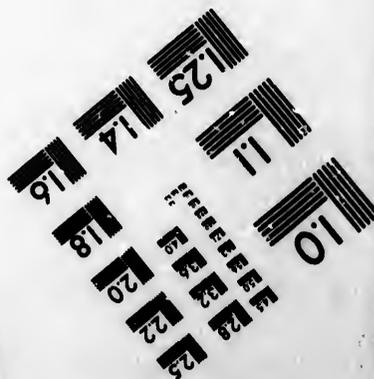
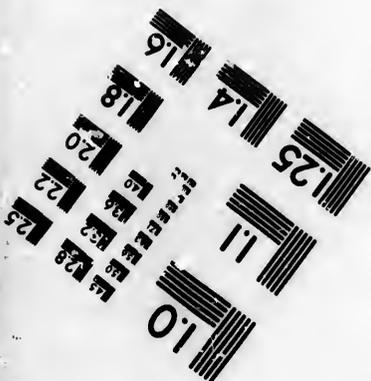
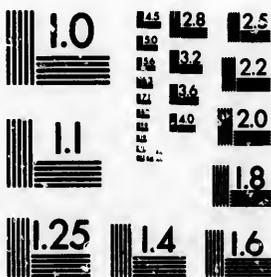


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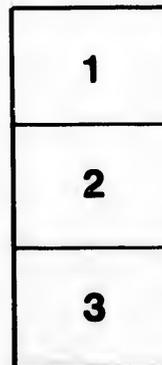
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DEFENCE OF CANADA

CONSIDERED AS

AN IMPERIAL QUESTION

WITH REFERENCE TO

A WAR WITH AMERICA.

BY

J. L. A. SIMMONS, C.B.

COLONEL ROYAL ENGINEERS, AND MAJOR-GENERAL IN THE OTTOMAN ARMY.

LONDON:

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THE
DEFENCE OF CANADA.

ALTHOUGH in the late debates in Parliament it has been elicited from the Government that 'there is no danger of war with America, and that nothing that has recently passed indicates any hostile disposition on the part of the United States,' the country may congratulate itself that the debates have taken place, as, without giving any just cause of offence to the United States, the policy of England with respect to the defence of Canada has been clearly declared, and with such perfect unanimity that the consequences of an attack on Canada cannot fail to be appreciated.

All parties, however much they may differ as to the measures to be taken for the defence of Canada, agree with Lord Palmerston, that 'this is not a Canadian question; that it is not a local question; but that it is an Imperial question:' in other words, that an attack of Canada means war with Great Britain—

not only in Canada, for the defence of Canada, but wherever a British ship can meet an American ship, or a British soldier can grapple an American soldier.

War with America is not a war of 21,000,000 of Federal Americans, or 31,000,000 if the Union should be re-established, against 3,250,000 of Her Majesty's North American subjects, supported by 29,000,000 of inhabitants of Great Britain, at a distance of 3,000 miles, but war against the whole of Her Majesty's dominions, including 9,000,000 of her subjects distributed throughout the colonies, and 135,000,000 in India.

As in war the great object sought is to gain an honourable and advantageous peace by inflicting the greatest amount of injury on the enemy, whilst warding off as much as possible all harm from ourselves, it is evident that the country which acts on the offensive must always be at an advantage as compared with that which acts on the defensive. In an offensive war, the enemy suffers from the inconveniences and horrors of war; and, if waged successfully, there must always be, in treating for peace, some territory or advantage to surrender in return for an equivalent: whereas in a purely defensive war, however successful, peace can only be purchased by a cession of rights or territory, or both.

If these principles be correct, war with America upon the basis of the defence of Canada must result in disaster; and it would appear that a mistake has

been made in discussing the best mode of carrying on war with America purely with reference to this object.

War involves, in the first instance, the defence of Great Britain and Ireland, the heart and life of the empire ; and after that, of her colonies, possessions, and commerce.

To consider the probabilities of war with the United States with reference solely to the defence of Canada, is to reduce the question of war to a Canadian question. It does not even assign to it the dimensions of a Colonial question, which would embrace the maritime provinces of North America, Bermuda, the West Indies, and other colonies ; and much less does it give to it the importance of an Imperial question. To accept the defence of Canada as the issue of war, is also at once to give up the selection of the seat of war, which in itself is an enormous advantage.

Great Britain being separated from the United States by an ocean, it is evident that war can only be waged through the intervention of the navy ; the mode of operating in war must therefore depend, in the first instance, on the navy ; and, considering the vast importance and the great difficulty which confessedly surround the question of war with the United States, it seems reasonable that the consideration of the most efficacious means for prosecuting it, should be referred to the most experienced naval officers in consultation with the most experienced

military officers, with whom might be associated some others specially qualified, whose experience in the resources of the empire and in the conduct of public affairs, combined with a knowledge of America, might regulate the deliberations of the naval and military men, and keep them within the limits of the possible.

Such a deliberate consideration of the possibility of war with the United States would, without a publication of details, carry weight with the country ; it would ensure the acceptance of the recommendations emanating from it, and would not lead to debates on the defence of Canada ; but the subject would be treated as an Imperial question of Imperial magnitude, in a way which would probably carry conviction and obtain the concurrence of Parliament.

Looking at the possibility of war from this point of view, the first thing that presents itself is the necessity for blockading the American coasts, with the double object of keeping open the navigation of the sea for the commerce of Great Britain, and of maintaining the communications for military purposes between Great Britain and her colonies. Unless this blockade be established and maintained, American ships of war would be met with on all parts of the ocean ; the conveyance of stores, materials, or reinforcements to any of the colonies would be attended with risk, and American cruisers might even be found preying on British commerce in

British waters. The true mode of protecting British ships on the sea would be by establishing a strict blockade on the American coast, and, if possible, driving the American flag from the ocean.

Considering the development of the American navy during the present civil war, this blockade can only be maintained by powerful ships, capable of moving at high speed, with a proportion of iron-clad vessels which could hold their own against the iron-clad navy of America. For the maintenance of these ships upon the coast of America, large supplies of fuel near at hand are requisite, and docks for repairs and for keeping the bottoms of the ships free from weed and other substances which may retard their speed. Docks also are required for refitting ships after an action. Without such depôts and docks, there would always be a risk that a disastrous gale of wind, or a severe naval action, even though successful, might deprive us for a time of the services of the blockading fleet, and set free a number of cruisers to prey upon commerce in all parts of the world, and to embarrass our communications with the colonies.

It would therefore appear essential to the maintenance of the blockade, that advantage should be taken of our Transatlantic possessions, to establish dockyards and depôts of fuel in suitable positions with reference to the coast of the United States, and to place them by fortification in conditions of perfect

safety. Fortunately, Great Britain has possessions most favourably situated for establishing these necessary depôts and dockyards in the maritime provinces of North America, in Bermuda, and in the West Indies.

The fall of New Orleans, and more lately that of Fort Fisher, has clearly shown, that in presence of the means of attack which in the course of four years of war have been developed in America, works for the defence of these dockyards must be of the most substantial character and of large extent, and that they must be defended by numerous garrisons, probably not much less than 15,000 men for each.

Without these fortified bases of operations for the navy off the coast of North America, a blockade would, on account of its great length—3,000 miles—and distance from England, be almost impossible, (even with them it would be most difficult,) and American ships of war and Alabamas would swarm; so that the operation of maintaining supplies and reinforcing an army in Canada, even when the navigation was not closed by the rigour of the climate, would be attended with great risk and vast losses, not to speak of the direct effect upon the general commerce of the country, and the indirect effect produced among the manufacturing population by the great diminution of our export trade.

It is a primary condition, therefore, to the maintenance of an army in Canada, that these fortified

positions should be occupied, in order to protect the line of communication from Great Britain to her army in the field.

There are other considerations, moreover, which point to the same necessity. Until the overland route is well established by the settlement of the country, and by the construction of railroads from the United States to California, the passage from the Atlantic to the Pacific across the Isthmus between North and South America must be of great strategical importance.

Great Britain by her Indian possessions ought, in a war with the United States, to be mistress of the Pacific; but this commanding position might be imperilled if the Americans could secure easy communication from the Atlantic States to California. This would be best prevented by closing the passage of the Isthmus, which might be effected by naval means, based on a good and secure dockyard and depôt in one of Her Majesty's West Indian possessions.

If this were done, probably the most effective means of attacking the United States, and carrying war into their territories, would be by a well-planned expedition from India, in which Her Majesty's Indian subjects could be employed with effect without drawing on her European subjects, who are more difficult to procure in numbers and more costly to maintain.

Her Majesty's Australian subjects might also be

inclined to assist in such an enterprise, which would tend greatly to the security of the rising cities on their coasts, and of their trade.

An attack of this sort would also be the best mode of defending British Columbia, and of protecting British commerce in the Indian and Chinese seas; but all would hinge on the establishment of a defensive position in the West Indies. Without such an attack on California, a blockading squadron on the west coast of America, in the Pacific, with a fortified dockyard in support, would be necessary for the security of the commerce in the Pacific and Indian seas.

It will thus be seen that the primary effect of these fortified naval depôts in the Atlantic, on the east coast of America, would be to assist the blockade of the American coast, and to that extent to secure the commerce of Great Britain with other parts of the world, to protect the line of communications from Great Britain to her colonies, and more especially to the British North American possessions, and to a great extent to sever California from the United States, and localise the war in the Atlantic, instead of allowing it to spread all over the world, to all the colonies, and wherever British commerce might extend.

Backed also by the army in England, these fortified stations would have a marked result in compelling the maintenance of strong garrisons, which, in the aggregate, would not amount probably to less

than 150,000 or 200,000 men in the great cities and harbours all along the Atlantic coast, and to that extent of compelling an outlay of men and money, and thus crippling the resources of the United States, and occupying armies which might otherwise be used to augment the forces employed against Canada.

The above measures, which would probably absorb from 40,000 to 50,000 effective men, are necessary for the defence of the empire at home, and in her colonies and possessions, before placing a single soldier in Canada as a theatre of war. They are ancillary to operations in Canada, and will act as a diversion in favour of them; but these latter must be conducted independently, from a secure base, upon the true and strict principles established by the experience of war, no departure from which is sanctioned by the experience of the war now raging between the Federal and Confederate States.

The first condition of war is a secure base of operations. The importance of a fortress into which the Government of Canada may, in case of danger, retire, and from which the resources of the colony may be directed, has been well shown in a letter lately published in the 'Times' by General Sir E. Cust. The position which, so far as Canada is concerned, is best calculated to fulfil the necessary conditions of a secure base of operations, is Quebec. Naturally strong, and in a position where for six months in each year it can be in direct communica-

tion with Great Britain by her fleets, and, as it were, the seaport of Canada, Quebec is undoubtedly the true base of operations for carrying on war in Canada, and therefore, as the Government of Canada must cooperate in war with the Home Government, it is there that it should establish itself immediately on the outbreak of hostilities.

Notwithstanding all that has been said as to the possibility of a campaign in front of Quebec during the winter months, all those who know the country, and have experience of its climate and the effects of frost in hardening the ground, will feel perfect confidence that, although hostilities may be continued for a month or six weeks after the close of the navigation, during which the defence of Quebec might be left to its own unaided resources, the attack of a fortress in winter is almost an impossibility; and the utmost that could be done, even if the army could keep the field, would be to blockade it, with the hope of reducing it by starvation—which, considering the facilities for keeping stores in winter, could only be the result of gross neglect on the part of the defenders. Quebec, therefore, with the support of the fleet in summer, and of its rigorous climate in winter, furnishes many of the conditions requisite for a secure base of operations. It has, however, a great defect, in consequence of its distance from the shores of the Atlantic, and the difficulty of keeping up a communication between it and Great Britain during the

time that the navigation of the St. Lawrence is closed.

Unfortunately, the frontier of the United States is unpleasantly near to the road from Quebec to Halifax; and although no railroads have as yet been made leading from the interior of the United States to the frontier, they have been completed to a point within sixty miles from it, from which there are common roads leading to it; and the population of New Brunswick, which only numbers 250,000 souls, is not sufficient to prevent an inroad upon the line of communication from Quebec to Halifax, and to keep it open. It would therefore be necessary, if this road were to be kept open, to augment the Colonial forces in New Brunswick, and probably to assist them in their defence by opening roads, and by fortifying one or more well-selected positions, by acting from which the great intercolonial road might be secured from insult, except from occasional raids by small bodies of men, which the experience of the present war in America has shown cannot be prevented in a closely-wooded country with a very sparse population.

To provide also for keeping up a communication with the Government and troops in Canada, a line of telegraph along the north shore of the St. Lawrence, and across the straits of Belle Isle to Newfoundland, would be of very great benefit, as it would be in perfect security when the navigation was closed,—

that is, provided its Atlantic terminus were duly protected; and without it, information would rarely reach England during the winter months as to the state of affairs in Canada beyond that, the publication of which might be permitted by the authorities of the United States.

Quebec, being fortified, would naturally become the object of attack in case of war with the United States. History tells us that the mode of attack upon Quebec by the forces of the United States under Arnold and Montgomery, in 1775, was by columns advancing from the State of Maine along the course of the Kennebec, and from Montreal.

These lines of advance nearly coincide with those which armies might take in the present day. The railroad from Portland by Richmond gives one line of advance, and the river St. Lawrence from Montreal gives another. Any British army, therefore, operating beyond Quebec must embrace both of these lines in its operations. The experience of the war in America has clearly shown, notwithstanding Sherman's exceptional and unopposed march from Atlanta through Georgia to Savannah, that military movements on a large scale by armies capable of attacking a fortress such as Quebec ought to be, can only be made along a line of railroad or navigation. Now, as the railroad from Portland leads direct upon Quebec, it would appear that the first defence of Quebec should be maintained in advance on the line of that

railroad, and the more so as that railroad is also one of the most favourable lines for advance upon Montreal.

By taking up a strong position, if such can be found, near the American frontier, which is ninety miles from the St. Lawrence at this point, fortifying and occupying it in force, the line of railroad would be covered; the resources to be derived from a population of 400,000 souls between the frontier and St. Lawrence would be secured; a threatening position would be assumed, from which offensive measures might be taken, within the territory of the United States; an army would be placed in a position which would render an advance by Lake Champlain upon Montreal more difficult than it otherwise would be, and necessitate the employment of a much more powerful army for that enterprise; and, if occupied in conjunction with a position on the Richelieu river in advance of Montreal, would go far towards placing that city in security. Without the occupation of an advanced position on this railroad, the country through which it runs would be lost, facilities would be afforded by the railroad itself for combined movements upon Montreal and Quebec, and even a position might possibly be taken on the St. Lawrence which might embarrass, if not sever, the communication by water between Quebec and Montreal.

If such a position could be taken on the St. Law-

rence, Montreal would soon be left to its own unaided resources, as there is no communication except by indifferent country roads on the north of the St. Lawrence between the two cities.

An advanced position on the Portland railroad appears, therefore, to be an essential condition in the defence of Canada; and, considering that the troops allotted for its defence would not improbably have to operate against an army such as that with which General Grant has captured Richmond, it would not be too much to assign to it a force of 50,000 men, including the garrison of Quebec, which, so long as a field force remained in its front, would not require to be numerous.

An army in such a position, by threatening the line of operations of an American force acting against New Brunswick, would also be of great value for the protection of the intercolonial line of communication from Quebec to the ocean.

For the defence of a position on the Richelieu, in front of Montreal, it would not be too much, for the same reasons, to assign also a force of 50,000 men: but this even would not provide for the defence of Montreal, if attacked from the west as well as from the south. With respect to operations of war also to the west of Montreal, it is to be observed that the climate of Western Canada is by no means so rigorous as that of Eastern Canada, and that unquestionably military operations may be conducted throughout

the winter in it, when assistance from Great Britain would be almost, if not altogether, impossible.

These forces may seem large; but, considering that all operations which may be undertaken to the west of Montreal would depend on the integrity of the country between them and Quebec, it would be as essential for their success to secure that country, as it is certain that, with the experience the Federal generals have acquired in war, they would attack that country if undefended, and so isolate the corps operating to the westward, and cut them off from Quebec, and from all communication with Great Britain, upon which they would depend for supplies of arms and ammunition, and for reinforcements of men.

In discussing the possibility of war with America, an army of 30,000 or 40,000 men is frequently spoken of as the utmost that Great Britain could send forth and maintain in the field in America. If this be the case, it is useless to consider the warlike measures to be taken for carrying on war on land, as the whole of the able-bodied population derived from 2,500,000 Canadians, if willing to leave their homes unprotected for the defence of their country, and aided only by a small contingent of 30,000 or 40,000 men, could never carry on a successful war against the able-bodied population to be derived from 31,000,000 of the United States. Without derogating from the character of the Canadians, it is evident that such a contest would be only a repeti-

tion, with no very great difference in the odds, of the Prussian and Austrian war against the Danes in 1864, and of that which has now terminated so disastrously for the Confederates.

In the same way that the American armies have grown with the existing war until they are numbered by hundreds of thousands, and that Great Britain, in 1813, after twenty-one years of war, with only a population of 18,000,000, had 853,000* men under arms, a war with America or any other great power would soon cause the numbers of the British army to be increased to a par with that of the army to which it would be opposed. When once the honour of the country was involved, it could never allow its armies to be driven from the field for want of numbers, but would again, by some means, which would certainly be forthcoming when required, augment its forces to the required strength. Will it not be wise,

* Sailors and Marines	140,000
Regular Army	237,000
Regular Militia	83,000
Yeomanry Cavalry	65,000
Local Militia	288,000
Militia in Canada	40,000
Total	853,000
Native Indian Army	200,000
Total	1,053,000

(*Lord Castlereagh's Speech, Nov. 11, 1813.*)

therefore, to look the possibility of a war boldly in the face, and to calculate the cost in men and means, and not, by commencing it with inadequate preparations, and upon an imperfectly matured plan, to risk a defeat, which would cause a loss of prestige that no nation, however powerful, can afford at the outbreak of a war, and thus increase the difficulties of conducting it enormously? To be drawn into a large war by degrees, commencing it as a small war, is a very dangerous policy; such a proceeding would tend to give confidence to an enemy, and to destroy it proportionately in ourselves, and might be productive of political complications, attended with great danger to the empire: it would tend also to protract the war; and as, eventually, at least the same force which if employed at first might have been successful, will be required to bring it to a successful issue, such a policy must necessarily be attended with increased expenditure.

Such a policy would be a repetition of that by which it was thought to frighten the Emperor Nicholas out of the Danubian Principalities, by sending 10,000 men as a demonstration to Malta, and of that which sent a weak division of 1,0000 men to America at the time of the Trent affair, when it was successful, because of the heavy work which the Americans then had in hand, but which would only have tended, in all human probability, to bring about

the war which was then imminent, if the Federals, with their present military organisation, had been free from other and more pressing engagements, and ready to commence operations against us.

The history of the military preparations in connection with the Trent affair has yet to be written, and an account given of the strategical arrangements by which an insignificant division, as compared with the armies at the disposal of the Federal States, was distributed in small detachments over an exposed frontier, extending some 900 miles, from London, in Western Canada, to the ocean, without any military organisation in the colonies to support it.

The success of this demonstration may blind the eyes of political students, and cause them to attribute to military vigour a result which was wholly due to the apprehension on the part of the Federals that, by a declaration of war, the Southern ports might be opened, and the Confederates assisted in their struggle for independence; but the military student will see in it a movement which was utterly valueless in a military point of view, and only excusable as a manifest declaration to the Federal States that Great Britain was in earnest, and intended war if the Confederate Commissioners were not surrendered.

In view of the great armies at the disposal of the United States, the forces already enumerated appear small, viz. :—

50,000 men for the defence of dockyards and
naval depôts ;

50,000 men in front of Quebec and in that for-
tress ;

50,000 men in front of and to the south of
Montreal.

If defensive operations should be undertaken to the west of Montreal, these forces would require to be increased in a very large proportion for the defence of the communications above that city. Unfortunately, there is a line of railroad along the south of the St. Lawrence, at some distance from the frontier, extending from Lake Huron to Montreal, and thence through Richmond to Quebec, which is joined at various points by other railways leading up from the interior of the United States. The power of locomotion afforded by these railroads is of enormous advantage to the Americans either for attack or defence ; whereas the communications in Canada are badly arranged for military purposes. The Great St. Lawrence Canal above Montreal is in part on the south side of the river, can be easily destroyed, and is therefore difficult to be defended ; the railroad from Montreal to the west is close to the river on its north bank, and very open to attack. The only other communication is by the Rideau Canal, which was made by the British Government, at an expense of near £1,000,000, in 1826, expressly as a line of

military communication from Montreal to Lake Ontario. This canal, which was made for the navigation of ordinary canal-boats not drawing more than $4\frac{1}{2}$ or 5 feet of water, is unfortunately quite inadequate in the present day for the supply of an army, is not well adapted for a naval communication between the ocean and the lakes, and is difficult also to protect.

Operations, therefore, to the west of Montreal would require very large forces to protect the line of communications in rear of them. Such operations would be by no means impossible, but should not be undertaken without a very careful consideration of the mode of conducting them, and a calculation of the means in men and materials requisite to ensure their success. Without an ample provision of such means, it would be an act of madness to attempt any serious operations on a large scale in that country, as they would infallibly lead to disaster.

The geographical conformation of Canada is naturally unfavourable for defence. It is a long narrow strip of land in the basin of the St. Lawrence, skirting that river, with a wall of impenetrable forest to its north, and exposed at every point to an irruption from the south. It stands, therefore, to reason, that any force entering this narrow strip of country or gorge from the sea, and extending its operations westwards, must have one flank and its rear open to attack, and be placed, therefore, under very great disadvantage.

Any general who would advance a force in such a country, unless his flank and rear were well protected, would entirely neglect the first principles of war, and invite defeat by a repetition of the same movements which have proved so eminently successful in Sherman's advance from Chattanooga to Atlanta, and thence northwards through Carolina in rear of Charleston, and now again in Grant's last successful attack of the lines in front of Richmond, and in his pursuit of Lee's army.

The question of the defence of Canada is one in which the advantages must be carefully balanced against the disadvantages. In the first place, it requires consideration, whether, in a war between Great Britain and the United States, Imperial interests would be best promoted by the defence of Canada, whether wholly or in part, or by allowing the temporary occupation of the whole or a part of it, which, although greatly to be deprecated, would have but little effect on the general results of so great a war, probably very little as compared with the effects produced by the mere outbreak of war upon the commerce and fiscal condition of the two countries; and if it should be decided that war should be carried on in Canada as a part of the general scheme for waging war against the United States, the question of conducting that war locally should be considered with reference to the means which could be placed at the disposal of the commanding general.

These notes are only intended as suggesting the general principles upon which war with the United States, if it should unhappily occur, should be carried on, and would require much amplification if it were attempted to fix the precise details and the strategical points to be taken up in a war for the defence of Canada. There can be no doubt of the vast importance of the subject; and that the change which has supervened since the defence of the North American Colonies was under the consideration of the Duke of Wellington—by whose advice the Imperial Government undertook the construction of the Rideau Canal and the fortifications of Kingston—is so great, that the whole subject is reopened.

These changes consist in a vast increase of population in the United States, from 10,000,000 to 31,000,000; in the construction of railroads and communications by which armies can be supplied and move in directions and with a rapidity which before was impossible; in the development of a numerous and highly efficient army, commanded by generals who, although they may be thought lightly of by some for their short length of service and rapid promotion, have acquired, in four years of warfare on a scale such as has seldom been exceeded, a larger war experience than the great majority of the generals of Europe, and have, by the operations which they have conducted, proved themselves adepts in strategy and very skilful tacticians. This war has

also created factories to supply the necessities of war, and an aptitude for war in the population which can only be acquired by practice; as witness the transport of masses of men by railroad and by sea, the rapid construction of ships, the destruction and repair of railroads, and even their construction across natural obstacles, in a manner and with a rapidity which cast all engineering works executed in previous wars entirely into the shade, and numerous other features of the present war.

The whole aspect of the continent of North America, as regarded from a military point of view, has changed, and, as a natural consequence, the mode of carrying on war, if war should come, should be carefully weighed with reference to the altered circumstances of the case. The present appears a very favourable opportunity for so doing, when, notwithstanding the successes which have of late attended the Federal arms, the pacification of the Confederate States is far from accomplished, and there may be time to consider the subject and make preparations. It does not follow that by so doing the probabilities of war will be increased, nor that justice to the United States denied, which Mr. Seward announces as the condition upon which Canada shall remain undisturbed; but the Government of the Federal States would be strengthened in carrying into effect the policy of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other countries, which the same gentleman declares

will, if the people approve it, be the policy of the United States after the war.

Preparations against all contingencies, and a clear understanding on both sides of what war would entail, is probably the best preventive of war; but, on the contrary, half-measures, like the display of a few thousand men at Malta previous to the Russian war, tend to induce war, by involving the honour of the disputants, and exciting irritability and animosity one against the other. If such measures consisted in the distribution of a few thousand men along a very long line of frontier, in most exposed situations, even though fortified, they must be calculated to invite attack.

In making these few observations, the question of the probability of war has not been entered upon, that being a subject within the peculiar province of the statesman, and upon which the writer, as a military man, does not venture to give an opinion. The possibility of war has been conceded, otherwise the question of the defence of Canada would never have been mooted; and as the measures to be taken in consequence of this concession are under discussion, however far distant it may be hoped by all that the day is when the apprehension will be realised, there can only be one desire that a question of such vast importance should be thoroughly ventilated, irrespective of party, and that such conclusions should be arrived at as shall bear the strict scrutiny, not only of friends

at home, but of possible opponents of great military experience who will seek to find a flaw in them, and who, if they do find a flaw, will be prone to take advantage of it to the detriment, not of Canadian, but of Imperial interests.

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