

A Warning voice from the Spanish Armada.

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(Continued from page 351)

False Economy of the Government.

Two remarkable instances of the Queen's unwillingness to incur expense in war, and to bring matters between herself and Philip to such an issue, occurred in 1585 and 1587.

In 1585, the newly united Provinces of the Netherlands sent to offer the sovereignty of their country to Elizabeth. Notwithstanding her decided predilection for the reformed faith, and her fear of the power of Spain; and notwithstanding the warning of some of her counsellors that, if she did not fight Philip in the Netherlands she would have to fight him in England, she not only refused the sovereignty, but snubbed the deputation, and only agreed to help them with troops on condition of her favourite Leicester being made Governor of the Netherlands and of her receiving some towns as securities. She sent over some 10,000 men, of all sorts, but as she soon ceased to pay them, they became a trouble instead of assistance to her Dutch allies. Her repugnance to join heartily with the United Provinces was, perhaps, partly due to her tendency for diplomacy, in which, however, she was no match for the unscrupulous Philip, and his still more unscrupulous viceroy, Parma. But the mainspring of her action seems to have been fear of spending money. Secretary Walsingham says, in 1586, "rather than spend £100, she can be content to be deceived of £5,000." "Her Majesty and her Council do greatly stagger at the excessive charge;" "She scorneth the peril (of giving up the cause of the Netherlands); the hope of peace with Spain has pushed into a most dangerous security." One can not but think that, if she had carried on a bold war in the Netherlands, the Armada would have been forced on before its time, and England would have come out of the struggle holding a much higher place in the world.

But though the English land forces were thus losing precious time for want of resolution in the Government, the English navy, with equal spirit and more confidence in themselves, was not tied down by the same leading strings. Sea expeditions not being then considered to be actual war, and every merchant ship being prepared to fight, it had long been the custom of the adventurous sea captains to fit out expeditions, especially against Spain, partly private and partly supported by the policy of the Government. It was not, therefore, difficult for Sir Francis Drake to get up such a combined expedition to discover what the Spaniards were really doing in the matter of the Armada. For, by the spring of 1587, says Stowe, "the commonalty began to entertain a stronger opinion touching the Spaniards' settled resolution for the invasion of England than either Queen or council." And Drake was the popular hero of the cause, just as Nelson was afterwards, against Napoleon. And good service he did. With 4 Queen's ships and 24 merchants, he entered Cadiz harbour, silenced the forts, beat back 12 great galleys, and destroyed 10,000 tons of shipping; and repeated the performance in the Tagus, under the eyes of the Marquis of Santa Croce. By which he not only delayed the Armada for another year, but produced the more important effect in war of shaking the morale of the enemy, and taught the mariners of England how to handle ships,

great galleys," but, though Lord Burghley himself gives this testimony to Drake's exploits, he is obliged to add, "Her Majesty is greatly offended with him." The attacking Spain itself was carrying the little game at sea rather too far for her cautious policy; she sent and express after him to forbid it, but fortunately for all parties, there were no electric telegraphs between London and Plymouth in those days, and she was enabled to make political capital out of her attempt, and at the same time reap the benefit of Drake's misdemeanours.

Detail in Counties.

The preparations on land for defence were extremely well elaborated on paper. There were to be three distinct armies, and a reserve; forming, one may say, three lines of defence. The first line, that "to encounter the enemy on his descent," was to consist of 34,262, spread along the south and east coast, and to be furnished by the counties bordering on that coast. The second line was to consist of 22,872, stationed at Tilbury, because it was expected that the descent would be made in Kent or Essex, and was to be furnished from the midland and southern counties. The third line was to consist of 23,000, and be stationed near London, and considered as the Queen's guard, and was to be furnished by selected troops from all the counties. The reserve, 46,145, was to remain in the counties, to be used as required. These make a total of 132,179; but, in addition to them, there were the quotas to be raised in Wales, amounting to 9,377, which are not included in any of the above; also, those in Yorkshire and Durham, which formed a separate command of about 14,000 and then there are nine northern counties not mentioned at all, so that the total force calculated (on paper) to be raised in all England and Wales must have been nearly 170,000.

The great principal at the bottom of all these proceedings was, that over man in the country, if he was able, was bound to assist in the defence of it. The returns from the counties give the number of "able men" above 16 years old, and also the number "furnished" or "armed;" but these returns are evidently not trustworthy, for, on the whole, the number of able men returned is not above double that taken for service. Now, Sir W. Raleigh estimated the number of men capable of bearing arms in England, at that time, to be 1,172,000, a much more probable number when we consider that, in 1841, the male population of England, between the ages of 16 and 45, was one fifth of the whole population.

This 170,000 would have been a respectable force in proportion to the population of about four millions, if it had actually existed and had been trained and armed; it would have been one twenty-fifth of the whole population. The present military forces of Great Britain, including Volunteers, are about one sixty-fifth of the population. The war army of North Germany, including Landwehr, is about one thirty-fourth of the population, but, including the Landsturm authorised in 1874, it is about one-fifteenth of the population. But the numbers actually embodied fell very far short of these, and the training and arming were still more lamentably deficient; and the fault that it was so lay more with the Government than with the people.

Norfolk.

It is when we turn to the details of arrangements in each county that we see the genius of the people really appearing. As early as 1586, instructions were given to the

Lieutenants of counties, but they mentioned generally the different places were to be considered, leaving county authorities to apply their own local knowledge. Mr. Bruce gives, as an example, arrangements made in the county of Norfolk—not one of those mentioned—and which appear to have been made by Sir Thomas Leighton. Eight places on the coast, considered to be those of greatest importance, "by reason of the good roads interior and the depth of the water, were selected to be fortified temporarily to be the guardposts of the force. These, Wymondham and Yarmouth, were made as the centres of defence. The force of the county, about 3,000 or 250 horse (which is about the quota for each county's quota for the first line of defence) were divided into two divisions to each of these two places, and each of these into three or four companies; so that, in each subdivision, about 300 foot (half of whom were "untrained") and 40 horse (of whom about one fourth were "light horse," which probably were the yeomanry of the time. With division there were some 70 pikes, spades, picks, shovels, axes, "brown bills," and a few artificers, smiths, and wheelwrights, and couriers.

The subdivisions were told off (by captain's) to take duty by the day or other of the above two divisions (convenient to their locality), to keep on with the defences. On each beacon fire, each full division was to its centre. The remainder of the embodied population were to ascertain appointed places in the respective hundreds, and wait further orders. Deputy Lieutenants.

If a division was driven back to the coast, the whole force was to retire to the coast, which was to be victualled, intention, and Mount Surry was entrenched and defended, as well as certain named bridges, one between Norfolk and the county prepared for defence, and for the retreat from the coast, no fort was to be left, all corn that could not be destroyed, and the bridge route destroyed. The chief was to appoint the watchers of the watchmen at every bridge, and in continual readiness, at all times on the coast, to carry information to every market town. If the county force was to follow to hinder as much as possible the and foraging over the country.

Arms.

The clothing was supplied by the Government, and cost about fifteen shillings. Arms were either purchased or "ed" from private individuals. In the fortunate period, in this respect, the old English was giving way before the musket, but was more difficult to obtain.

The advantage of a weapon was how to the English people was to be used to full advantage only by the bold race. It was, moreover, maintainable in the country itself, the labouring man could provide his