

The Imperial base can be reduced in two ways :—

1. By direct assault : invasion.
2. By indirect means : investment.

It is curious—I trust I may be forgiven for saying it—that while the possibility of invasion is not generally disputed, I believe I happen to be the only individual who believes in investment; at least I know of no other who has for eight years tried to force on public attention the fact that the certainty of investment, partial or complete, follows the possibility of invasion as surely as night follows day.

Consider for one moment on what the presumption of possible invasion rests. It rests on this—the loss, temporary, or permanent, of the command of the waters surrounding the British Islands. But remember that the lines of communication *all* radiate from these waters; the loss, therefore, of our command *here* cuts every one of the Imperial lines; and what is this but investment?

The statesman who could, in a magazine, speak complacently of an opposing force “scouring our coasts at twelve, fifteen, or sixteen miles an hour,” must surely have forgotten that the heart of the Empire thus cut off from its sources of supply must cease to beat. Hardly a mile could be traversed in triumphant defiance without injury, in a greater or less degree, to some artery or nerve, producing in some far-off member of the body politic of the Empire results more or less disastrous. It might be but a nervous tremor produced by a temporary disarrangement of the free course of trade, or it might be a paralysis caused by a prolonged interruption of the vital powers of communication. The question of results is but a question of time.

As regards the safety of communications, it must be borne in mind that the greatest danger to which they can be exposed is that which threatens the greatest number at one and the same time. Geographically speaking, this can only happen at the point of convergence or radiation, which in our case is the Channel.

Of what avail is it if our colonies, though protected in their own immediate neighbourhood, are “locked-out” from the mother country by a force in the Channel, against which we are unable to contend? Of what use is it protecting our commerce on distant seas if it is to be destroyed within sight of the shores of England? Surely, in reckoning up our means of defence, we should not forget that if our enemy confines his operations to an attack on our communications, and we are unprepared to resist it, the forces we have created for repelling invasion will be after all but a harmless host of a ruin they are powerless to avert.

I do not for a moment underrate the immense importance and absolute necessity of being prepared to render invasion impossible by purely military forces. If we are not so prepared we stake the fate of the Empire on, perhaps, a single naval engagement. A temporary reverse at sea might (by the enemy following up his advantage) be converted into final defeat on land, resulting in a total overthrow of all further power of resistance. It is necessary for the *safety of the Channel* that invasion be efficiently guarded against, so that should our home fleet be temporarily disabled we may, under cover of our army, prepare to strengthen it to regain lost ground, and renew the struggle for that which is essential to our life as a nation, and our existence as an empire—the command of the United Kingdom.

But the defence of our communications is not secured by the mere presence of sufficient naval force at home or in the Mediterranean; for as there are two modes of attack on the United Kingdom, so there are two ways in which our lines of communication may be destroyed. 1st. By direct attack on the point of convergence. 2nd. By a variety of attacks on one or more lines at points far removed from the place where they all meet. Assuming provision for meeting the first to have been made, I will now deal with the means to be adopted to meet this other mode of attack: and this is the most interesting portion of my subject.

Communications, whether sea or land, whether long or short, *can only be secured by a firm grasp of the points which command them.* The greater the extent of the line, the greater is the number of defended points necessary for its safety. In order to cut a line of communication, the first thing to be done is to seize the point which commands it, and in defending a line the point which commands it is the last to surrender. Such points are the minor bases of operation of forces acting in defence of the line. The relative importance of such points to the line, and to each other, can only be estimated by the circumstances of their geographical position and their distance from the main base from which the line springs.

It is now time to ask what are these points? and, in an attempt to reply, I take each line separately:—

1. The line to Canada. The only point here is a terminal one—it is Halifax.

2. To the West Indies. Here we have Bermuda, the Bahamas, Jamaica and Antigua. The strategic value of Bermuda is in some degree understood. The military value of Bermuda is in some degree understood. The military value of Bahamas was fixed by Sir John Burgoyne. Jamaica, from its central position and capacious harbor, is of considerable importance. I add Antigua for two reasons—(1) because Jamaica is far too leeward to be a coaling station or arsenal for cruisers acting in the defence of communications to the Eastern Islands; such vessels would burn a great quantity of fuel in steaming up to their station from Jamaica against the trades; (2) vessels bound for the greater Antilles and Gulf of Mexico generally pass between Antigua and Guadeloupe.

3. To India, the East, and Australasia, by the Mediterranean. The points here are Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Bombay, Cape Comorin, and King George's Sound on the main line, with Trincomalee, Singapore, and Hong Kong on its northern branch.

With the development of the resources of India, Australia, New Zealand, and a host of smaller possessions, the necessity for securing their roads increases; so also increases the power of providing and supporting adequate means of defence. With a Russian sea-board on the one hand, and an American sea-board on the other, it cannot be said by their remoteness from us they are removed from danger of attack; nor must it be forgotten that the very fact of their distance adds to our difficulties in defending them, unless by a judicious combination of Imperial resources.

To attempt to determine the exact site for such a reserve naval arsenal for the Eastern portion of the Empire would be beyond the scope of this paper, but considerations respecting climate, and its effects on stores, &c., point to some port in Australia, as best adapted for the purpose.

4th line: To India and the East, and Australasia, round the Cape.

5th line: From Australasia and Vancouver's Island, round Cape Horn.

On looking into the subject, I have been much struck by the entire want of Great Britain of any advanced position in the Pacific Ocean.

In the selection of the points the following conditions should be fulfilled:—1. They must be in our possession, and on or near a line of communication. 2. They should possess natural advantages, such as safe and commodious shelter for the war and commercial fleets, easy of access, and capable of defence. 3. They should be as far as possible the natural rendezvous of all times of vessels passing and repassing along the line, and the chief, if not the only, coaling station of the district they command.

Too much attention cannot be paid to the selection of coaling stations of the Empire.

It is our boast that we are at least secured from invasion because we have 100,000 regular troops at home, but when we are threatened with invasion, we are in imminent peril of investment. As the regular army is the only military force that can move, it clearly follows that, if 100,000 or any larger