

A maritime trade can be guarded—apart from the general protection which is given by winning command of the sea—partly by keeping the coast which it quits and the coast which it approaches clear of the enemy's ships; and partly by patrolling the sea-routes which the vessels traverse in the ocean itself. Of these the first is by far the more important, for the ocean is so wide that a search for ships once in blue water is a sort of hide-and-seek affair, whereas a ship approaching Canada must either thread the Strait of Belle Isle, pass between Newfoundland and Cape Breton, or enter Halifax or St. John; so that our trade must concentrate at a few fixed points which an enemy able to keep the sea could watch.

Thus it seems suitable that our naval force should be devoted at the outset to coastal defence. We should guard our coasts so well that no enemy's cruiser would care to haunt them, and that our ships sailing to England could gain the blue water without molestation. Later, when our coastal defence is organized, we may consider the advisability of discouraging hostile cruisers from hanging about in the North Atlantic; but that is matter for a fairly distant future.

The weapon of weapons for coastal defence is the torpedo. Once let our coast be infested with our own torpedo-boats, destroyers, and submarines, and we may be certain that hostile vessels will on ordinary occasions give it a wide berth. We could count on a zone, perhaps a hundred miles wide, within which no enemy's cruiser would willingly venture, and the existence of this zone of safety would enable our merchant vessels to steer courses on the oceanic part of their voyage calculated to baffle a patrolling foe. A torpedo defence alone is not final, as a cruiser can destroy a torpedo vessel if she can get within range of it in daylight; to complete our immunity we must have larger vessels, able to meet in open fight any ships likely to be sent against our shores. Like everything else, this is a