

## BRITISH DEFENSIVE ARMAMENTS.

Mr. Vernon Harcourt, M. P. addressed the members of the Royal United Service Institution, on Wednesday night, on "Our Naval and Military establishments, regarded with reference to the dangers of invasion. Premising that he had accepted their invitation for the purpose of eliciting information, and because an interchange of ideas between civilians and the two professions tended to the public advantage, Mr. Harcourt disclaimed the notion that military and naval men had any desire to keep up unnecessary armaments, assuring his audience that no desire existed among civilians to reduce them below the requirements of the honor and safety of the empire. Excluding the consideration of foreign policy and external wars as political questions which the institution could not enter into, and confining his remarks to the defence of this country and its dependencies, he asked how it was we had now in round numbers a land force of 100,000 men, when during the war with Napoleon and up to the Crimean War it numbered only 50,000 men. It could not be owing to an increase in continental forces, for those forces had always been three or four times as large as our own, and the question was not how large they were but how many men could threaten our shores. Had the power of transporting men increased during the last twenty years in a greater ratio than the power of resistance? The "Battle of Dorking," assumed that the invaders landed, but this is begging the question, for if the passage of the Channel was easy, it was admitted that the military force of the great continental powers was immensely greater than our own. Assuming that we could properly concentrate 30,000 infantry of the line, half our actual force, with reserves behind them, 10,000 cavalry, 5000 engineers, and 50 batteries of field artillery, he presumed that an invading expedition would consist of not less than 30,000 infantry, 10,000 cavalry, and 50 batteries of field artillery. Discussing the question how such a force could be embarked, Mr. Harcourt remarked that the inferiority of other countries to ourselves in mercantile marine was scarcely appreciated. France was obliged in the Crimean and Roman expeditions to send its soldiers on board its men of war; and the neutrality laws, which were becoming more and more understood, would prevent the hiring of transports, so that an enemy would be confined to its own resources or those of its allies. In proof of the difficulty he mentioned that the embarkation of 25,000 English troops from Varna occupied a fortnight, a process that might be expedited in a port provided with docks and other facilities; that the passage to the Crimea occupied eight days in calm weather and unopposed, and that a month elapsed between the determination to sail and the battle of the Alma. So far as he could ascertain we employed 400 transports, and had the French and Turks employed transports, instead of omitting cavalry and guns and embarking the troops on men of war, 1,000 transports would have been necessary. Now where could 1000 transports be found in Europe or America? They might, indeed be constructed, but this would involve time and also notice to the threatened Power. The Abyssinian expedition included 50,000 non-combatants to 14,000 combatants, and 35,000 beasts of burden, but he would assume that an invading German force would bring 25,000 horses. Assuming that the transports could be provided, he dwelt on the facilities of blockading the ports from which the expedition would sail, and urged

that before the embarkation was completed our fleet might anchor off these ports, communicating by cable with the Admiralty in London. No expedition would start unless it had a fleet prepared to fight, and in the present state of affairs, it was very improbable that any hostile power should have the temporary command of the sea. We had 49 ironclads, more or less effective, whereas France had only 34, and an authority on which he could rely had paired off the English and French navies, ship by ship taking into account the thickness of plating, weight of guns, and speed, the result being that 31 English vessels could be matched against the 34 French, leaving a preponderance in our favor of 13 first class iron clads. Prussia had three ironclads, 2 built in England and 1 in France, while she was now attempting to build one at home. Hence it was surely as unlikely that she would attempt an invasion of England by sea as that we should attempt to march on Berlin by land. Russia had two iron clads with 4½ in. plates, inferior to the *Warrior*, and 3 of the same class as the *Defence*, but inferior, while she was building two large vessels of the *Devastation* class. As for the United States, they had no ironclad that could safely cross the Atlantic unaccompanied by a merchant vessel. (Laughter.) Assuming, therefore, that France, Russia, Prussia, and America combined to attack us, we should have ten first class iron-clads in excess of their united forces. In the presence of such a fleet no flotilla of transports would put to sea, and our powers of construction, if menaced, were infinitely greater than those of any other Power. Assuming however, an invasion resolved on, the transports provided, and our fleet destroyed, torpedoes would prevent the enemy from entering an estuary and seizing some small port. He would consequently have to land on an open beach, an operation which would take three or five days, and which our troops would make very uncomfortable. The country for ten miles round the point of landing would have been cleared, so that the enemy would have to bring him food and land transport, and to keep his communications open the permanent command of the sea would be essential. Mr. Harcourt urged in conclusion that if our navy was not overwhelmingly superior, it might be made so, and that this would be a much easier task than to compete with the armies of continental Powers.

In the discussion which followed, Sir Shafto Adair remarked that, whereas continental powers formerly levied armies, they now armed the whole people, and he could perceive the practicability of a more formidable combination than that supposed by Mr. Harcourt being provided with transports for an attack on our commerce and shores. The expedition would naturally be divided, in order to distract attention and to disperse our ironclads. He believed from the experience of the Crimea, that only one steamer and three transports would be necessary to every thousand men. While thinking the force for which statutory power existed in the event of war or invasion would be sufficient, he demurred to the assumption that the present force was too large, and urged the danger of supineness. As to Ireland, it was perfectly able to defend itself, with the assistance of loyal subjects and of such troops as could be spared from England, against the strongest force that could be despatched to invade it. Brigadier General Ayde, while questioning Mr. Harcourt's assumption that our navy would always be at hand to defend our coasts, agreed with many of his statements, especially as to the difficulty of improvising or concealing arrangements for

embarkation. Owing to the warnings of the Duke of Wellington and Sir John Burgoyne we were in a much stronger position than was the case prior to 1847, and every harbor and river ought to be barred against invaders by guns and torpedoes, obliging him to land on an open beach without a base of operations, a moment when he should certainly be attacked. He deprecated exclusive reliance on the navy, or on a smaller land force than 100,000 regulars and 140,000 reserves, and mentioned that many ports were being armed with heavy guns. Colonel Chesney expressed an opinion that an invader, in consideration of the difficulty of transport, would bring only 5,000 horses, and pointed out that facilities of locomotion had immensely increased the power of making war. Indeed, it was the opinion of some Germans that had Napoleon had one line of railway in 1812 he would easily have conquered Russia. Mr. Harcourt's contention as to the efficiency of the navy would imply that an army was altogether unnecessary; but he deprecated exclusive reliance on the former. In defence of the "Battle of Dorking," he explained that it assumed the destruction of the British fleet by some suddenly developed means of fighting, and mentioned that at the time it was written fleets of torpedo boats were being constructed, unknown to the author in Germany, with a probability, had the war continued, of the destroying the French navy.—*Broad Arrow*—

## THE TRADE OF CANADA.

[From the Monetary Times, Toronto.]

The commercial returns for the fiscal year ending the 30th June, 1871, were laid before Parliament last week, and are of a gratifying character. They show that the year was one of prosperous trade—one during which the Dominion made satisfactory progress in the development of its resources and wealth.

The total commerce of the Dominion during the twelve months, counting both imports and exports, amounted up to the large sum of \$161,121,000. This is an increase over the previous years of \$16,310,007. The simple statement of this fact, however, does not bring out the full significance of this advance, for it must be remembered that there was the large increase in our trade of about \$20,000,000 during 1869-70, and it was hardly to be expected that with such an advance in the latter year, the increase in the succeeding year would almost have equalled it. Taking the two years, the increase has been fully \$36,000,000, and it is now pretty certain that the current year (1871-72) will manifest another important stride, onward.

The present prosperity and growing importance of the Dominion is well attested by the statement that we have attained to an annual commerce of \$161,000,000 and from enquiries made at the seat of Government at Ottawa, we have every reason to believe that, when the returns for 1871-72 are complete, the total will not fall far short of \$175,000,000.

The details of our transactions for 1870-71 just laid before Parliament, are interesting and worthy of attentive consideration. The total consideration: The total amount of our imports was \$86,947,482—an increase of \$15,709,979 over those of the previous year. The figures indicate a very large consumption of British and foreign goods throughout the country, and we need not, at any length again point the moral—which we have so