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THE BRITISH NAVY.

Immense excitement was caused in England near the end of last year by statements being brought forward by skilled and competent authorities that the navy of Britain was not nearly powerful enough to uphold its supremacy with other nations. So persistently and, seemingly, well founded, were the statements put forward,—statements that were well supported by facts and figures—that the Government were forced to pay some attention to the outcry, and accordingly formed a Committee of enquiry under the presidency of Lord Ravensworth. The result of their deliberations was that, although there was not much cause for alarm, still the British navy in many respects was not up to the standard of efficiency that a Maritime power, such as she is, ought to be.

When we reflect upon the vast possessions of Britain, scattered as they are over the globe, and also on the fact that it is chiefly owing to the immense commerce done by Britain, that entitles her to be called the first nation of the world, one wonders at the apathy shown by the present and past Government's on a subject such as this. This subject is one of vital importance, because if Britain is not prepared to support and protect her immense mercantile marine, her commerce will decline, and her importance as a nation of the world will be greatly lessened. It is therefore, gratifying to learn that the agitation on this subject has, in some measure, produced satisfactory results.

"Engineering," commenting on the Admiralty proposals, says:—"The programme laid down is quite

insufficient for the purposes of the country; while the manner in which it is proposed to be carried out is inexcusably dilatory, and inefficient. Five years is the most sanguine estimate that can be found by the Government of the time that will be occupied in carry-out these present proposals. But judging from the slowness with which they are to be carried into effect, even this unnecessary length of time will probably be exceeded." This is rather strong language to use when we consider that the Government have resolved to expend not less than \$30,000,000 in addition to what had been already proposed. That sum will be expended in building four ironclads, two torpedo rams, five belted cruisers, two "scouts," and thirty torpedo boats, besides naval ordnance, and coaling stations. These facts should surely show, on the part of the Admiralty, an awakening to their responsibility.

One point, on which all who have interested themselves on the matter are agreed, is the time taken in building any ironclad is, far too long, and one reason for this is that they are all built in Government dockyards. It is contended that if they were built by contract, the time taken would be considerably lessened, and the work done be more satisfactory.

The latter is, of course, much more important than the former, and one might overlook the length of time that is usually taken to construct an ironclad provided, when they were completed, that they gave satisfaction. But such has certainly not been the case, as has been admitted by the Admiralty Committee, as, for example, when they reported on H.M.S. *Inflexible*, in which report they recommended that no more ships of that class should be built, which recommendation, however, has not had the desired effect, as similar ships have since been built. It is to be hoped that the Imperial Government will give more attention in future than has certainly been the case in the past, to her navy, which, in times of war, is expected to protect not only Britain, but her vast Colonies.