

by Great Britain, and woven into her Imperial naval fabric. We have rested content in the comfortable knowledge that an Imperial North Atlantic or North Pacific Squadron always, either actually or potentially, hovered about our eastern and western sea coasts, sheltering them and our commerce under the historic prestige of which it was the symbol.

But the seaborne commerce proper to Canada has now assumed very considerable proportions, both eastward and westward, and it would seem that, if we are to learn and apply the lessons of history, and unless we are to repudiate the burdens incident to that independent commercial sovereignty which we have boldly claimed and fairly won, we must establish and demand, to secure the continuity and growth of our great and increasing seagoing trade, a thoroughly well grounded belief in the minds and consciences of other nations that we are ourselves able to give it an adequate and continuous protection. It is true that we already have the nucleus of a Navy; that is to say, we have ships which are exercising true naval functions.

Since 1885 we have protected our fisheries, both on the Atlantic seaboard and on the great lakes, by means of armed vessels, and our ships have done valuable hydrographic survey work, fitting work for a navy.

But in the wide, independent sense in which our sovereignty is conceived, the burden has never yet been acknowledged, much less lifted to our young shoulders.

In these days of "practical politics" it seems certain that the shouldering of any great financial obligation must be preceded by an intelligent realisation, first, of a duty with regard to it, and, second, of its significance and extent. Unless Canadians are persuaded (they will not be dragooned) into a belief in the existence of such a duty, it is unlikely that they will volunteer. Once convinced, they will not be deterred from undertaking and performing it by faint-hearted or penny-wise considerations. The Canadian attitude towards recognised obligations is, above all, essentially honest.

The first question, then, is whether there exists now a Canadian duty in the matter of a naval establishment. Or, it may be stated in another way, to emphasise the two elements which enter into the question: Do we, as Canadians, owe such a duty to Canada; that is, to ourselves? And, if we do, is it a duty which calls for performance under existing Canadian conditions?