

such a contingency. The destruction of certain coal depôts might be accomplished in a few hours by a single ship with very few guns; and heavy requisitions, on pain of instant bombardment, might be hastily levied on a fleet of merchantmen in harbour by "an intelligent maritime Uhlan" in the shape of an insignificant cruiser, even in the presence of military force. This danger can in several instances only be met by port defence vessels, and torpedoes. A very small local force, if trained and provided with these weapons, would meet the requirement. But where are the weapons? where is the force? It will be too late to await the outbreak of war to provide the weapons and to train the force, for an attack on our coal depôts at the strategic points will not be the last, but the first act in the drama of future war. The means for their destruction are always at the disposal of any maritime power, but the measures for their adequate defence take much time to develop. A single cruiser bringing her guns to bear on one of our coal depôts, would in a few hours paralyse the action of our fleet for months.

It is not possible here to enter more fully into details respecting the defence of the Imperial roads, which is the first, and can be made the strongest line, of Colonial defences. In no way can our Colonies and possessions be so efficiently protected as by a firm command of their communications, for with the exception of Canada and India they would thus be exempted from the possibility of attack, and unless Canada and India are to be cut off from succour and support, their communications must be held, come what may.

The lines of Colonial defences may be thus summarised:—

1. The defence of their communications, which involves fortifying the Imperial strategic points, and the existence of a purely naval and a purely military force; the one equal to the task of keeping open the roads between the points, the other sufficient to secure those points from capture in the necessary absence of the fleet.

2. The interior line of sea-defence, which must provide against the destruction, by bombardment from the sea, of