

OCEAN ROUTE TO AUSTRALASIA THROUGH ATLANTIC AND PACIFIC.

WHATEVER view is held as to the policy of holding the Mediterranean and Canal route in war with a great Naval Power, there can be no doubt whatever that the difficulty of protecting commerce between Port Said and Gibraltar will be great, especially during the early period of hostilities.

It seems probable, however, that this period will, to a great extent, influence future action.

Trade diverted for a time will not quickly return to its original course. Insurance rates once raised to a high figure will not rapidly fall. Confidence shaken at the outset by the evident menace of attack at short distances from numerous Naval Ports, in narrow waters, will not be immediately restored unless a great naval victory were obtained. Such a victory at the outset of war is not probable. In the present uncertainty, an enemy would be unlikely to risk a battle, unless in overpowering superiority.

On all grounds, therefore, continuous maintenance of a trade route through the Mediterranean at the outset of war cannot be counted upon. It follows, therefore, that the transport of Troops and Stores to the East will be equally hazardous, at least for a time.

Of all routes, those of the Atlantic and Pacific will be safest in war with a Naval Power.

Fast ships on these routes cannot well be captured, except by mere mischance, on the Ocean.

No probable enemy, no nation, except the United States, is likely in the immediate future to develop any considerable naval strength in the Pacific, while the maintenance of strong squadrons in the western verge of the Atlantic will be difficult to any power not in alliance with the United States.

Again, these Ocean routes pass near no naval bases of European Powers, which, especially at the outset of war, will confer on them practical immunity from raids. On the Cape route there is the menace of Dakkar, of Reunion, and possibly of Diego Suarez, which cannot be ignored, and which would unquestionably raise insurance rates to a high figure.