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Can England be Invaded

One of the methods used by pro-German influences in the attempt to provoke prejudice against Great Britain, is to suggest that a large part of her military forces are being held in England because of the fear of German invasion; the object being, of course, to put the thought in the minds of the Allies that Great Britain is acting selfishly in not giving as full co-operation as she might to the armies fighting on the western front. Now, any one who is conversant with naval operations knows perfectly well how absurd is this bugaboo of German invasion. The German General Staff never allow any operation to be undertaken unless they feel reasonably certain of its success; and they are well aware that to carry through a serious invasion, resulting in the conquest and occupancy of Great Britain, a minimum force of 250,000 men would have to be landed, together with all the field and heavy artillery, transport and military supplies.

In contemplating such an invasion one of two plans would have to be followed: The only safe and certain plan would be to obtain command of the sea, either by destroying the enemy fleets, or blockading them so securely that any sortie would be impossible. If this were done, the question of communications would be solved; and, once the invading army had been landed, it would be possible to keep it fully and continuously supplied.

On the other hand, if the General Staff believed the British Navy to be so powerful that its command of the seas could never be seriously challenged, then the only other possible way to get an army of 250,000 men landed in England would be to secretly gather a fleet of transports in the German ports, make a rush across the North Sea, and achieve a surprise landing at two or three points on the east coast within supporting distance of each other.

Now, the probability of Germany's ever obtaining the absolute command of the sea, even for a limited period, is extremely remote. She tried it at Jutland, when she had only the British fleet against her, and she liked her "glorious victory" as the Kaiser called it, so little, that she has never sought to gain another. But when we sent our destroyers and battleships over to add their strength to that of the British navy all discussion, nay even the very thought, of winning the command of the sea must have died out once and for all at the German Admiralty.

As to the possibility of making a surprise invasion, while the British were in command of the sea, all the chances of the thing are heavily against its success. In the first place, there is not in all the Seven Seas a stretch of water that is so thoroughly patrolled as the North Sea. Patrol boats, big and little, trawlers, mine sweepers, destroyers, and a thousand passing ships of commerce, each equipped with wireless, would flash early tidings of the sailing of any Armada to Admiral Beatty. Moreover, long before the German ships were sighted by surface craft, the throb of their propellers and the loom of their bulk in the darkness would have been heard and seen by the far-flung screen of British submarines. Should the fleet steam out from Wilhelmshaven and the mouth of the Elbe, how would it pass through the vast mine field covering the German coast?

However, let us suppose that German mine sweepers should manage to open clear water for the transport fleet out into the North Sea. What then? What would be the chances of this fleet covering the 350 miles of distance to the coast of England and disembarking 250,000 men with their artillery and military supplies, before the British fleet came up and sank every one of the transports? Let us take it for granted that if an army of 250,000 Germans, thoroughly equipped, could be landed on the east coast, such an army could live off the land and make good its losses in guns, and ammunition by its captures from the enemy; the question still has to be answered by what miracle of good luck could such a large fleet make the passage and the landing without being discovered.

A brief consideration shows that it would require a veritable Armada to transport a thoroughly equipped army of this size. Our own Quarter-master Department estimates that for conveying our troops in France we require five tons of shipping to the man. Let us cut that figure in half for the North Sea passage, and we still find that 625,000 tons of shipping would be required, which, at an average of say 5,000 tons to the ship, would call for a fleet of 104 transports.

No, the British are not holding troops in England because of any fear of invasion by Germany. Of the several millions that she has called to the colors, only a certain proportion can be counted as fighting men that will carry a rifle at the front; and of these, possibly a million are under the sod in France or have been permanently crippled in their fight for the common cause. The others are still undergoing their training ready for the front, or are fighting in France, in Italy, in Greece, or in far distant Palestine and Mesopotamia.—Scientific American.

FIVE GOOD REASONS



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