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THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSIONERS APPOINTED TO CONSIDER THE DEFENCES OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, 1860.

By Vice-Admiral P. H. COLOMB.

THE older I grow the more convinced do I become that the greatest difficulty men have to deal with is that of grasping and appreciating first principles. It is that which hampers Sir Edmund du Cane in his paper on "The Fortification of our Dockyards," in the *JOURNAL* of the Royal United Service Institution for February, and while allowing him to take exception to certain opinions which have been expressed in regard to the views of the Royal Commission of 1859-60, and their results, it causes him to misinterpret them, and to miss their bearing. He does not perceive that the exception taken to the Report of 1860 is its entire disregard of first principles, and on that account of its inconsequence; and he does not attempt to defend it on the only ground on which it has been attacked.

There is just now quite a reflex action setting in on our defensive policy; so that while most of those who wrote and spoke in the days before the Naval Programme of 1889 and led up to it, devoted themselves to the exposition of the first principles of our defence, and conquered the mind of the country in that way; the bulk of such as now write and speak, carefully avoid considering first principles; put them aside, and tend to throw us back on that sort of chaotic view of defence which will cause Parliament to grant or withhold supplies, not according to the strength of the reasons put forward, but upon the strength of will and persistence of the men who demand them.

The pith of the exception that we must take to the Report of the Royal Commission is that it fully proved the necessity of an increase in the Army, or the Navy, or both, towards which nearly 12 millions would have gone a long way; and then proposed to expend that sum on something which it clearly showed and admitted could be no defence against the sort of attack it apprehended.

But no greater mistake could be made by those who think they can defend the Report of 1860 than to suppose that those who attack it desire to "brand" its members "with incredible wrongheadedness." What those who attack the Report say is, that its members were all full of the false ideas of their day, and that almost any body such as they were, would then have reported in that sort of way. The late Admiral

Sir Cooper Key, one of the members, a man of the highest capacity and intelligence, was then saturated with the views put forward, and it was not till quite late in his life that he began to see things in another light. It was only here and there amongst naval men that the errors of the Report were noticed. Some of the acknowledged leaders of the Naval Service were called as witnesses before the Commission, and gave evidence which then read to us who were in the way of it—myself, for instance—as sound and logical, and it was years before we saw its fallacy. Very few of the witnesses called showed what we now consider a true sense of the position, and Admiral Sir John Hay stands almost alone as a naval officer who holds now exactly the language he held in 1860, in reference to the Report.¹

We can no more justly apply the term “incredible wrongheadedness” to the building of the works of Portsmouth and Plymouth than we can apply it to the building of the “Hydra,” “Hecate,” “Glatton,” and other coast-defence ironclads, and the large numbers of the “Staunch” class gun-boats. Most naval officers see now that it was quite a mistake to have spent our money in this way, but scarcely anyone saw the mistake in the days when the ships were laid down.

The building of the works and the defence ships and vessels were the outcome of a prevalent set of ideas of naval war which had never been corrected by any reference to its history, and the principles deducible therefrom—ideas which, if history is any guide, would have ultimately left us at the feet of a conqueror if we had continued to act on them. I know more than one distinguished and leading naval officer who points with pride to the exact date when in these matters he passed “from darkness to light,” and such feel with me that over a large field, wrong ideas are scotched and not killed. By us the report of 1860 is designedly attacked, as the clearest evidence of the fallacies of the day, and because its criticism is the most potent instrument for preventing our falling back into darkness.

Sir Edward Du Cane says that:—“The most outrageous assertions have been made as to the views expressed by the Commission. By selecting passages from their report it has been attempted to show that the fortifications they recommended were intended as a substitute for the superior fleet, which is, of course, a vital necessity for us.” Surely if the passages are truly quoted, and not unfairly separated from any context that might modify their signification, it cannot be an “outrageous” proceeding. If the views of the Royal Commission are to be defended on this ground, the only way to do it is to re-quote, and to show that wrong use has been made of quotations. But it is in this passage as much as in any other that Sir Edmund Du Cane is missing first principles. He cannot see that to claim the necessity for the fortification of the dockyards in the presence of a superior British fleet is quite as much a contradiction in terms as to claim that two straight lines can

¹ “Lines from My Log-Books,” p. 341. Sir John, in his speech in the House in June 1862, said he had been examined by the Commission, but his evidence is not reported.

enclose a space. This does not seem so to him, and it is because it does not seem so, that he is able to defend—or rather to think he defends—the report of the Royal Commission. He would no doubt make the common answer that he thinks of a superior fleet temporarily inferior. He does not understand that there is and can be no such thing as a superior fleet temporarily inferior. To such as have studied the matter, the attack on any of our dockyards by an enemy which has an inferior fleet to ours is now just as impossible as it seemed to the mind of the great Sir John Jervis and his colleagues in 1789.

But it is time to analyse the Report of the Commissioners, in order to exhibit the danger of upholding it.

The first paragraph professes to show that the fleet alone is insufficient for the defence of the kingdom. This is a practically axiomatic statement if we make it because we admit that the fleet might be beaten. But this is not the line taken by the Commissioners. They said that the command of the Channel was “The first and most obvious line of defence, but it was one that could not, in their opinion, be entirely relied on at the present day, even if England had no greater external interests to protect than the countries which may be opposed to her. Its adoption would involve the necessity of retaining in the Channel for purely defensive purposes a fleet equal to any which could be brought against it, not only by one European State, but by any probable combination of maritime Powers, and this in addition to the other fleets and cruisers which are required for the protection of our vast colonial empire, our military communications with distant dependencies, our extended commerce and interests in every quarter of the globe.”

Sir Edmund Du Cane says of the report, of which this is the first paragraph:—“Our supremacy at sea was always treated as a condition which nobody dreamt of dispensing with, though it was seen to be unquestionably possible that it might be locally and temporarily suspended or interrupted.” It is evidently impossible to find the idea of “supremacy at sea” in this first paragraph, and as it covers the whole Report, we can only reasonably declare that a permanently inferior Navy was the logical basis of the great fortification scheme, just as it was in Charles II.’s time. There is no sign of “temporary suspension” of the superiority of our fleet. We are assumed to have a fleet which might protect our colonial and other interests abroad if we gave up the command of the Channel to our enemies; and it is inferred that if we gave up our interests abroad we might hold the Channel; the paragraph therefore declares as plainly as English can put it, that the condition the Commissioners felt it necessary to provide against was permanent inferiority at sea—permanent loss of command of the Channel in any probable combination against us in war.

The same idea—if yet the language be obscure—is put in the second paragraph:—“Even if it were possible that a fleet sufficient to meet the emergency of a sudden naval combination against this country could be kept available and fully manned in time of peace, such an application of the resources of the nation would lead to an outlay of the public

revenue far exceeding the expenditure which would suffice for that object under other circumstances." This, I take it, must be read as deprecating the expenditure necessary to keep command of the Channel with a fleet, and being prepared to suggest a less expenditure in another way, "which would suffice for that object." If it does not mean, taken in connection with the words of the first paragraph, that "the fortifications they recommended were intended as a substitute for the superior fleet," then I am bound to say that I do not know what it does mean.

It is impossible, at any rate, to misunderstand the plain language of this further passage in the first paragraph:—"England is differently circumstanced from other European States; for were an undue proportion of her fleet to be tied to the Channel for home defence, it must result that theirs would be proportionately set free; to the great danger of our Colonies, and the injury of a commerce which becomes of more vital importance with every successive step of national progress." A supreme Navy must be large enough and numerous enough to overmatch the whole of the Navies opposed to it. Whether the other Navies are scattered or concentrated, does not affect the question. They may be scattered, as in April 1799, when the French had a great fleet at Brest watched by a British fleet; the Spaniards a small fleet at Ferrol, and a large fleet at Cadiz, watched by another British fleet; the French, other ships at Toulon which were matched by the British squadrons at Minorca and Palermo; the Dutch had a fleet in the Texel, watched by another British fleet. Or the French and Spaniards might be concentrated at Ferrol to the number of 90 sail, as they were in August 1799, and yet the British Navy, scattered as it was at first, and concentrated as it was at last, was equally supreme, as neither French, nor Spaniards, nor Dutch, nor all together dared to attack it.

The conditions of 1799 are not those contemplated by the Commissioners. If they thought of historical conditions at all, which there is no proof that they did, they must have supposed a case where, to watch Cadiz and Toulon, we must have let out the ships at Brest, or in the Texel, or both; and if we kept the Dutch and French fleets from taking action in home waters, we must have let Minorca go, if not Gibraltar; and have abandoned the siege of Malta. Whether the Commissioners were aware of it or not, they were supposing a permanently inferior Navy, one much smaller proportionately than we were able to place in 1799 against the fleets of France, Spain, and Holland arrayed against us.

It is necessary to note in passing the curious conceptions that were forced into the minds of the Commissioners by their fundamental acceptance of a fleet which was *not* equal to any probable combination. Thus, in the first paragraph, when they had once accepted a fleet which could not protect our interests abroad, and hold command of the Channel at the same time, they were forced to admit that "our military communications with distant dependencies," and therefore our foreign commerce, could be maintained intact when the enemy was in command of the Channel; or more broadly, in possession of the waters surrounding these

islands. I suppose most people can now see that the thing is impossible, but it is certain that in 1860 it did not seem impossible even to so able a naval officer as the late Sir Cooper Key.

Again, in the second paragraph, we note that the Commissioners considered that the only way to defend this country by the fleet was to keep it fully manned in time of peace. No one now considers such a thing necessary. Everyone recognises our security, provided we keep fully manned a fleet which is at least not inferior to that which probable enemies keep fully manned. It is sufficient that the ships in reserve should have officers and crews in reserve; and those two things are the basis of our present naval policy. It would not now be possible to find a body of naval and military officers to sign jointly a paragraph which would assert the necessity of keeping our whole fleet fully manned in peace-time; or who, supposing this necessity existed, would suggest that anything else "would suffice for that object."

With every respect, therefore, for Sir Edmund Du Cane, I do not think that anyone reading, without prejudice, these first and second paragraphs of the Report, can doubt that what the Commissioners aimed at obtaining was something which might be substituted for a sufficient fleet, and might save the country the expense of providing one. The Navy Estimates then were about 10 millions. Could the Report have been signed by a body of men who supposed that the country was prepared to add to that sum annually, another sum equal to the whole estimated cost of the fortifications?

It is necessary to point out that there is not a word in the Report referring to history or experience in regard to the general case. All the conditions assumed are contrary to experience. The fundamental proposition that the fortifications of ports would save the fleets within them was contradicted by the experience of 1667. The admission that stronger works at Sheerness and Chatham would have kept the "Royal Charles," the "Great James," the "Royal Oak," and the "Loyal London," out of the hands of the Dutch, does not in the least weaken the fact that the Dutch sailed up the Medway and took or burnt them.¹

Then, the supposition expressed in the first paragraph, that we might forego the retention of a fleet "in the Channel for purely defensive purposes," in order to protect colonial possessions, commerce, and interests abroad, is directly contrary to experience. We let our islands in the West Indies go, we let Minorca go, we let the North American Colonies go, rather than not retain "in the Channel, for purely defensive purposes, a fleet equal to any which could be brought against it."

I think I have shown that there could not have been in the Royal Commissioners' minds any idea of that "supremacy at sea" which we now declare we base our policy upon; and that there was no recognition of any probable condition of war before their minds. I propose now to

¹ The bombardment of Sweaborg is quoted to show that a place may be bombarded without loss to the bombarders. It was forgotten that, as far as the fortification question went, Sweaborg proved that the heaviest fortification would not prevent bombardment.

show, as already mentioned, that the Royal Commissioners proved and admitted the necessity of an increase in the Army or Navy, or both, and in the same breath proposed to divert 12 millions away from Army and Navy to spend on something which by their own showing would not avail against the sort of attack which seemed most likely.

They assumed that steam had greatly facilitated the invasion of this country; and they did not even allude to the facilities which steam might have given to the defence of it, presumably because they supposed that we should not have the material to carry it out with. But under the conditions they set forth, they said:—"The object of the enemy would be, in the first instance, to land a sufficient force on some unprotected part of the coast, to enable him to seize and hold a position under cover of which the invading army might be disembarked. With the power of concentration which steam now affords, such a force might be assembled before daylight upon any point selected for the attempt, and thrown on shore there in two or three hours. Doubtless, the defence would be somewhat aided by railroads and the telegraph; but whilst either real or feigned attempts were made on several positions, troops could not be detached from the threatened localities; and in the event of an attack succeeding in any instance the enemy would secure a position which would serve for the disembarkation of the entire hostile army."

Now, I am bound to say that given no naval defence of these islands, and given also the impossibility of investing them at all, or for a sufficiently long time to bring us to our knees—from the fall in the price of labour and the rise in the price of food—then such a plan as this seems of all others the most likely to be adopted by an enemy, and most likely to succeed. But it is clearly not compatible with any attack upon a dockyard. If the invasion is going to succeed, the dockyards will fall with the rest of the country. The withdrawal of forces, naval or military, or both, to attack a port or dockyard ever so lightly garrisoned and fortified, when the main object is the landing of forces on "unprotected parts of the coast," is a piece of stupidity not conceivable on the side of any enemy.

The Report goes on to point out—still, of course, denying all naval defence—that practically the only defence against an attack of this sort "is the numerical strength of the forces which can be brought into the field to resist the aggressor, the nature and relative state of the two armies being at the same time carefully appreciated." Then we are assured that as things stood, "Even when joined to such portion of the Militia as may be sufficiently trained to act with the Regular Army, the force capable of manœuvring in the field can never be compared, in point of numbers, to the disposable forces of any of the great Continental nations." Paragraph 7 treats of the Volunteers, and suggests that if the movement went on as it had begun, "it might go far to obliterate this numerical disparity." It was doubted, however, whether at the commencement of a struggle, Volunteers could "meet the regularly disciplined soldiers of Continental Armies on anything like equal terms." It was a great question how to utilise the Volunteers.

The conclusion thereupon, in the eighth paragraph, was "That neither our Fleet, our Standing Army, nor our Volunteer Forces, nor even the three combined, can be relied on as sufficient in themselves for the security of the kingdom against foreign invasion."

I own I have always had considerable difficulty in exactly weighing and mastering the meaning of this assertion. It is followed by the sentence:—"We therefore proceed to consider that part of our instructions which directs our attention especially to fortifications," and I have sometimes thought that the Commissioners wrote in a sort of despair; as if they were assured that the country would not make the sacrifices necessary to defend itself either by sea or land; but that, as Lord Palmerston and the authorities were intent on spending money on some sort of fortifications, it was as well to get out a plausible excuse for the expenditure. But I was much shaken in this view by the evidence of many naval officers before the Commission. And when I found that my dear and intimate friend, the late Sir Cooper Key, had, before the Commission sat, written officially pressing the defencelessness of the dockyards against bombardment, and holding that the capture of the Isle of Wight would be aimed at by the enemy as a preliminary to the destruction of Portsmouth Dockyard, it became certain to me that some at least of the Commissioners feared that attacks in that form were our nearest dangers. But then Sir Cooper Key had no doubt as to the ability of a sufficiently powerful Navy to ward off that danger, as well as all other forms of attack. His conviction was that the country would never submit to the necessary expense. When in 1885, as the First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, he joined in raising the Estimates a million and a half, he thought it was as far as we could possibly go. When he died in 1888, the Estimates only stood rather over 13 millions, about half a million more than he had left them; and I suppose he must have thought that nothing short of a miracle would have raised them to their present figure of 22 millions, and maintained them at a higher scale than the Army Estimates.

If then we suppose the military members of the Commission, considering, as they naturally would have done, that the greatest danger was that of invasion; and the naval members, thinking that the most imminent danger was the bombardment of the dockyards; we get the kind of compromise which is expressed in the paragraph quoted. It is not—we may suppose them thinking—possible to get a sufficient Navy, and that will leave the dockyards open to bombardment; it is not possible to get a sufficient Army, and that, because there is an insufficient Navy, will leave us open to successful invasion; let us at least turn to our instructions and secure ourselves, as far as may be by fortifications, against the dangers which our naval colleagues consider nearest.

But it must, all the same, have seemed exceedingly unlikely that if we were open to successful invasion as assumed, the enemy would substitute the bombardment of a dockyard for the larger operation, and it was necessary to make a special case for the fortifications. It was done in this way. In paragraph 10 it was said:—"Should a system of defence by fortification not be adopted, it is evident that if an enemy should

succeed in landing on our shores a larger number of troops than our regular manœuvring army might consist of at the time, he would be enabled to hold that army in check, while he despatched a considerable body of men to attack any of our dockyards. Such a mode of attack is by no means improbable, as the destruction of our dockyards would be one of the most effectual modes of depriving us of the power of refitting our fleet; and by thus enabling the enemy to retain that naval superiority he must have possessed in order to effect the invasion, would at the same time secure his base of operations and his power of obtaining the necessary reinforcements, besides doing much to ensure his ultimate triumph over an essentially maritime State."

Just let us examine this proposition in order to see how extraordinary it is; but note, as a preliminary, the frank admission that our superior fleet would be equally a bar to invasion and bombardment. The Report began, be it remembered, by predicating no fleet, or at least an inferior fleet, in the Channel, because of our Colonial possessions and interests. When the enemy invaded, therefore, he did it because there was no fleet to hinder him. If there was no fleet to hinder him, there was no fleet to refit. Why, therefore, should he commit the astounding mistake of detaching a "considerable body of men" from his main army to make an attack which, by the hypothesis, had no object in it?

Was it supposed that the enemy landed in sufficient force to allow it to be broken up by detachments, before it had beaten the "regular manœuvring army," or made good its footing in any way? Or did the general land with a force only supposed to be sufficient to march upon the capital, but found it all so easy that he was able to seize Portsmouth (say) and London each with separate armies? In neither case could it require "necessary reinforcements." The enemy in either case had troops enough to beat "the regular manœuvring army" and conquer the country, and the only thing which could have suggested failure, and prevented the ultimate capture of Portsmouth, would have been the weakening of the main army in the manner proposed.

But take, on the other hand, a condition which was not predicated by the Commissioners, and does not appear to have been in their minds, namely, a series of battles in the Channel resulting in our fleets being defeated and forced into their ports to "refit." Allow that the enemy's fleets after defeating us are sufficiently powerful to cover and support an invasion, and allow, further, that its success all depends on completing the conquest of the islands before our fleets which have been driven into port are sufficiently refitted to come out again and defeat the enemy's fleets. What then? There are Cork, Milford Haven, Plymouth, Portsmouth, Sheerness, and Chatham, regular naval dockyards. There are also the Mersey, the Clyde, the Tyne, and the Thames, in most of which ports are full appliances for re-fitting warships. Is it intended to be said that the capture of Portsmouth will stop the re-fitting in all the other ports? Or is it meant that the invader will be able to detach forces to capture all of them?

But note the far-fetched notion of the necessity for capturing any

dockyard, or all the dockyards, before they fall in due course into the conqueror's hands. We have established such superiority in the enemy's fleets that they have beaten and driven our own into port. They must keep their superiority as we always did in like cases. How are our fleets to pass the enemy's in order to attack the communications of the invading force? The refitted fleets must fight the enemy's fleets before they can interfere with the invading force, and they must conquer them. What magic lies in "refitting" that shou'd enable the inferior fleets to become the superior, when the whole world is open to the enemy's fleets to strengthen themselves from? We are therefore asked by the Commissioners to agree that the invading general will reasonably weaken his forces in the immediate presence of our defending army, in order to possess himself of one refitting port out of a dozen or two, in order to prevent ships from attacking his communications that are already prevented from doing so by the superiority of the enemy's fleet!—which is absurd.

The Commissioners therefore clearly show us that nothing but a superior fleet can prevent the bombardment of a dockyard. They conclusively show us that if the enemy is in a position to bombard a dockyard, he will not do it, but will invade; and they show us that if the inferiority of our fleets allow him to invade, nothing will prevent him invading but a sufficient defending army. They show us, by the example of Sweaborg, that the heaviest fortifications will not prevent the bombardment of a dockyard. They show us that it is inconceivable to think of a dockyard being attacked on the land side by an invading army. They prove that the only possible defences for this country are a superior Navy, and a great defending Army behind it in case it should be beaten; but they offer absolutely no sound reason for the expenditure of the 12 millions proposed on fortifications.

They had a remarkable witness before them—Lord Overstone the great banker—to whose evidence they directed especial attention in the Report, as if it supported their conclusions. But Lord Overstone said that there was no question relating to the ulterior operations of any invading army *after landing*; the first touch of "our soil by a foreign invader" would, he earnestly declared, bring about immediate collapse in this country; and then if we were not capable of making the sacrifices necessary to prevent that first touch of the invader's foot, we should suffer a deserved fate. Yet the Commissioners had the invaders careering all over the country, and all going well, so long as the inland fortifications of Portsmouth and Plymouth were intact!

Sir Edmund Du Cane again is indignant because those who attack the Report of 1860 warn the public of the danger of locking up troops; yet we have the Commissioners of 1860 telling us that we could not—apart altogether from the enormous garrisons which would become necessary to defend the new works—put in the field a sufficient force to defend ourselves against an invading army, and then claiming to withdraw from the already too small Army, great forces to put away behind walls that might never have an enemy in sight of them!

Sir Edmund Du Cane, as it happens, has to show that in 1860, in the face of dangers of a war with France, it was more politic to spend 12 millions on fortifications than on the Army and Navy. The whole attack on the Report is that it showed it was not more politic, and yet recommended it. The attack is made and continued because what has happened may happen again if it is not guarded against. Public opinion may again be turned from maintaining a superior Navy, with an efficient and powerful Army behind it, to spend its money on something which is neither, and does not add to the power of the nation.

But Sir Edmund has scarcely seen what he had to do. He has elaborately proved, in the bulk of his article, that all through the growing years up to 1860, there was necessity for strengthening the naval and military forces, but he does not attempt to show that the fortifications really strengthened them. Indeed, were we to indulge in the miraculous forecastings of bolts from the blue, it would be easy to show that the land defences of Portsmouth and Plymouth ought to-morrow to be razed to the ground, as positive weaknesses. For suppose a bolt from the blue in this form:—The French secretly embark 15,000 or 20,000 men simultaneously in steamers capable of entering Portsmouth Harbour at low water. They all rendezvous off the Isle of Wight at 3 o'clock some fine morning, and steam straight into Portsmouth Harbour as day breaks. They could not meet with any resistance. They would all be inside the harbour and safe from gun-fire before any one could be sufficiently assured that they were hostile, to fire on them; and then there would be practically no guns manned. The enemy would immediately land; take the garrison by surprise, march into the batteries by their more or less open rear, and in two or three hours be ready to welcome the scores of thousands of men; of tons of stores and provisions, which are always ready when bolts from the blue are to be fired. Provided with a base made more secure, by the chain of inland forts, than the lines of Torres Vedras, our enemy would recruit himself and mature his plans, and then proceed to the orthodox conquest of the realm.

Such a picture is no more a piece of tomfoolery than any of the others to which we are accustomed; but it is made plausible by one thing only, namely, the inland defences of Portsmouth.

Apparently Sir Edmund Du Cane offers one plea, and one plea only, on behalf of the real proposition that it was more politic to spend the 12 millions on the works than on the Army and Navy. He says:—“The ‘Warrior,’ the new ironclad with $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches of armour, was the strongest ironclad afloat, and no gun then existing could pierce its sides. When I have seen lamentations by those who hold that the money spent on fortifications would have been better applied in increasing the Navy, I cannot help asking whether they have considered what value the expenditure would now have if it had been laid out in additional ‘Warriors.’”

This is rather a wonderful piece of argument; for those who disbelieve in the value of the fortifications have only to answer that if the “Warrior” is now considered useless, so are the fortifications. If the

"Warrior" is not absolutely useless, £12,000,000 worth of "Warriors" would even now be of more value than £12,000,000 worth of fortifications. I do not assert that it is reasonable to say either of these things. Only it is the answer an entire disbeliever in the works is entitled to make.

But the argument proposed is futile. The "Glatton," "Hotspur," "Gorgon," "Hecate," "Hydra," and "Cyclops," armour-plated coast-defence ships, are all as efficient as ever they were. But it is—perhaps universally—allowed in the Navy, that these were built under profound misapprehensions of the strategic conditions. They are admittedly useless, not because that class of ship has become obsolete, but because it always was obsolete and can never be called into action. The coast-defence ships can be equally defended on the ground taken up by Sir Edmund on behalf of the fortifications of 1860.

Interest at three per cent. on the 12 millions asked for by the Royal Commission would have supported a force of 7,000 men from that day to this and ever onwards. Is it possible to maintain that a standing force of 7,000 troops would now be pointed to as less valuable than the works and guns which are soulless and dumb without them?

But the whole case of the Commissioners was want of Army and Navy. On their showing, and now on Sir Edmund Du Cane's confirmation, had war come while we were building the forts and neglecting the Army and Navy, we might now be only a third-class Power.