

from point to point at twenty, thirty, or forty." (a)

Now these are the utterances of a master-mind, but it is passing strange that it never seems to have occurred to the writer that we cannot limit the field of operations of an opposing fleet. If our enemy's fleet can scour the coasts of "Happy England" at from twelve to fifteen or sixteen miles an hour, they can scour the coast of "Unhappy Colonies and Possessions" at the same rate, where their operations will not be hampered by the presence of any army at all. Even the stores of coal needed for marine locomotion, "though principally ours," are conveniently situated at commanding points along the Imperial roads, and by being for the most part totally neglected and undefended, afford a guarantee that the enemy's fleets shall not be inconvenienced by want of fuel in a raid upon "our vast Colonial empire, our extended commerce, and interests in any part of the globe."

It is said that a certain bird when hard pressed in its flight buries its head in the sand, and finds imaginary security because ceases to see the near approach of danger; and the present policy pursued by this country in the matter of defence appears to me to be somewhat analogous. Our Imperial Eagle, whose wings cover the seas buries her head in the sands of the defended shores of England, and blinding her vision of danger with a few men, guns, volunteer reviews, and autumn manoeuvres, her statesmen bid her believe that she is safe!

This is one side of the picture; let us glance briefly at the other. It is not many years ago since our defensive measures were based upon an exactly opposite principle, and one equally dangerous to the safety of our Empire. Our armies and our fleets were scattered indiscriminately over the face of the globe, while the United Kingdom (the Imperial base of operations) was left destitute of any power of resistance. All our war force was exhausted on means for the direct defence of our Colonies and distant possessions, to the exclusion of all considerations relative to the security of the Imperial base.

The defenceless state of the British Islands at the same time of which I speak, can best be pictured by recalling the concluding words of the celebrated letter of the Duke of Wellington, in which he showed the ease with which these islands could be carried by assault: "I am bordering on seventy seven years passed in honour. I hope that the Almighty may protect me from being a witness of the tragedy, which I cannot persuade my contemporaries to take measures to avert." We were then as oblivious to the truth that the capture of the citadel involved the downfall of the Empire as we are now blind to the fact that the security of that citadel is no guarantee for the safety of *twenty nine thirtieths* of British territory, or for the protection of the lives and properties of *four fifths* of Her Majesty's subjects. (b)

In avoiding Scylla we have encountered Charybdis. Where, then, is the true channel through which the Empire may safely pass, defying attack? Many may think, with the Government of the day, that this question may be solved by saying to our Colonies and possessions—Arm yourselves;

it is every man's duty to defend his hearth and home. Do as we have done in England, raise volunteers, create what military forces you please, do as we have done, and our Empire is safe! Now, let us consider whether this be a true solution of the problem. In the first place, it is not possibly to lay down a general rule of self-reliance and self-defence applicable to all Colonies and possessions alike. The power of resistance of each fragment of the Empire can only be measured by a comparison between its population, its geographical position, and natural defensive advantages, and those of its possible enemy. It is simply ridiculous to tell any one of our West Indian islands to be self-reliant, and to trust to its citizens to resist the war power of the United States. If this general rule is the basis of our plan of Imperial defence, and is to be applied, it means in plain English that in the unhappy event of a rupture with America, we offer that nation peaceable and quiet possession of 100,000 square miles of territory, and make over the lives and properties of 1 1/4 millions of British subjects!

I fear it would not be difficult to find what are termed "advanced thinkers" in the country—nay, in Parliament, and seated on Government benches—who would not think this a very great national calamity. Possibly such persons might argue that the United States would allow the money value of these territories as a set-off in the final balance-sheet of American claims of indemnity for expenses caused by war. It is therefore necessary to observe that the loss of the West Indies affects the safety of Canada. First, by increasing the resources of the United States; secondly, by securing to that power the command of the Western Atlantic—thus rendering it impossible for Imperial forces to create a diversion in favour of Canada, in the hour of trial, by blockade and attack on the southern and eastern shores of America.

It follows, therefore, that the general and indiscriminate application of the policy of fragmentary self-reliance and self-defence, though possible to Canada as a direct means of frontier defence—besides involving the loss of other possessions—is the most certain method of ensuring she shall be left in her struggle unaided and alone.

Similar arguments apply with equal force to other Colonies and possessions elsewhere; but as it is impossible to deal with this great question in a short paper, I think I have said enough to show that this general rule of "self-reliance" fails to solve the problem of Imperial defence. The question, therefore, remains—What are the general principles on which the defence of the Empire must be based?

Before we can give a reply worthy of the name, it is essential that we should understand what is the Empire, and what is vital to its existence. Speaking generally of its geographical position, it consists of ten groups of territory separated by long sea distances. The British Islands, British North America, the West Indies, the West Coast of Africa, the Cape, the Mauritius, Australasia, Hong Kong, the Straits' Settlements and India.

This is a rough sketch of the ground to be defended. Now to quote from a work by Sir C. Pasley, written in 1808. (a) "The strength of an empire composed of several islands or possessions, divided from each other by the sea, will be further modified by the geographical position of its respective parts. The strength of an empire of any

kind, whether insular or continental, will be greater or less, with equal resources, in proportion to the facility with which its several parts can afford each other mutual assistance when attacked, and to the difficulty which an enemy may find in supplying and supporting his invading force."

This able exposition of a great military truth brings to light two great principles:—

1. That it is of vital importance that the safety of the Imperial communications be secured.

2. That it is essential to the military strength of the empire that forces created or existing for the defence of one portion be not so constituted as to preclude the possibility of using them in the defence of another.

If the Imperial communications are not secured, our enemy can make it *physically* impossible for the several parts to afford "mutual assistance when attacked." On the other hand, although they may be tolerably safe, if the military forces of each part are by law so constituted so as to preclude the power of moving them to another, we ourselves render it a *moral* impossibility for the several parts to afford "mutual assistance when attacked." In the one case the enemy cripples the necessary power of concentration; in the other we save him the trouble by doing it ourselves. What then becomes of the military value of forces constituted as our militia and volunteers are, at home or in the Colonies, when weighed in the Imperial scales?

If the empire is to be defended at all we must apply, on a large scale, the ordinary and common military principle applicable to the defence of all territory, large or small.

The fundamental principle is briefly this: The success of all operations of war, whether defensive or offensive, depends upon the disposition of force in such a manner as will best secure the base of operations, and ensure safety and freedom of communication. It is useless to do one without the other, for in the one case neglect of the rule must lead to a "lock out," in the other the "lock-up" of military force. Our former disposition of our force risked the "lock out" of military force by rendering the capture of the base possible: our present plan endangers, nay courts, the "lock-up" of military force at the base by leaving our communications exposed, and our outposts undefended.

In the late war we saw first of all an attack upon the advanced positions on the lines of communication; next the cutting of the lines of communication; and lastly, as an inevitable consequence Paris fell.

The United Kingdom is our Imperial base. The Imperial main lines of communication are:—

1. To British North America across the North Atlantic.
2. To the West Indies.
3. To India, China, and Australasia by the Mediterranean.
4. To India, China, and Australasia round the Cape.
5. From Australasia and the Pacific round Cape Horn.

The Imperial base can be rendered in two ways:—

1. By direct assault; invasion.
 2. By indirect means; investment.
- It is curious—I trust I may be forgiven for saying it—that while the possibility of invasion is not generally disputed, I believe I happen to be the only individual who

(a) "Germany, France, and England." *Edinburgh Review*, 1870.

(b) The area of the United Kingdom is about one-thirtieth of the total area of the British Empire, and the population less than one fifth.

(a) "The Military Policy and Institutions of the British Empire."