

"AN EMERGENCY"

Definition and Distinctions: Much of the discussion as to the existence of "an emergency" would be obviated if some little attention were paid to the meaning of the word. Murray's dictionary supplies the following:

"A state of things unexpectedly arising and urgently demanding immediate action."

For example, as Mr. George E. Foster said, in 1909:—

'When, in 1899, Kruger attempted to drive the British into the sea..... that was an emergency' (a).

Tested by this definition and illustration there is no discoverable emergency.

Discussion would be much simplified, also, if proper distinction were made between the sufficiency of British preparation for defence—that is the capacity of the navy—on the one hand, and, on the other, the ability of the British army to cope with continental forces. For if you say that the British islands or their possessions are insecure, you speak without knowledge; and if you say that the British army is inferior to the French or German, nobody will dispute your assertion.

There is a third factor in the situation that ought to be remembered. It may be stated in the language of *The Montreal Star* (31 October, 1912):

"There is danger at this moment that she", the United Kingdom, "may be drawn into the Balkan trouble. We may have to fight a terrific and costly war, paralysing our trade, throwing our industries out of gear, crippling our finances, weakening our expensive navy and spilling the blood of all too many British subjects; and all for a cause in which we are hardly at all concerned. Why should Britain actually go to war to establish a Slav Federation in the Balkans? We have threatened to go to war more than once in the past to prevent something very like this precise result. Yet we may be compelled to shoulder the enormous burden of a great war for this cause which is certainly no more to us than the establishment of a free Persia, which we are indirectly helping to prevent. And why?

"Because we are bound to our allies, as we were not bound before this 'emergency' arose" (b).

(a) Hans., 29 March, p.

(b) This throws back the apparition of the phantasm to at least 1908, and possibly to 1904—the respective dates of the *approachements* with Russia and France. The "urgency" created by its arrival must be as old.