

1869, just twenty-two months ago. Looking back at this most piping period of peace from the stand-point of to-day, it is not at all improbable that even at that tranquil moment a great power, now very much greater, had a firm hold of certain wires carefully concealed; the dexterous pulling of which would cause 100,000,000 of men to rush at each other's throats: nor is this supposition rendered the more unlikely because of the utterance of the most religious sentiments on the part of the great power in question, and because of the well-known Christianity and orthodoxy of its ruler. But this was not the only power that possessed a deeper insight into the future than did its neighbours. It is hardly to be gainsaid that there was, about that period, another great power popularly supposed to dwell amidst darkness—a power which is said also to possess the faculty of making Scriptural quotations to his own advantage. It is not at all unlikely that amidst this scene of universal quietude he too was watching certain little snow-wrapt hamlets, scenes of straw-yard and deep thatched byre in which cattle munched their winter provender—watching them with the perspective scent of death and destruction in his nostrils; gloating over them with the knowledge of what was to be their fate before another snow time had come round. It could not be supposed that amidst such an era of tranquillity the army of England should have been allowed to remain in a very formidable position. When other powers were talking of disarming, was it not necessary that Great Britain should actually disarm? of course there was a slight difference existing between the respective cases, inasmuch as Great Britain had never armed; but that distinction was not taken into account, or was not deemed of sufficient importance to be noticed, except by a few of the opposition