

THE SATURDAY READER.

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written by the author of "Barbara's History" for
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PEACE OR WAR.

ENGLAND AND THE UNITED STATES.

WAR with England! war between England and the United States! Do those who so glibly utter these words picture to themselves their terrible import and the ruinous results that would flow from such an event? We think they do not, we hope they do not, and that these threats in which our neighbours so frequently indulge, proceed from the excitement of the recent contest with the South, and the exultation over its successful termination, rather than from any serious wish or intention on the part of any one fit to live out of a Lunatic asylum, to attack Britain or her possessions, at home or abroad. England has abundantly proved her determination to avoid, if possible, a serious collision with her pugnacious offspring; and we will not do the latter the injustice to suspect that her desire for peace has had anything to do with the denunciations daily launched against her by the writers and orators of the Union. Surely our cousins have had plenty of fighting of late. A nation may get a surfeit of glory as of other good things. We have ourselves no extreme veneration for laurels that are steeped in blood, especially in kindred blood; but tastes differ, and we do not pretend to blame those who take a different view of the matter. These then, may enjoy the *certaminis gaudia*, "the rapture of the fight," to their heart's content; yet, as a familiar proverb says, enough is as good as a feast—even of war and battle. What could the people of the United States gain in the way of glory, by fighting England, that they do not possess already? They insist that they thrashed her to rags in the war of 1812. If it will relieve their bursting bosoms, no one will object to their declaring that they frightened her into fits in 1865. As Lord Derby would say, it will please them, and do her no harm; while fighting would certainly injure both.

But this is a grave subject, and ought to be seriously treated. War between the United States and England would, in the first place,

involve the destruction of the commercial marine of both nations, and the transfer of their shipping to other countries. The war-risks of insurance alone, independently of the risk of capture, would make this a certainty, if we are to judge from the mischief done to American commerce by one or two Southern cruisers, during the troubles with the South. With scores of Alabamas and Floridas scouring every sea, no merchantman of either of the belligerents could leave port without the most imminent danger of seizure before it had scarcely lost sight of land. No war on land could be so destructive of property as this would be, without taking into consideration the other consequence we have alluded to, that, namely, of placing the carrying trade of the ocean in the hands of those who would be but too ready to take advantage of a chance of enriching themselves at the expense of the two combatants madly bent on ruining each other. This circumstance of itself, without reference to many others, ought to make war between England and the United States all but impossible, and cannot fail to influence every reflecting man of the two nations in continuing peaceful relations between them as being equally the interest of both. In fact, it is not merely desirable that they should cultivate such relations; it is absolutely necessary that they should do so, if they would maintain their high position among the great powers of the world. The present age repudiates the old doctrine, that injury to the commerce of one people is beneficial to that of another people which chooses to consider itself its rival. England and the United States have nothing to gain by war, but everything by peace. So confident are we that this is the light in which the majority in both countries will eventually regard the matter, that we will venture to predict that intimate as the alliance is which now exists between England and France, there is greater danger of war between France and England, than between the United States and England.

We will not repeat the many fine things that have been said and sung in denunciation of quarrels among men of the same race, speaking the same language, once living under the same laws and institutions, with much moral commonplace of the like kind. We know that such quarrels have been frequent in all ages, and we also know that they are bitter beyond anything exhibited in the disputes of communities or individuals bearing no such affinity to each other. The blood of Cain still flows in the veins of mankind. We shall therefore be neither moral nor sentimental on this occasion and subject. Let us be hard and practical instead. We shall suppose that England and the United States are at war. The Americans boast that they can conquer Canada and the sister Provinces in one campaign, and that a short one. They did not conquer them the last time they tried, in four years, but let that pass. Well, these Provinces are conquered,—what then? Is England a soldier or a ship the weaker by this subjugation of an unwilling people? Are the United States stronger by the acquisition? We suspect

that the very contrary would be the truth. The British Parliament and Government have declared, over and over again, that whenever the people of the North American Provinces express a wish to dissolve the existing connection with the mother country, no obstruction will be thrown in the way of the movement. They have only to say the word; and no voice shall be raised, save in kindness, to dissuade them from the course they have resolved to pursue; not a shot would be fired by a British soldier to hold them in forced subjection. They would be allowed the full benefit of State Rights, according to the Southern reading of that vexed doctrine; and secession, though it might be a folly, would not be a crime, punished by the sword, or confiscation or the scaffold. It is a country so situated that the fiery spirits in the United States would fain wrench from England at the cost of a war in which colonial hands would neither be weak nor idle. But to resume: What would be the next step in the war? There would be endless contests at sea; and, as we have already shown, the commerce of the two countries would be utterly ruined. This could not be allowed to last long, and the combatants must come to a death grapple on land. This it is not easy to effect, the vital parts of the respective countries being divided by some three thousand miles of water, the one from the other. The ocean can, indeed, be crossed; but not easily with a numerous army which would, if attacked in crowded ships, be slaughtered like sheep. But this is a point which we cannot discuss at length, and which cannot be explained except by widely digressing from the main subject of our remarks. These propositions in connection with it are, however, self-evident. First, That in the present day, no single one of the great maritime powers can secure the exclusive command of the ocean. 2nd, That England could not invade the United States, nor the United States invade England, with any effect, except with an immense army, which, in either case, would have to cross the Atlantic. 3rd, That if sent across in detachments, they would be cut off in detail, before the whole force could assemble; and if they crossed in a body, they would, if attacked by a naval force, even inferior to that which escorted them, suffer serious if not fatal loss, from a determined enemy pouring his shot into their ranks, cooped within the limited space of a ship's deck and hold. This is the great danger which invading expeditions by sea have had to encounter or dread, which led to the overthrow of Philip the Second's great Armada, and which deterred Napoleon from persisting in the invasion of England.

We shall conclude with a few hints offered in all friendliness to the fire-eaters among our neighbours, who tell us that they thirst for a war with England, as the hart thirsts for the water-brooks. They imagine that the Navy they extemporised in the course of the late civil war is so numerous and powerful that the English navy would be wholly unable to cope with it. They are mistaken. England is the workshop of the world;