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The Defence of Our Empire

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I.

The war in which the British Empire has been involved during the last two years and a-half, considered together with the tremendous issues which have been at stake, makes it a duty for every citizen to study the danger we have been in, and to take such steps as are possible to prevent a repetition of so dangerous a crisis. The question is not one as to the safety, progress or prosperity of that one particular portion of the Empire in which we may have our home, but it is a question of the safety and prosperity of the vast unit of which we form a part. The openly declared hostility of most of the foreign Powers, shows us, as Lord Salisbury says, that "We have no security except in the efficacy of our own defence, and the strength of our own right arm." Everyone of our great leaders has warned us of the danger which we stand in, and even so cold and dispassioned a man as Lord Kimberley tells us: "Never was there so unfriendly a feeling all over Europe towards this country as there is now."

This storm of hostility does not threaten Great Britain alone; it endangers all branches of the British Empire alike, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, British India, every continent or island where the British colors fly. Let the power of our Island home be broken, and but a short time would elapse before the other portions of our heritage would be struggling to maintain and defend their independence. The British Empire must stand as a whole, and each part of it is identified with the necessity of maintaining the pre-eminent position of that portion which is the heart of the whole organisation. I allude to that

"One Isle, one Isle,
That knows not her own greatness: If
she knows
And dreads it we are fallen":

that "ocean empire with her boundless homes—our ever-broadening England."

I propose in a few chapters to point out the inadequacy of our present system to meet the hostility of a possible combination of our enemies, whose military strength I will put before you. I will endeavor to show that it rests with ourselves to make our defence sufficient to meet any possible strain, and I hope to be also able to make you understand that it is our duty and also to our advantage that we should share the burden of a great national obligation.

THE NAVY.

The British Empire has increased in population from 25,000,000 in 1800, to 502,000,000 in 1898. Its area has increased in that period of time from 1,500,000 to 11,400,000 square miles. Its revenue has risen from £37,500,000 to £116,000,000. The exports and imports from £67,000,000 in 1800, amounted in 1898 to £764,000,000, while the tonnage of British shipping, which in 1800 was 1,856,000 tons, was in 1898 10,325,000. To protect our first line of defence is the British Navy—and here at once I enter my first plea, that it is the manifest duty and it should be the willing duty of every portion of the British Empire to bear its share of the burden in guarding the interest of this vast possession and trade, and to take its proportionate share in the maintenance of the Navy, which gives security to the whole Empire.

It is the opinion of our highest political and naval authorities that our fleet must be kept up to a strength not less than will equal the possible combination of any two other Powers. Such a balance of naval power we now possess and there is no reason to believe that any government which may come into power will be allowed to neglect the maintenance of our naval