

following officers:—Bro. G. Hicker, W. M.; Bro. A. C. Muir, S.W.; Bro. H. E. Hammond, J.W.; Bro. Perkins treasurer; Bro. D. McKnight, secretary; Bro. J. J. Beatty, S.D.; Bro. J. H. Geake, J.D.; Bro. F. J. Bailey, organist; Bro. C. Glen, D. of C.; Bros. A. S. Brown, A. W. Hobbs stewards; Bro. A. E. Fox, I.G.; Bro. T. F. Hammond, tyler. After the ceremony had concluded the officers, visitors, and members were sumptuously entertained at a banquet (catered by Bro. A. S. Brown) When the good things provided had been disposed of a couple of very pleasant hours were spent in proposing toasts, exchanging fraternal greetings, and listening to the charming selections given by the string band of H.M.S. Royal Arthur, under the directorship of Mr. F. H. McKay, bandmaster.—This lodge occupies a unique position, being the second in Canada which draws its membership from the Services. Its success has been phenomenal, there being now over fifty members, although it has been only in existence since December 1st. The work is a perfect exposition of the renowned English ritual, and the motto of every member is emulation or who can best assist and best agree. The toast list was as follows:—"The Queen and the Craft," "M.W.G.M. of B.C.," "R.W.D.G.M. of B.C. and Grand Lodge officers past and present," "The M.W.G.M. of England, H.R.H. the Prince of Wales," "W.M. Bro. Hickey," "Visitors," "Senior and Junior Wardens," "Absent brethren," "Sister lodges," "The ladies," "The Press," "The Tyler's toast." Suitable responses were made in each case, and when God save the Queen had been sung a unanimous vote was recorded that the event in all its details was of a very pleasing character.

The Protection of Commerce in War.

Great Britain, with a Mercantile Marine valued at 122 millions, has sought to provide for its protection by an annual expenditure on the Navy of some 18½ millions, while France, whose Mercantile Marine is little over 10 millions in value, considers it necessary to actually spend some half million beyond that sum in each year, and Russia regards 5 millions as not too much to spend, though the worth of her whole Merchant Navy amounts to but 3 millions. Added to these pregnant facts must be the all-important one that while, as has frequently been insisted upon, France and Russia would still continue to be great powers,

though their fleets suffered a crushing defeat, on the other hand the loss of the command of the sea would most gravely imperil the very existence of the British Empire and inflict the greatest privation and suffering upon the inhabitants of these islands.

The problem, then, how best in the time of war to protect our vast commerce with the comparatively very limited naval force likely to be at our disposal is a difficult and important one. Unless our fleet is strengthened, more particularly as regards cruisers, it seems to us clear that the task would be beyond our powers. Sir Geoffrey Hornby, Sir George Elliot, and others, have properly insisted upon the great strategical advantage possessed by France. We may boast of our past victories and talk of our luck, but, as Sir Geoffrey has reminded his countrymen, the luck may be on the other side in the next war, for the French cannot be expected to repeat such blunders as they made in Nelson's days; while their officers and seamen in the present day know their work as well as our men do, and have as good ships to fight in.

In considering the question of what would be likely to be the most effectual means for the Admiralty and the Navy to adopt, whether by convoy, by clearing the seas of enemies, or by some other means, the history of convoy, as ably epitomised by Professor J. K. Laughton in Lord Brassey's "Annual" for the current year may be profitably studied. It will materially assist in arriving at a decision as to whether the system was or was not advantageous, and, if advantageous, what were the limitations to its value; and, again, how far it has been affected by the almost radical change which the conditions of commerce have undergone.

A very reasonable doubt has been expressed by Admiral Colomb as to whether a system which, in several historical instances he has adduced, allowed of enormous losses, was not a faulty one, for it is plain that often merchant ships, if at all good sailors, would have been individually very much safer if making their own way and trusting to their own masters than collectively when brought together, for the purpose of being convoyed, into a large fleet of such value as to stimulate the enemy to every possible exertion, and left without really adequate protection. Professor Laughton, however, shows, we think conclusively, the true deduction to be not so much that the theory of convoy is faulty as that there were blunders in the employment of it, and that it is essential to success to make the guard in some degree proportionate to the work it may be called upon to perform. If we do not hold the command of the sea, either locally or

absolutely, a convoy should not be sent out without a protecting fleet of sufficient force to engage any possible enemy; and even then, as was illustrated in Kempenfelt's attack on Guichen—the safety is by no means assured.

Too much should not, in our opinion, be expected of armed mercantile cruisers. Sir Thomas Sutherland, the experienced chairman of the P. & O. Company, to our mind, properly holds that the role of the mercantile cruiser should be to avoid fighting, except when she comes across ships which she would plainly be a match for, but that fast ships borrowed from the Mercantile Marine would be of immense service in the time of war in many ways—for scouting, for carrying coal, for transporting troops. It is, as Sir Thomas points out, very unlikely that we should ever have a war in which the army will not be engaged as well as the navy. Reinforcements would have to be sent across the sea, and we might easily lose a thousand men at a blow by the capture of one of our slow old transports. It certainly would be good policy, and involve no very extravagant outlay, for the government to retain all the very fast ships that are afloat.

It is very generally doubted whether in any circumstances the system of convoy would be revived. Certainly our fast steamers would not be likely to avail themselves of it, as with their great speed, and the not inconsiderable armament they may carry, the war risks would not be heavy. But Professor Laughton argues with much reason that the eight or ten knot steamers are not the vessels fortunate "runners" are made of; and that for them convoy in some form or other will be revived seems tolerably certain, though probably not in the form known in the last century or in the great war. The conditions are changed, notably in the ability to keep appointed station or an appointed route without any important divergence.

In some cases, where the geographical position favors such a course, it may, as suggested by the professor, be considered more safe and more economical to patrol assigned routes by cruisers of the smaller classes, with places of rendezvous also assigned, to meet their supports in the shape of larger cruisers, or third-class battle ships, or any greater force deemed necessary. For the channel special precautions, by dotting the sea with gun-bearing vessels or otherwise, would obviously be necessary; but further away we are inclined to agree with Professor Laughton that probably a system of commanding certain appointed stations in force, and a wise prevision of probabilities, will so greatly reduce the opportunities of an enemy's cruisers that the need for convoy will but seldom occur, and then only in a very modified degree. Once more, however, we would insist that unless our fleet is made sufficiently strong to maintain the absolute command of the sea against all comers, not only the safety of our commerce is jeopardized but the integrity of the Empire gravely endangered.