

EDUCATIONAL SERIES

TO WHAT EXTENT SHOULD THE UNITED STATES NAVY BE INCREASED?

Russell E. Townsend, of Lebanon, Ill., won the Silas Lillard Bryan prize given annually to the students of McKendree College, Lebanon, Ill., by W. J. Bryan in memory of his father, who graduated at McKendree in 1849. The subject of Mr. Townsend's essay was "To What Extent Should the United States Navy be Increased?" The essay follows:

Introduction

A larger fleet is not necessary, for: (a) War is improbable on the Pacific; (b) War is improbable on the Atlantic; (c) Granted the possibility of war what the United States wants is not a larger fleet but better coast defense; (d) Diplomatic contentions do not require it.

Proof

A larger fleet is not necessary, for
1. War is improbable on the Pacific, for (a) We have no formidable foe in the Orient, for (1) Japan, the only naval power in the Orient is very friendly; (2) Geographical isolation prevents conflict.

2. War is improbable on the Atlantic, for (a) The United States is stronger than either France or Germany; (b) The British fleet could not act as a unit, for (1) Her colonial policy will not permit it, (2) Her geographical situation is not suitable; (c) The bond uniting the English speaking nations declares it so, for (1) Nearly one hundred years of continued peace warrants peace, (2) Race, religion, and political institutions are similar.

3. Granted the possibility of war, what the United States wants is not a larger fleet but better coast defense, for (a) Proper coast defense would doubly safeguard the Pacific, for (1) It would protect against a hostile fleet, (2) In case of war it would give strategic advantage to the fleet; (b) Proper coast defense would doubly safeguard the Atlantic, for (1) It would securely protect life and property along the coast, (2) It would release coast defense vessels for service with the fleet; (c) The Panama canal will increase naval efficiency, for (1) It will strengthen our already unique geographical situation, (2) It will shorten the sea passage from ocean to ocean.

4. Diplomatic contentions do not require it, for (a) It is moral weight that wins diplomatic contests, for (1) The Monroe doctrine was peaceably established, (2) The open door was gained through confidence, (3) Cleveland fearlessly settled the Venezuela boundary, (4) Lincoln caused the withdrawal of Maximilian.

Conclusion

Therefore, through the foregoing arguments the following conclusion is reached, that (1) There should be no material increase in the number of units of our present navy, for (a) War is improbable on the Pacific; (b) War is improbable on the Atlantic; (c) Granted the possibility of war what the United States wants is not a larger fleet but better coast defense; (d) Diplomatic contentions do not require it.

To what extent should the United States navy be increased?

However deplorable and unnatural the viciousness of one nation's arming itself against another may be there remains an undeniable fact that they support and maintain navies which can have but one legitimate purpose for an existence—that of protection. Being a sea power the strength of our navy depends altogether upon the probability and possibility of war. If from the nature of our country—its geographical situation, its coast line, its commerce, its international policies—there is a strong probability of war in either the Pacific or Atlantic waters, and it can be shown that other means of defense together with our present fleet are inefficient in case of possible war, then the present number of units of our navy are inadequate and our policy should be that of materially increasing the units. But if war can be shown to be improbable in either ocean, and it can be shown that we can be made sufficiently strong by other means, together with our present number of units, in case of possible war, then a policy of increase becomes untenable and our policy should be a mere process of replacing the old and inefficient vessels, thus maintaining our present strength. Therefore, to

prove the latter theory correct and establish the fact that no larger fleet is necessary it should be proven, first that war is improbable on the Pacific, second that war is improbable on the Atlantic, third that in case of possible war a properly constructed coast defense together with the present fleet would prove adequate for lawful purposes, fourth that diplomatic contentions do not necessitate a large fleet.

The fact that war on the Pacific is considered improbable by the United States government is shown by the significant fact that a fleet has never been held there permanently. The Orient has but one naval power, that of Japan. We may trust the traditional friendship of that country, and we can also trust that she is in no condition economically to wage war against a great power. Should war occur with that country—and we have no grounds for a suspicion—her fleet would be of no practical benefit. Japan has no coaling station nearer to our Pacific coast than her own ports. When in a conflict with this country the ports of neutral countries are closed against her. It is unreasonable to think that Japan's fleet could steam to our western coast without replenishing her coal supply. And were it even possible for her fleet to reach our shores it could not possibly return. Any conservative mind must realize that a war between the United States and Japan must of necessity take place in the waters around the Philippine Islands. Hence our fleet must be sent to that quarter of the globe. This can be done before hostilities reach the point of rupture, for every conflict the world has ever known has been anticipated and prophesied for a surety months before hostilities began. To claim that we have a probable foe in the Orient and are in imminent danger of an attack from that foe far surpasses the wildest dreams of naval enthusiasts.

Having determined that war is improbable on the Atlantic an examination of the relative sea strength of the powers logically follows before a discussion of the improbability of war on the Atlantic. According to the annual report of Secretary Metcalf to the president made on November 30, 1908, England ranks first in the amount of tonnage, number of first-class battleships, armed cruisers, cruisers above six thousand tons displacement, and cruisers of from one thousand to six thousand tons displacement. The total number of these now in commission in the British navy being one hundred and seventy-three. England appears to have no coast defense vessels. The United States ranks second, France third, Germany fourth, Japan fifth, Russia sixth, Italy seventh, Austria eighth. From the secretary's report these significant facts are gathered. England has nearly one million more tons displacement than the United States who ranks next to her. Or to make it more explicit her tonnage is nearly as large as the combined tonnage of the United States, France and Japan. In the number of units, excepting torpedo boat destroyers, torpedo boats, and submarines England now lacks one unit of having double that of the United States. Were the vessels now building completed England would have two units over double those of this country. This country would still, however, remain second, but France and Germany would trade places. These facts and figures distinctly place the United States as the second naval power in the world. Being second then, every ship that we add to our navy in the meantime which does not make us superior in number to England is useless as far as other nations are concerned, and of no avail as far as England is concerned. So we are left the alternative of being satisfied to hold our present position, or enter into a wild scramble for superiority with England.

Since it has been determined that our fleet, according to Mr. Metcalf's report, is the second in the world the probability of an Atlantic conflict appears further removed than war upon the Pacific. Those who entertain the most direful thoughts of sudden war surely can have no fear of France or Germany, since our navy is greater than either of theirs. But suppose for a moment the sea strength of either of these countries was equal to that of the United States the result of the Spanish-American war will inevitably stand as a warning to those nations. At the beginning of that conflict the tacit opinion of the powers of Europe was that an equality

of strength existed between the belligerent countries. The result of that war is well known to the naval world. The United States, without the loss of a single ship and but one man utterly destroyed the Spanish fleet whose power was conceded to equal that of the United States. If the powers of Europe were willing to grant to Spain an equality of power and the rank of France and Germany now actually falls below that of this country how much more superior then is the United States than either France or Germany, and too, by the same logic England loses much of her strength. England has become a strong naval power because her extensive colonial policies have driven her to it. In the Atlantic waters she has forty-five battleships and thirty-three armored cruisers. Since England thus concedes that her active naval operations must be transacted in the Atlantic ocean it is of no concern to this country where the remainder of her ships are situated since it must remain there to compel obedience to British power. In the Atlantic waters it is possible for the United States to have twenty-five battleships, eleven coast defense vessels, twelve armored cruisers of from one thousand tons displacement to those classed as armored cruisers, making a total of eighty-seven units. The power of such a fleet no one doubts for a moment. They can all unite for a common purpose while those of England must necessarily divide into two squadrons—one to guard the British Isles from the slumbering jealousy of European powers, the other to protect the eastern coast of Canada.

All these facts, however, dwindle into comparative insignificance when the great bond of friendship which unites these two English speaking nations is brought into consideration. The evolution of perpetual peace has been going on by slow degrees, and although it does not exist among other nations, it certainly removes all probability of a conflict between England and the United States. For nearly one hundred years events have drawn and are drawing these two countries closer and closer together, and the more they know of each other the clearer is their perception of the fact that race, religion, and political institutions form between them a bond such as exists between no other two countries of the earth. Their essential interests are not divergent. Such unsettled questions as arise to vex their mutual good will are capable of adjustment without serious restriction. The trend of human events exerts a subtle influence which must enter into the final settlement of all disputes between them.

It has been pointed out clearly that war is not probable but still there is always a possibility of it. In case of a possible war it is not a larger fleet but better coast defense which this country needs. Too little attention has been paid to this matter. The necessity for a complete and adequate system of coast defense is greater today than ever before. The fact that we have a fleet makes it all the more necessary. The great strategic advantage a fleet has is its possibility to be on the offensive rather than the defensive. A good coast defense gives the fleet this advantage and permits it to seek out and watch its objective. This was illustrated in the late Russia-Japanese war. Japan had a good system of coast protection, consequently could strike more effective blows without fear of a recall to defend the coast line. By building up the coast defense on our Pacific shore it is at once evident that should our fleet ever be called to a conflict in Pacific waters our vessels could take the initiative in every maneuver, and at the same time our coast would be safe from that phantom possibility of attack, the airy dream of navy-mad Americans. Then so far as a separate and distinct fleet in the Pacific is concerned we need none at all but should rather build up our neglected and inferior coast defense.

As upon the Pacific so upon the Atlantic our coast and harbor defense is very inferior. On the Atlantic coast there is a population of sixteen millions of people within gun shot of a ship; there are approximately eighteen billions of dollars of property within striking distance of a hostile fleet; and only five out of the twenty-seven fortified harbors have complete equipment of fire control. Furthermore, many of our navy yards have become inadequate for receiving the large Dreadnaughts proposed and advocated by our naval enthusiasts. The draft of battleships has been increasing so rapidly during recent years that there are many ports throughout the United States that can not be entered with safety. With proper coast defense these requirements will be met and, in time of war, there will be no demand for a