combat "are without precedent;" but we may bitterly regret that the means "to enable us successfully to do so have not been devised," not from lack of power, but from want of will.

While it is essential to guard the strategic points from capture by military force, it is equally necessary to secure their resources from destruction by bombardment from the sea; and in many instances military force would be—from natural circumstances and situation—powerless to prevent such a contingency. The destruction of certain coal depôts might be accomplished in a few hours by a single ship with very few guns; and heavy requisitions, on pain of instant bombardment, might be hastily levied on a fleet of merchantmen in harbour by "an intelligent maritime Uhlan" in the shape of an insignificant cruiser, even in the presence of military force. This danger can in several instances only be met by port defence vessels, and torpedoes. A very small local force, if trained and provided with these weapons, would meet the requirement. But where are the weapons? Where is the force? It will be too late to await the outbreak of war to provide the weapons and to train the force, for an attack on our coal depôts at the strategic points will not be the last, but the first act in the drama of future war. The means for their destruction are always at the disposal of any maritime power, but the measures for their adequate defence take much time to develop. A single cruiser bringing her guns to bear on one of our coal depôts, would in a few hours paralyse the action of our fleet for months.

It is not possible here to enter more fully into details respecting the defence of the Imperial roads, which is the first, and can be made the strongest line, of Colonial defences. In no way can our Colonies and possessions be so efficiently protected as by a firm command of their communications, for with the exception of Canada and India they would thus be exempted from the possi-