

Before, however, proceeding to show how best (in the humble opinion of the writer) these dangers can be avoided and guarded against, it would be well to look into the records of the past and see how our trade and commerce has fared during past wars.

HISTORICAL RÉSUMÉ.

In the study of the majority of human problems the lessons of history are profuse and *à propos*; similar conditions and experiences very generally offer themselves as guides whereby a rule of conduct can be mapped out and followed, and whereby the attendant contingencies can to a greater or less extent be foreseen and provided for. But as regards the great problem made the subject of this essay, the history of our land, owing to the marvelous and rapid advances in the arts and sciences, and the wonderful changes lately brought about in all that pertains to the vessels themselves, as well as "they who go down to the sea in ships," can offer us but little guide, speaking in a general way, of how to properly and successfully defend a shipping which in the aggregate of its tonnage is more than one-half of that of all the nations of the world combined. The great sea wars, when last our commerce was in danger, were conducted under vastly different conditions that one might say there was but little to learn and profit from in their perusal; but, after all, though details have altered wonderfully, the main great principles of protection are the same. Fast cruisers, flitting about and destroying merchantmen, must still be brought to book by yet fleetier cruisers. Battle-ships blockading great ports must still be met and dispersed by more powerful and better-handled battle-ships. In brief, the answer would still seem to be: to properly protect an immense commerce an omnipresent and overwhelmingly powerful fleet is indispensable. Opinions will, it may readily be surmised, always differ as to what constitutes an *adequate* fleet; but with the performances of cruisers and privateers in the past before our eyes, as well as the known capabilities of steam, it seems but wise and right to adopt the highest possible standard of numbers and efficiency irrespective as to whether our expected hostile opponent is, nautically speaking, a strong or a weak State. Prepare always for the worst; let that be the standard; and not what might suffice for the best or even half best.

Early maritime wars present for our consideration little, if any, indication of an attempt at organized effort (as we now understand it) for special protection of trade. Commerce was but then comparatively in its infancy, and the course of trade was intermittent and uncertain. The greatest danger to be guarded against, and one always present in peace and war, was capture by pirates and freebooters—lawless men, owing allegiance to no country particularly—whose hand was against every man's, and who lived upon the spoils of captures whenever and wherever found. In early times the venturesome merchant tried to ensure the safety of

ship and cargo by fast sailing and a strong and well armed crew; then, as these marauding attacks became more serious, several merchants would club together and employ an armed vessel manned by soldiers or mercenaries to act as escort, and thus the convoy system was inaugurated.

In Britain and "Greater" Britain, accustomed as we are at the present day to look upon the Navy as the natural corollary to the growth of our trade and commerce, and to consider the protection of the latter its main functions, still it must not be forgotten that this is not its only duty, and was not in the beginning the prime reason for its creation and existence.

The reign of the Illustrious Alfred is usually quoted as the period which gave birth to our British Royal Navy, and certainly it was not the protection of their trade that moved our fathers in that age to organize a regular armed service for the sea. Rather was it for the defence of their coasts and the prevention of those raids by marauding Danes and Northmen which for so long caused such loss and suffering upon the south and east coast counties of England. As a defence against invasion, and later as a means to enforce respect for national rights and obligations, the Royal Navy has continued its steady growth to its present fine proportions, though it is only of late years comparatively that its high mission and great importance to the nation as a whole has been understood and appreciated. In former times, in times of trouble and imminent danger, the Navy grew and increased suddenly, to languish and decline once peace was declared, until another storm upon the seas of diplomacy awakened the "powers that were" to a sense of its great necessity. The wisdom of the saying, "In times of peace prepare for war" was not then so generally accepted, nor were the conditions of warfare, either by sea or land, such as to necessitate the preparation in peace-time which is now imperative.

The study of our past history does not, however, show that great loss and destruction (relatively) of our shipping and commerce which foreign writers so glibly assure us will be the condition of things in our next great war with a first-rate Power. On the contrary, it is a curious fact that at the very time when it appeared as though our people were struggling for their very existence, and countless seizures were being made of their shipping, the balance of advantage after all generally always rested with us, and though our losses through captures by the national vessels of the enemy and his privateers were very great, the proportion of such loss, and its effect upon the whole trade and commerce of the kingdom, was as nothing compared to the corresponding loss inflicted upon our opponents by captures made at the same time by our own seamen.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)