

eight new Dreadnoughts should be "taken in hand" as soon as possible."

A week afterwards (29 March) Mr. Arthur Lee moved a resolution declaring that the policy of the government

"does not sufficiently secure the safety of the Empire" (a).

The arguments were repeated, and the resolution was lost by 135 ayes to 353 noes.

The party advantage of the agitation was soon apparent. The Annual Register tells us that:

"The excitement, however, was greater in London (b) than in the north of England, or Scotland (c), and was strongly manifested in the Croydon election campaign where 'we want eight and we won't wait' became a refrain of a Unionist song. The Liberal defeat (March 29) was a striking testimony to the effect of the naval agitation and the efforts of the tariff reformers" (d).

After further speeches in the constituencies and at a Guildhall meeting summoned by the Lord Mayor (e), Mr. Asquith, at Glasgow (17 April) explained the situation, declared that:

"These facts gave no ground for alarm, but suggested the need of timely and adequate preparation. The British fleet was overwhelmingly superior to any combination of fleets" (f).

The Unionist agitation, nevertheless, proceeded, but with rapidly diminishing vitality. I do not say that it was indulged consciously for mere Unionist purposes. But I do say that the agitators were Unionists, whose *métier* it was to discredit the government. I say that the agitation was the work of one political party. And I say that there was no limit to the stupidity of the stories which were printed in the newspapers, and by many people believed. For example:

"Mysterious air-ships were seen at night in various places as far apart as Lowestoft and Cardiff, and one was even discovered at night on a Welsh mountain accompanied by two men who spoke some foreign tongue. Another story. was that there were 50,000 stands of Mauser rifles and 100 rounds of ball cartridge for each stored in a cellar within a quarter of a mile of Charing Cross, ready for the 66,000 German soldiers supposed to be in England.

(a) Hans., p. 39.

(b) Predominantly Unionist.

(c) Both strongly Liberal.

(d) Ann. Reg. 1909, p. 62.

(e) Ann. Reg. 1909, pp. 66, 7.

(f) As given in Ann. Reg. 1909, p. 79.