Complete in 4 (1-4).

16.
from the Author

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POLITICAL BACK-GAMES.

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BY

LORD ORMATHWAITE.

LONDON:
HATCHARDS, PICCADILLY.
1871.

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(Sir John ~~Benn~~)
Walsh

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POLITICAL BACK-GAMES.

Amateurs of the game of chess understand the meaning of the term 'back-game.' In playing that noble game a student is often very anxious to ascertain at what point and by what false move he lost it. He is conscious that he has made a blunder somewhere, and he wishes to recall the point from which his mistake originated. In chess this is very easy; if the position of the pieces at any particular point of the game is retained he can go back to that point and detect the exact place of departure from which the failure of his game may be dated. Once committed to a false move it may be difficult or impossible to repair it; but there is very great advantage, at any rate, for any future opportunity that he should become fully aware of the error he has fallen into. From these back-games a new game may be commenced, and he who has been defeated, owing to an error, may come out the winner in the subsequent contest.

Who lost
the game?

On that
board.

It is to be lamented that in politics these back-games are impossible, and players in that arena cannot replace their pieces in a former position. They cannot recall their mistakes; their errors are irretrievable. Nevertheless there may be an advantage in retracing and recognising them.

There is a certain satisfaction, however melancholy, in knowing the cause of our own failures, and the lessons of experience may not be always quite unprofitable in the future. It has always appeared to me, therefore, a very useful and beneficial exercise thus to go back and trace by the lights and experience of their results the consequences — often the evil consequences — of past measures. Under this light arguments which were not listened to, warnings which were disregarded, and results which had been predicted at the time, but neglected in the heat of party struggles, will assume their proper proportions, and afterwards vindicate their truth. Perhaps it is for this reason, perhaps it is that statesmen and political leaders are unwilling to subject their measures to this double test — to try them not only by the arguments of the present, but by the experience which the future brings, that, as a general rule, they discourage by all means in their power such references to the past. The struggle is over, the battle is won, the measure is

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carried, and their great effort is to welcome it, not only as a party triumph, but as a great substantial benefit to the country.

They do not wish to have their shortcomings pointed out after all struggle is over, and on the other side the defeated party is not very anxious to re-open the question. They know that it would be extremely difficult to induce Parliament or public opinion to reverse a decision already pronounced. They know that the mere fact that the measure has been carried is a proof that it is popular with the majority, and they are more inclined to leave a question upon which they have been defeated, and to seek for some new battlefield than to seek additional unpopularity by obstinately adhering to the opinions which the popular voice has condemned. These are very natural motives on both sides, particularly at a time when the voice of a popular assembly once pronounced and endorsed by public opinion, acquires an almost irresistible authority. Yet it is perfectly possible that the views and arguments of the majority may have been wholly unsound, and that their fallacy may be demonstrated by their consequences.

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Many instances may be adduced in confirmation of this statement—they crowd in upon us. I should like to select one which admits of no question. We will take the controversy respecting our military and naval establishments which has raged almost ever since the passing of the first Reform Bill in 1832. The great wars waged at the close of the last and the beginning of the present century, first against the Jacobins and the French Republic, the next against the overwhelming military power of the first Napoleon, had ended, after many struggles and fluctuations, in the triumph of that conservative cause of which England had been the foremost champion.

Whatever future historian writes our history, we may confidently predict that no period of our annals will shine forth with greater lustre than the time from the Battle of Waterloo, in 1815, to the fall of the Duke of Wellington's administration, in 1830. Great Britain had not only been the victor in that mighty struggle, but had sustained the cause with admirable consistency and unflinching courage throughout. No reverse had ever darkened her fame; every other great power in Europe had seen defeat and humiliation carried to the very gates of her capital; England alone, if sometimes checked and unable for the moment to resist the victorious march of the conqueror, if she were driven to retreat within her own shores, yet never lowered her crest; and when the fortune of war changed she was the first in her unimpaired might to come forward, and by her arms, by her naval supremacy, and by her vast financial resources, to turn the tide of fortune and to effect the emancipation of Europe. We must also remember that the close of the war left the naval supremacy of England positively overwhelming. It is not merely that our fleets were the most powerful in the world, but that they were the only ones. No other maritime power had really any existence. Our ships commanded all the oceans of the world in uncontested supremacy. Such was the position of England at the termination of those great wars, but she had a number of internal foes, or, at any rate, detractors, who regarded with a secret jealousy and disapprobation all these brilliant results. From the very first outbreak of the French Revolution and the advent of power to Pitt, all party feelings, so strong among the Whigs, had never ceased to assail, sometimes directly and sometimes covertly, the Ministry and the measures of that great epoch.

There was also an undercurrent of Radicalism and Democracy which, in those days, was not so apparent as it has since become, but which still exercised an influence among many sections of society. There were, then, these two parties influenced by different motives but concurring in hostility towards both the Ministry, the Conservative party personally, and also to the policy which they had rendered triumphant.

The death of George IV., the advent to the throne of a monarch well intentioned indeed, but quite inexperienced in public affairs ; the excitement occasioned by the overthrow of the elder Bourbons in July 1830, and the resentment of the ultra-Tories against the Duke of Wellington's administration, and the measure of Catholic Emancipation ; all these concurrent causes produced the fall of that great Tory power which for more than forty years ruled the fortunes of this country, and had raised it to so high an elevation. Now came into operation an entirely different set of principles which have ever since been gradually working their way to the summit. Of these one of the most leading was the cry of retrenchment and economy in our military and naval establishments. Both the great parties of Whigs and Radicals entertained very hostile feelings against these services, and against the achievements which they had performed. The Whigs grudged their adversaries—the Tories—all the lustre attendant upon them; the Radicals considered the triumphs of our arms as a defeat of her own particular democratic cause and principles. Any patriotic sentiments which they might feel at the glory of England were choked in the feelings of mortification which the discomfiture of their favourite

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principles to doctrines gave them. When, therefore, the first Reform Bill lifted them into power, all their efforts were directed to pare down within the narrowest limits all military and naval services, and to throw an unpopularity upon them.

The former administrations were accused of lavish expenditure and profuse extravagance, constantly and unnecessarily draining the pockets of the people. This favourite phrase, 'the pockets of the people,' which was first of all introduced by Mr. Joseph Hume, has since become stereotyped. Scarcely a debate on financial matters has occurred during the last half century, or hustings speech addressed to the population of a borough, without this phrase being constantly repeated. There was a homeliness in the expression which recommended itself to the ears and comprehension of the middle and working classes, and it was a text upon which popular orators constantly preached that the wars, and their consequent expenses, had been the unnecessary causes of the burdens of the people.

When the Whig administration came into power in 1830, three great watchwords were raised as indicating their policy and principles—retrenchment, reform, and non-intervention in foreign affairs. These watchwords have continued to be sounded from time to time as the rallying cry of that heterogeneous combination which is called the Liberal party. They by no means lost their influence in the country; but few people take the trouble of reckoning how constantly they have been departed from during the forty years which have succeeded the first Reform Bill. At the very outset of Lord Grey's administration it was discovered that the Duke of Wellington's estimates for naval and military services were framed on the most economical system consistent with efficiency; and it is a singular fact, often lost sight of, that the annual expenditure for the last year of his administration was positively less than it has ever been since. Another cry to the same effect was shortly afterwards raised by Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright and the other members of the peace party; and every one familiar with the history of Parliament during the last twenty years knows the powerful influence which these two public men exercised, and the remarkable ability with which they advocated the doctrines they enforced. It would be a curious study now to read some of the eloquent, ingenious, and plausible speeches by which they sought to convince the nation that mankind had outlived the practice of war, and that all our armaments were precautions against an imaginary and unreal danger. They first began to sound this note when the great struggle terminating in the battle of Waterloo had already given twenty-five years of uninterrupted peace to the countries of Europe; and they persuaded themselves, or at least sought to persuade others, that this state of tranquillity was destined to remain for ever uninterrupted. It is difficult to believe that men gifted with such logical powers and minds, in many respects so acute, should ever have adopted a creed so manifestly contradicted by the universal experiences of mankind. Many temporary causes combined to prolong this state of tranquillity, which had certainly exceeded any former duration of peace in Europe. In the first place, the great and violent struggles consequent upon the wars of the French Revolution in the first Napoleonic Empire had exhausted all the nations in Europe, both conquerors and conquered, and a period of lassitude had naturally succeeded to such unparalleled efforts. None had any immediate object in renewing the strife. France, although driven back within her ancient limits, was still great, powerful, and glorious, and contained within herself all the elements for peaceful progress. The three great monarchical powers of the centre and east of Europe — Russia, Austria, and Prussia — were at that time bound together in the strictest friendship, which had been cemented by their common struggle to free themselves from the power of Napoleon. They feared a renewal of any such struggles, and they dreaded also the revolutionary element in Europe, which they were aware was always smouldering under the surface, far more than they hoped for any gain from any possible war. They entered into treaty obligations, violently stigmatised at the time by the Liberal party as a compact against the liberties of mankind, which was known as the Holy Alliance. The chief articles of this famous treaty consisted in engagements respectively adopted by the three powers to abandon all attempts at territorial acquisition, either from each other or from their neighbours. They were sensible that if any one of these three powers gave the rein to its personal ambition, the treaty would be immediately annulled by the jealousy of its colleagues. Territorial aggrandisement has been and always will be one great cause of national wars, and as long as this compact between these three great powers endured in principle, danger to the public tranquillity was removed. The other objects of this treaty were so unpopular, comprising engagements to suppress revolutions or democratic movements in all quarters, that the great obligation which the lovers of peace owe to this obnoxious treaty and to those who framed it has never been sufficiently acknowledged. Yet recent events may show us how its provisions conduced to the maintenance of peace. Had the principles of the Holy Alliance continued to be enforced as they existed in 1815 and 1816, and as they governed the policy of these three great powers for more than twenty years afterwards, none of the causes of quarrel which have recently overspread Europe could have had any existence. Russia would not have attacked Turkey, Prussia would not have assailed Denmark, nor would the contest between the two great Germanic powers which led to the battle of Sadowa have ever happened. If Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright could have extended their views a little beyond the narrow circle of their own favourite dogmas, they might have seen other signs but their dreams of universal and perpetual peace resting upon the most baseless foundation.

The revolutionary spirit, although kept under by the power of Governments, was always fermenting under the surface; and wild ideas of human perfectibility and the spirit of democracy which the first French Revolution let loose upon mankind, had never ceased to agitate Europe. Every established Government was therefore constantly obliged to be on its guard against the outbreak of these social convulsions, and in the presence of an unknown enemy, against whom they might at any moment have to contend, the ordinary motives of ambition and aggrandisement which actuate states, were in a great measure suspended. All Governments united in controlling for their common interest a formidable domestic enemy, and they were proportionably unwilling by international disputes to give an opening to this common foe.

These causes combined may account for the long period of peace which followed the close of the great war in 1815. But these causes were in their nature temporary, and although they might for a period arrest, they could not permanently destroy, those martial influences and human instincts which, in all ages and under every formation of society, have led nations to war with each other. The politicians of the Peace Society and the Bright-and-Cobden School would not admit these consequences. Filled with fanciful theories of the progress of mankind, and what they termed the advance of civilisation, they argued that the world had become too wise in the nineteenth century ever to embark on that course of international war to which they traced all the misfortunes and calamities of the human race. They quite refused to recognise that the spirit which leads to wars is inherent in human nature. They rejected all idea that it was possible to recur to such practices, or to relapse into errors which they thought the wisdom of these later times sufficiently demonstrated. If we turn back to the Parliamentary debates of that period we shall see how obstinately these politicians clung

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to these ideas, and how resolutely they shut their ears to every indication which might serve to suggest their fallacy; and yet such signs were not wanting. They were always speaking of the progress of mankind and the advance of science and knowledge, and yet they were blind to the fact that no one science had advanced so steadily or had made such enormous progress as the science of war, whether naval or military. Every year added to the new inventions which augmented the destructive powers of modern military science. Every step rendered it certain that any future war would be waged on a gigantic scale, and with machinery and appliances unknown to previous generations. Ever since the first French Revolution the conscription or some similar system of compulsory recruitment had become general in Europe, great standing armies everywhere existed; populations trained to arms might be considered more as soldiers upon furlough than as civil citizens. Every year preparation was made for war, every nation was on its guard against its neighbour; and the history of Europe of later years, particularly since the second French Revolution of 1830 and the third of 1848, was rather an armed truce than a state of tranquillity.

England alone, perhaps, relying upon her naval supremacy and on the strength of her insular position, might venture to disregard those signs and to rest in comparative security; yet England must feel convinced that if wars on a large scale break out in Continental Europe, the consequences eventually must extend to her own shores. It is very curious to watch, however, the extraordinary obstinacy with which these doctrines of the Peace party were engrafted on the minds of a large portion of the population; no warning could awaken them; they could never be convinced of the unreal nature of their chimerical views, and they could only be aroused by the advent of a real war, which, to use Mr. Gladstone's own expression, appeared to them when it did arrive to be perfectly bewildering.

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It is scarcely possible that their dreams should not now have been rudely and entirely dispelled. The contest with Russia in the Crimea when the Emperor Nicholas first threw off all the maxims which had guided the Holy Alliance, at once removed one principal security for the continuance of European tranquillity. Since then the Italian wars of the French second Empire; the ambitious encroachments on every side of Prussia; the disturbed state of Spain, Turkey, and Greece; and, above all, the great collision between France and Germany, followed by the outbreak of revolutionary fury in Paris, equalling in violence all the atrocities of the first French Revolution,

In fact I know that the people in Paris during the Commune at Easter 1871 were ignorant to a degree that makes any political theory about them absurd. They knew as little of would have convinced, we should imagine, even Mr. Cobden and Mr. Bright themselves, on what mere delusions they had been speaking and acting for nearly forty years. At any rate, no man of common sense can fail of coming to the conclusion that all these theories have been finally disproved; no statesman or political philosopher can fail to recognise that war is certain to continue to agitate mankind, and even that modern society has generated more new causes of strife, and modern science has placed new weapons in the hands of Governments and generals wherewith to prosecute them. Those statesmen who cling to those exploded errors of universal peace will be the ruin of the states they administer if a revolution of public opinion does not destroy their power.

It is much to be feared that the ideas which they have so sedulously inculcated during so many years, and which are associated with all the principles of that Liberal party which, since the Reform Bill of 1832, has principally guided public opinion, will retain their hold of the majority until it be too late to guard against the consequences of those errors.

Nations, like individuals, seldom profit by the experience of others, and not always by their own. At the present time we see that our Government, instead of frankly acknowledging

facts political and historical and of things happening within ten miles of their walls as the stupidest Chew Bacon in old England. They were not the people of whom theorists dream. They were savaged.

its mistakes, and seeking, while it is yet time, to add to the military and naval strength of the country, is only intent upon diverting the public mind from the real issues, throwing out a tub to the whale, and leading them away from the substantial question which ought to engage their whole attention. Say that the purchase-system may have its defects, say that it is one which is liable to some objections! Can any one pretend that its abolition would materially augment the military strength of the country? or that it is anything more than a mere popular cry raised to divert public attention from the real question and from that reversal of their former policy which the lessons of the last few months imperatively demand?

The defects of our military system, whatever they may be, are not to be sought in any shortcomings of our regimental organization. No army in Europe is better disciplined, no soldiers under any service are more devoted to their officers, or more ready to follow wherever they lead. Our officers have never been deficient either in skill, or in courage, or in any of those qualities required for the service. Trace our history during the last hundred years, and show us where any breakdown has ever occurred in consequence of misconduct, or of the want of proper, efficient discipline in the regiments. Suppose, for

the sake of argument, that we may admit that the purchase system may have certain defects, these defects are certainly not of the nature to impair the efficiency of the army as a whole, and the abolition of the purchase system cannot supply the deficiencies which exist elsewhere. Our military establishments have been pared down to a point far below the wants of the service. If there be one truth more clearly demonstrated than another by the recent campaigns, it is that artillery has very much superseded every other service. The number of guns, and the vast extended range which modern improvements have given to them, have rendered the artillery almost the arbiters of the fate of modern battles. Not only is the range very much augmented, but the general substitution of shells for round shot has made them infinitely more destructive weapons of offence than they ever were in previous years. It must also be remarked that artillery soldiers require a far more finished and long-continued drill to attain proper proficiency than any other arms. An infantry soldier may be soldiers
made very efficient in from six to twelve months, a cavalry soldier may be formed in from eighteen months to two years, but it requires from three to four years to make a really good artilleryman. At the present moment we have been reducing our artillery to the very lowest ebb. We were

discharging artillerymen (trained and good artillerymen) even after the breaking out of the war between France and Prussia last year. Our artillery guns, scanty as they are, are so deficient in horses that they cannot be worked in the field. The stores and munitions of our artillery service are scanty in our arsenals, and yet we are wasting time, night after night, in the attempts to abolish the purchase system, which has never broken down. In fact, we neglect entirely all the real wants of the service, and the absolute necessity of augmenting, and largely augmenting, the artillery service. Why is this? Because it would be an implied censure to the Government to retrace their steps, as ever since their advent to power they have been almost abolishing the artillery service of the country. They are now imperatively called upon largely and speedily to increase it; instead of doing so, they divert public attention by unmeaning disputes about a branch of the service which, even if it were to be an eventual benefit, would be provocative of no immediate change or improvement. But to this question of the abolition of purchase they attach the magical words, 'Army Reform,' which has been such a watchword for so many years, and which it is almost sufficient to pronounce loudly in order to induce the masses to follow wherever it is pronounced.

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Our Commissariat also, which is an essential arm of modern warfare, is in a woeful state of disorganisation and neglect. All the munitions of war are insufficient. Everything has been neglected for economy, and a senseless cry against purchase has to be substituted for real and efficient additions to the service, which has been allowed almost to perish for want of support. These are the real wants to be supplied, and which would not be supplied, because officers may be appointed under a new system, which may possibly equal, and which cannot very much exceed, the efficiency of the old, which always produced the best regimental officers in any service in Europe.

The Transport Service, which forms so material a part of the organisation of all Continental armies, may be said to have no existence in our own. Whenever it is necessary to move regiments, the means for the conveyance of their baggage and war material has to be found from external and chance sources. I affirm generally that the British Army is deficient in all the means and appliances necessary for its acting in time of war. It is like an unfinished house, everything has to be supplied in a moment of emergency.

A review of the position of our present national defences would be very incomplete if we did not embrace in it the present state of our

That is the question are our officers professionally able? are they as well instructed as the Prussians? I don't think that they are. The mass of those that I know seem to me to dislike their profession as much as they can, & to know as little as is consistent with being officers at all.

Navy. The Navy of England always has been her principal arm, whether of defence or of offence: upon it we must always rely mainly for our security from foreign invasion, while the command of the ocean always renders us formidable adversaries to any Continental power. Whatever State we may enter into alliance with, we are enabled to protect their communications, furnish them with supplies, and to afford a secure base for military operations. We can cripple their commerce, interrupt their trade, and in a thousand ways embarrass and annoy them.

The history of this and the last century furnishes many examples of the great power wielded in combined military and naval operations. The struggle in Spain carried on for four successive years by the Duke of Wellington against the whole force of Napoleon was principally sustained by our possession of the seaboard and the means it afforded of constantly provisioning and reinforcing our troops. In the late civil war between the Northern and Southern States of America the command of the coast, the power of blockade, and the navigation of the great rivers, which are the arteries of that continent, probably decided the issue of that important struggle.

In case of a serious war with any powerful adversary our connexions with the whole of our colonial empire will entirely depend upon our retaining the command of the sea.

India would almost inevitably be wrested from us if our ocean communication with it were cut off, while at home neither Ireland nor our own soil would be safe against an enterprising foe.

It is not too much to say, that the very existence of England depends on her possession of the sovereignty of the seas. Let us turn back to the state of our navy at the close of the great war at the beginning of this century. We were at that time less populous, less wealthy than we are at present; the population of the British Isles has increased by about one-third; its wealth has been augmented in a still larger proportion. Taxation has been reduced enormously, for it must be borne in mind that the relative proportion of these burthens is not to be measured by the exact amount raised within the year, but by the taxes imposed to obtain them, and in the great and constantly augmenting riches of the country, and the increase in the consumption of all articles, a larger amount is raised now, while the taxes imposed are fewer and lighter. Every article which enters into the general consumption of the population is much cheaper than it was half a century ago.

If we look at our commercial marine we find that the number of her sailors is larger than at

That counts for the economists
not — for those who spend money on unproductive work like fighting & preparing for fight
That counts for the peace party

the close of the late war. We are led therefore to the conclusion, that what we may term the raw material of our naval supremacy is more abundant now than it was in 1814 and 1815. Should it be necessary to put forth our strength, is there less patriotism, less courage, less public spirit in the nation than there was at that glorious epoch? I hope not; but at the same time it may be apprehended that the constant inculcation of these peace doctrines has not been without its effect, and at this period the English nation is less inclined to make sacrifices for the maintenance of her great position among the nations of the world than at any former time.

We have been so accustomed to this position, we have been so long habituated to listen to high-sounding phrases about the majesty of the British Nation, the extent of her dominion on which the sun never sets, and similar vain-glorious sentiments, that we are tempted to lose sight both of the means by which we achieved our ascendancy, and of the continued efforts by which it would be necessary to preserve it. What was our naval condition at the close of the late war? The long series of naval victories, from Camperdown to Trafalgar, had balanced all the military triumphs of the first Napoleon. As he possessed almost uncontrolled supremacy over the whole Continent of Europe, so we held the undisputed dominion of all the oceans of the world. By what force was this maintained? In 1814 we had 145,000 seamen and marines afloat, we had above 300 vessels of war, of which more than 100 were ships of the line. We had powerful fleets in the Channel, in the Mediterranean, in the East and West Indies, and in the China Seas, while our frigates and smaller vessels scoured every sea, and watched every coast. I do not say that in time of peace it will be necessary to continue such gigantic armaments, but I do assert that if England is prepared to maintain her great position, she must contemplate the possibility of a recurrence of war, and calculate the means by which she might promptly resume the same commanding preponderance by sea which she then exercised.

Those who are familiar with the eloquent speeches of Mr. Canning will recollect that noble oration which he made at Plymouth on the question of the menacing position of the Spanish and Portuguese questions. Looking down on one of the great line-of-battle ships lying up in order in Hamoaze, he pointed it out to his hearers as a symbol of the majesty of England and its naval power in a state of repose, and eloquently contrasted it with the life with which it would be inspired at the first breath of war. Such was, indeed, the case at that period. All the constituents of our great naval superiority were indeed in a state of quiescence, but still existed. The ships were there, and the gallant sailors, of whom successive generations had braved for a thousand years the battle and the breeze, still manned our commercial marine. We must always remember that there is this great difference between an army and a navy soldier. An army soldier cannot be made in a day. They must be disciplined, drilled, trained, exercised; and it requires years to create an army; but merchant seamen are already disciplined and trained to a very great extent. A large ship cannot be worked without discipline, without officers used to command, and men accustomed to obey. Practical seamanship is quite as necessary on board an East Indiaman as on board a line-of-battle ship. Indeed the merchant-seamen, probably accustomed from their boyhood to the sea, and having often to do the same work with much fewer hands, are often the better practical seamen of the two. Men thus trained are almost men-of-war's men at once, it only requires to train them to the use of the guns to render them as efficient as those who may have served for years in a man-of-war.

We perceived that at the last Russian war we were not long in equipping fleets which asserted our old ascendancy at once on the Mediterranean and the Baltic. The great naval review at Spithead at the close of that war exhibited once again the naval pre-eminence of England. Since that time a vast change has taken place in the whole theory and practice of naval warfare. Those wooden vessels, which for five hundred years had been the bulwarks of England, have become suddenly obsolete; it was not merely that the greater power of resistance to shot gave an undisputed superiority to the ironclads, but the improvement in shells, and their substitution for round shot, gave the power of at once setting those combustible structures on fire. The wooden ship could no longer make much impression upon the ironclad, while the ironclad could speedily ignite and consume the wooden ship. Practically, within the last ten years wooden-built ships have been superseded for purposes of warfare. Now the first consequence of this great change necessarily was that all those noble ships lying in our harbours, and apostrophised by the eloquence of Canning, became utterly useless. We had to choose between two alternatives, either to resign our naval superiority or to replace the wooden ships by a corresponding number of those more modern engines of war. If we had fewer ironclads than we possessed previously wooden ships, or if our proportionate superiority in these vessels fell short of that which we had previously enjoyed under the old system, we forfeited a corresponding portion of our national strength. The question was mainly one of money. England possessed all the materials for the construction of an ironclad fleet in greater abundance than any other power in the world. We had iron, coal, manufactories of every sort of machinery; everything which could enable us to build these ships more rapidly, and perhaps more cheaply, than any other nation. In confirmation of this, we have only to observe the Turks, Russians, and Germans, all coming to our private dockyards to construct their vessels of war. Certainly it would require a very large sum to replace the antiquated wooden ships, but such a sum was in no way beyond the great resources of England. The money which was spent on that last Russian war would have amply sufficed. The money which we have expended in railways during the last twenty years far exceeds the amount which would have been required, but the economical spirit interfered here; the persuasion with which our statesmen had so industriously inoculated the country, that wars could never reach our shores, and that these precautions were wholly unnecessary and superfluous, had its powerful effect. We have no doubt slowly, gradually, by driblets, created an ironclad navy sufficient at any rate for times of peace, and which perhaps may be equal to contending with any one maritime power, but such a provision is far from satisfying the demands and exigencies of a naval war should we be embarked on it. We ought to possess the power of placing ironclad fleets of overwhelming force wherever we formerly were enabled to despatch our wooden defenders. Less than that is an abandonment of our national strength; less than that is an invitation to enemies to trample upon us. How have we met these demands in the course of the very last year? Before this tremendous European war broke out we were stripping our dockyards of all their trained artisans,—we were dismissing men from Deptford and Woolwich who speedily betook themselves to the other side of the Atlantic,—we paid off those whom we cannot regain, and instead of industriously applying our time to increase our ironclad navy, and to place ourselves in the same position that we had occupied previous to this great innovation in naval warfare, we deprived ourselves of the means even of continuing the lengthened preparations and the creeping substitution of the ironclads for the wooden ships which had lagged quietly through some preceding years.

We tried a few experiments,—very injudicious ones,—the last ending in the melancholy loss of the *Captain;* but economy and not efficiency was the guiding principle of all our naval policy.

We never seem for a moment to awaken to the great truth that the change from wooden vessels to ironclads demanded on our part a great national effort. We never awoke to the fact that England had lost by that change her great weapon, and that we must replace it by any means and at any sacrifice as speedily as possible. I do not underrate the necessity of strengthening our military establishments, or of providing a much larger army for the defence of our shores, or for the maintenance of our Colonial and Indian possessions. I do not in the least believe that the smallest advance will be made in this direction in the attainment of this object by the abolition of the purchase system, because I am sure that 'the thin red line' of the British soldiers will never be rendered stronger by any such change. Marshal Canrobert said in the Crimea that the English army had but one fault,—there were not enough of them, and I believe in the accuracy and truth of that opinion. There is one characteristic of our present army organisation to which I believe we owe much of its excellence. It is, that regiments are officered and commanded by gentlemen. This is a feature of the German armies which has not often been adverted to, but it is, nevertheless, the fact that those armies whose superiority to the French has been evinced in the late struggles are officered almost entirely by men of noble birth. Their men follow them and yield a far readier obedience to them from this circumstance. Those who have had the opportunity of witnessing the practical working of a different system in France ascribe much of the undisciplined spirit among the men to their disposition to throw off the authority of their officers, particularly on the slightest reverse, and to that spirit of equality which pervades all French society and which has rendered it necessary for every French officer to rise from the ranks.

Whatever may be the necessity for any augmentation of our military strength, I entertain the fullest conviction that the more important requirement for the maintenance of the British Empire is the full replacement of our naval strength by supplying the loss of our wooden ships, and enabling us whenever the time comes to command the seas with an equal superiority to that which we enjoyed under the former system.

28 *Berkeley Square*,
June 13*th*, 1871.

But those who know affirm that ours is now the finest fleet that we ever had, and by far the finest in the world. It seems to me that we have won the game, & that it is useless to play the back game

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and risk losing.

We are rich; and at peace we are ready to fight; we dont want to fight; & we dont want to be taxed: but we are willing to spend money if needed.— I saw Paris & came back to London, and felt that war is a curse & peace a blessing. I know that France prepared to fight, & that Prussia made ready to resist. France attacked & the suburbs of Paris became a howling desert within the year, while the devil broke loose in the town. If we are so far ready to resist, as to ward off attacks, that seems to me enough. I dont want to play this back game till I see that I am checkmated and that I cannot see yet.