

been forced home upon me this year, as never before : how long is that to last? will this grand position of pre-eminence be maintained?

I think it is Bacon who said, that when a nation turns from arms to commerce, it may be taken as proof of national decadence. I do not exactly endorse the sentiment, for it admits too much. No sober thinking man can approve the policy of France or Russia to-day, nor the state of things which keeps Germany armed to the teeth. No nation can do wisely in spending its life strength in the worship of Mars. The god of battles is always on the side of dry powder and big battalions, and the capricious deity makes large demands upon the industrious poor. But then, it is just as disastrous for a people to devote itself to merely Mammon and muscle. And that, it seems to me, is just what the English people are doing. There are no theological discussions now ; orthodoxy quietly hates heterodoxy, and heterodoxy quietly sneers at orthodoxy, but both agree that open rupture entails too much trouble. Science has but little to say, and the few words it now and then utters sound in dull unheeding ears. That huge body called the British public, is an investor of money, and the main enquiry is where the most interest can be got. To say nothing, the English people are growing intensely selfish in this matter. They regard themselves as the only authorized money makers in the universe. It has got to be that the main idea of political institutions, of Royalty, Lords and Commons, of army and navy, is to protect and further the interest of British commerce. All nations who will not accept the British commercial economy are written down as fools and worse. When the Suez Canal was but a project in the brain of a brilliant French engineer, the English nation, with many a hard blow, sought to beat it into nothingness ; when Beaconsfield turned the nation into a stockholder, even his followers seemed half ashamed ; but the other day in England, to judge from the excited meetings held, and the tall talk in the papers, you would have thought the world had formed a project to rob England of her rights. There was small recognition of the French engineer who had conceived and carried out the scheme in spite of English opposition ; and when English statesmen endeavoured to concede what they judged were the rights of others, English commerce rose *en masse* in violent protest, and the Government yielded to the storm. The argument was simple : the canal is a paying concern ; British commerce makes it pay ; therefore we must own that canal or another along side of it, so as to protect British interests. That is only an illustration of British