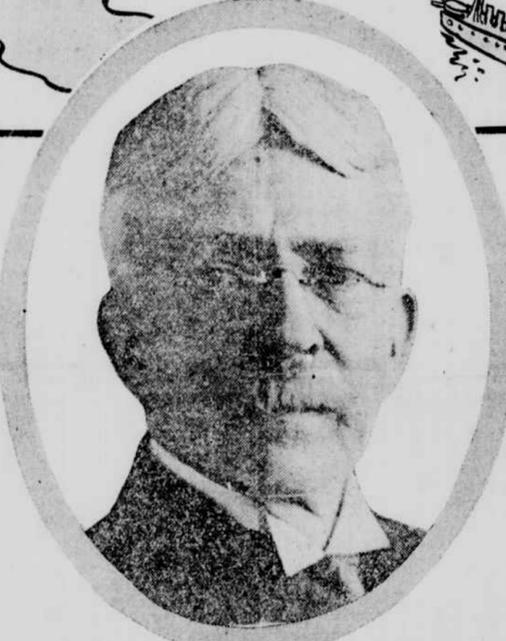


UNDEFENDED CARIBBEAN CHIEF WEAKNESS OF U. S.

THE WAY TO PEACE AT ANY PRICE IS ABSOLUTE PREPAREDNESS.

Fleet for Each Coast Equal
to Defeating Any Foe Is
the Primary Need of
Adequate Defence.

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PROFESSOR WILLIAM LEDYARD CATHCART.
Photo by Brown Brothers.

Through It Europe Would
Strike for the World
Prize, the Panama
Canal.

By PROF. WM. LEDYARD CATHCART.
Graduate of the Naval Academy, former officer
of the navy, famous American naval authority.

To no man's presentation of an adequate defence plan is a better hearing entitled than to Professor Cathcart's. As a former officer of our navy he has gained a reputation as an eminent authority in naval matters.

SHOULD WE RIVAL ENGLAND'S NAVY?

Important questions as to the amount and character of our naval expansion confront not so much the officers of our navy as the administration, Congress and the people whose will both the Executive and legislators represent. An unfit answer, in inadequate preparation now, may be grave with menace to the future of America. In substance, these problems are:

England is now throttling both our trade with neutrals and the great increase in our merchant marine to carry on that trade, which otherwise this war would bring. Should we aim to maintain a navy capable of disputing her mastery of the sea and of making this restraint impossible hereafter?

Falling this, should we have a naval force efficient, at least, to guard fully every foot of territory which we now hold in both oceans—that is, a fleet so strong that it can be divided and one section kept permanently in the Pacific?

Or, letting the Philippines, Hawaii and Alaska take their chances of capture in sudden war with an Oriental power, should we maintain only a single fleet, trusting to its sufficiently rapid transfer to protect the Pacific Coast in time of need?

An attempt to compete with Great Britain in naval strength would be financially extravagant and politically unnecessary at this time. The cost of her fleet has been great. During the last decade nearly \$2,000,000,000 has been spent upon it—and very wisely, as results have shown.

As to our international relations—for a hundred years America has felt no menace from British command of the sea. Four times during that period war between the two nations was threatened, but in each case the crisis was averted by sane and skilful diplomacy. Throughout the existence of the Monroe Doctrine England has tacitly acquiesced in its policy, and in two treaties she has given it quasi recognition.

In any great war like the present she must depend largely on the United States for supplies of all kinds. Her chief dominion lies open to attack on our northern border. And, finally, there are those still more potent reasons, the interests of the two nations—racial, social and commercial—which are mingled so inextricably as to make future wars between them unthinkable at this time. The existing controversies will fade, as have others in the past.

The friendships of nations, however, are, like their enmities, very passing things. Japan is to-day running her factories overtime to make ammunition for her old foe, Russia; and also—relying on the opportunity given her by the European war—she is apparently striving to wrest the hegemony of the Far East from her ally, Great Britain. While, therefore, both history and common sense teach that it would be unwise to trust forever to the continued friendship of England, the century of peace justifies us in believing that at this time she should not be considered as that problem of the strategists, a "probable enemy." Hence, her naval strength need not now be a prime factor in planning for our own, although always it should be borne in mind that as matters stand British interests will be served best if the United States shall not become a great naval power, but shall continue its present policy of non-interference.

OUR LACK OF SOUTHERN COAST BASES FOR THE FLEET.

For attack on our Eastern coast or on the Panama Canal any enemy except Great Britain would first have to seize a convenient and adjacent base for his fighting ships and transports. Such a naval base when fully developed, like Malta or Gibraltar, a harbor on island or mainland equipped to meet a fleet's needs for repairs, supplies, coal and docking. If possible, it should be a commanding strategic position, and it should be always so fortified and garrisoned as to be self-protecting, since otherwise the fleet will have to waste its force in guarding it. From a naval base ships can

strike to a distance limited only by the fuel they carry.

Halifax and Bermuda are the only nearby strategic positions in foreign control which are a possible menace to our Atlantic Coast. These ports can be made naval bases of the first rank, and, from either or both, continuous naval operations against us would be possible, the success of which would depend on the relative strength of the two fleets. Minor strategic positions, subject to seizure by a superior enemy under present conditions, are Provincetown and Narragansett and Delaware bays.

In New York Harbor, with its unrivalled facilities, and in Chesapeake Bay, with the fortifications now projected, the United States has, or will have, northern and mid-coast naval bases unexcelled in position, strength and resources. South of the Chesapeake, however, there is no Atlantic port which meets the demands of a large fleet, although the little barren island of Key West would be of great value not only in the daily supply of the ships (as in the Civil War), but as a base for destroyers and submarines.

As to the Gulf Coast: With the Strait of Florida guarded by an effective force at Key West and the Yucatan Channel dominated by a fleet based on Guantanamo, in Cuba, which we control, the Gulf of Mexico becomes militarily an inland sea which, with a powerful navy in the Atlantic and the Caribbean, is unlikely to meet the stress of war.

WHERE OUR CHIEF DANGER LIES.

With a reasonably powerful fleet our Atlantic Coast would be, as a whole, easily guarded from any enemy but England. But, as naval strategists have pointed out unceasingly for years, our chief danger does not lie there, but in the Caribbean Sea. Captain John Hood, U. S. N., says:

"The most probable and almost certain naval theatre of action in any war that we may have with a European nation will be in the Caribbean Sea or waters adjacent thereto, since it is there we are weakest and most vulnerable, with our present long undefended line of communications from Hatteras via the Windward and other passages to the Panama Canal."

"It would be a bold nation that would make a direct frontal attack on our Atlantic seaboard, where we are strongest, and whose adjacent waters are within the radius of our home bases, unless our fleet had been annihilated or driven from the ocean."

A glance at the map will show our responsibilities in this possible war area. The Caribbean Sea is bounded on the north by Cuba, whose independence we are pledged to defend; by the island comprising the Haytian and Dominican republics, over which we now exercise virtual protectorates, and by Porto Rico, which we own. Mexico and Central America bound it on the west, and these, like the continent to the south, are covered by the Monroe Doctrine. A thousand miles southwest of Porto Rico lies Colon, the entrance to the Panama Canal, which, as the gateway to the Pacific and the Far East, will make of the Caribbean Sea a new Mediterranean, with all its sure rivalries in trade and war.

Of these two seas Admiral Mahan said: "Their conspicuous characteristics now are their political and military importance, in the broadest sense, as concerning not only the countries that border them, but the world at large."

It is true that in Guantanamo we hold a strategic position which, owing to its location on the island of Cuba, is dominating, but this natural stronghold is as yet undeveloped in its fortifications and its equipment. Further, there are in this possible war area about nine other strategic positions now owned by eight different countries. With its weak fleet and its undeveloped bases America gives scant concern to its commercial and military future in the Caribbean Sea.

THE PANAMA CANAL AS A BREEDER OF WAR.

The chief advantage of the Panama Canal in the event of existing or threatened war will be that—like the strategic railways of Germany in land operations—it will enable naval reinforcements to be transferred rapidly on interior lines from ocean to ocean. It thus shortens the passage to the Pacific by sixty days—time enough to win a decisive action on our far-flung military frontier there, or, by the presence of superior force, to avert war. Further, in the event of attack on both coasts it is just possible that a sufficiently powerful American fleet might defeat one enemy on the Atlantic and then, sweeping through the canal, destroy the other on the Pacific. This conception seems more pleasing than probable.

Another advantage of prime importance is that the canal eliminates the perhaps unsolvable problem of fuel supply by South American neutrals in the passage to a possible war area in the Pacific. As to this Captain H. S. Knapp, U. S. N., says:

"It (the canal) means the possibility of sending ships from the Atlantic to almost any place where they will be needed in the Pacific by a route that has fuel stations under our flag along the entire distance, no two of which are further apart than the fuel endurance of our capital ships. This is an enormous advantage."

To estimate the magnitude of this advantage one need but recall that some years ago, when our battle fleet steamed around the world, it was attended by more than forty merchant vessels carrying fuel and supplies and all flying foreign flags. If sudden war had come during that globe-girdling cruise these transports would have been transformed automatically into enemies or neutrals. In the latter event, they would have vanished at once, leaving our admiral hard pressed to get his ships home.

It is improbable that direct naval attack will ever be made on the canal. The heavy gun and mortar batteries at the entrances and submarines and mine fields in the sea approaches

will prevent that. The Canal Zone is, however, nearly fifty miles long and is only ten miles wide, so that invasion by land forces will be easy if the zone is not very strongly fortified and garrisoned. "Advanced national outposts, like Malta and Gibraltar, must be (in strength) Malta and Gibraltar," says Mahan. But, as with our home coasts, the canal's first line of defence is the navy, and our fleet should always be strong enough to keep an enemy from ever getting near enough for invasion.

With regard to the future of the canal there are two facts which cannot be emphasized too strongly. First—Barring the Monroe Doctrine, there is no policy or possession of the United States which is more likely to breed war for its retention than the world prize, the canal. Secondly—Should we be too weak to defend it in war, all of its military advantages would pass to the enemy which took it. In that event its construction will simply have weakened us immeasurably, for through it we shall have opened a gateway for the nations of Europe to our Pacific Coast and our overseas possessions beyond.

That these forecasts have sound bases in history—the story of the Suez Canal proves. It was built for Egypt by France; it has passed, seemingly for all time, to England. The vital necessity for a British highway to India predetermined its ultimate ownership. Beginning with Gibraltar, England slowly through long years acquired Malta, Cyprus, Perim and Aden. The missing link was the canal, and Disraeli secretly bought a large, almost a controlling, interest in its shares. Then, in 1882, England entered Egypt "to restore order." Now, in 1915, after uninterrupted occupation, she proclaims a protectorate over that land and sand, and holds the canal in a grip that will never loosen.

OUR RICHEST PACIFIC TERRITORY MOST EXPOSED TO INVASION.

Our Pacific states, that is, the territory dependent on that ocean for commercial outlet, comprise—says James G. Blaine once said—"an area of nearly 800,000 square miles, larger in extent than the German Empire and the four Latin countries of Europe combined." Further, including Alaska, our outlying possessions in the Pacific have an aggregate area which is more than one-fourth that of the United States proper and more than one-fifth that of the whole continent of Europe.

The actual and potential wealth of this vast territory defies computation. On January 13, 1915, the Legislature of the State of Washington forwarded a petition for coast defences to

the President and Congress, showing that the appraised value of the taxable property in the states of Washington and Oregon alone exceeded \$4,100,000,000. Alaska is now yielding annually about six times its purchase price of \$7,250,000, and its enormous resources have been but scratched. As to the Philippines—that "military blunder" of their critics—they form, with their population of 8,000,000, their trade possibilities, their hardwoods, their agricultural resources and their command of Southern China and the East Indies, a rich territory for which most great powers would gladly go to war. Incomprehensible America, on the contrary, intermittently proposes to leave the group to its own feeble devices or to those of any grasping nation which may seize it. This is "national self-abnegation" raised to the limit.

The richest portion of our continental Pacific territory is that which is most exposed to bombardment, blockade and invasion. So far as adequate defences go, it is the weakest part of the whole frontier of this Republic. On the entire coast we have but one great naval base—that on Puget Sound, whose incomplete facilities are growing slowly. In the eastern North Pacific Ocean we own every strategic point but three, and the development of but one, Pearl Harbor, near Honolulu, is proceeding. In the Philippines the only position which could hold for a time against attack is the little island of Corregidor, in Manila Bay. The destiny of nations has given the United States commercial and military opportunities without parallel on and in the North Pacific Ocean. Thus far these opportunities and their attendant dangers have had but little consideration by Congress.

OUR "FLOCK OF SHEEP" ON THE PACIFIC.

In considering our possible dangers in the Pacific Ocean the Russo-Japanese War teaches instructive lessons. The fundamental reasons for Russia's defeat in that conflict were: Lack of preparation of her fleet for war, inadequate equipment of her naval base, Port Arthur, and the failure to concentrate her naval strength in the Far East, so that it was whipped in detail—first the Port Arthur fleet, and then that which under Rojstvensky steamed out from the Baltic.

All of these conditions exist to-day with regard to our navy and its probable enemies. It is gravely unprepared for war, lacking not only first line ships, but many auxiliaries; it is short of officers and men to a perilous degree; its chief naval bases have had little or no development, and the fleet is divided, with a naval strength in the Pacific which is inconsiderable.

The Pacific fleet, active and reserve, and the Asiatic fleet are composed of one old battleship, the famous Oregon; two obsolete monitors, seven armored cruisers, ten cruisers, eleven gunboats, fourteen destroyers and twenty submarines. This array seems impressive, but for facing a modern battle fleet it is "paper strength"—simply fit only to "show the flag" with dignity in peace, and in war, when sheltered in safe harbors, to soothe the fears of some timid, uncomprehending laymen.

Individually each of these vessels is excellent for its day and kind, but the effective day of the strongest of them was long ago and, except some of the destroyers and submarines, none of them could engage modern battleships. The most formidable of them are the six 13,680-ton armored cruisers, but they are of an obsolescent type, with a mixed battery of four 8-inch (model 1899) and fourteen 6-inch guns, thin 6-inch belt armor and a speed of only twenty-two knots. Hybrids tactically, they are too weak to fight battleships and too slow to chase or run away. Their characteristics compare very unfavorably with those of the dreadnought battle cruisers now serving in the British, German and Japanese navies. For example, the four vessels of Japan's Kongo class each have a displacement of 27,500 tons, a speed of twenty-seven knots, eight 14-inch and

sixteen 6-inch guns and 10-inch armor on belt and turrets.

A single battle cruiser like this with its quartet of attendant destroyers would give short shrift to our combined Pacific fleets, if they were massed in the open ocean—unless, indeed, one of our destroyers or submarines got in a lucky hit, which experience shows is more than a hundred to one chance. Out of range herself, the cruiser could sink each foe at leisure. That our ships would be fought gamely and skilfully goes without saying—for that is the immemorial way of American naval men. But that brief action would be a massacre—like a tiger turned loose on a flock of sheep. And yet this is our naval "strength" on the Pacific!

SOME PROBABLE "IFS" OF THE FUTURE.

With regard to timely reinforcements from the Atlantic Coast there are several things worth considering. In the first place, a fleet starting from Guantanamo, passing through the canal and steaming at twelve knots an hour would take fourteen days to reach San Francisco, nineteen days to Honolulu and thirty-five to Manila. The last period, if not the two latter, gives ample time for a decisive action to be fought—and lost by our weak naval force.

Again, there is no assurance that the canal would be open throughout at a critical time. Owing to slides in the cuts it will be an uncertain waterway for years—perhaps always. Recent press reports state that owing to slides the canal will be closed to traffic until November 1 at the earliest.

Further, nothing during the present war has been more startling than the effective work of the spies, who made possible the building of concrete emplacements for great German guns in France before war broke, and who, if current rumor be credible, blew up the British battleship Bulwark and the auxiliary cruiser Princess Irene in their home harbors. Would men capable of these things find great difficulty in blocking the Panama Canal at a critical time by exploding a land mine to make a slide, by sinking one of their own merchantmen with a clockwork bomb hidden in her coal bunkers, or by wrecking a pair of locks by explosives dropped from the air?

If the canal were thus blocked for a considerable period, it would take—according to Captain J. S. McKean, U. S. N., late of the Naval War College—sixty days to get a fleet of forty-eight battleships from Culebra, Porto Rico, around South America to Panama; the voyage would cost \$6,000,000 in fuel, and for the carriage of fuel and stores it would require 100 merchant vessels of 5,000 tons each, costing \$50,000,000 total. With our present self-sacrificial policy toward our transoceanic merchant marine, it would be interesting to know just where in the sudden stress of war any such fleet of transports could be found.

Finally the closure of the European war unquestionably will bring new groupings of the great powers. Japan, in her present aim for leadership in the Far East, will find Great Britain's vast interests there opposing her at every step. For many years there has been in Japan an influential pro-German and anti-British faction, said to have been led by the late Prince Ito and composed mainly of men educated in Germany. This party seems to be gaining, and some observers already find indications that Japan is coquetting with Germany in preparation for eventualities. If the German battle fleet shall pursue to the end its present course of, let us say, "strict neutrality" the close of the war will find that great fleet intact. Is it impossible to imagine that then, or soon after, Germany and Japan as allies might make a simultaneous attack on the United States—one on the east coast, the other on the west? From what source then will come those vital Pacific reinforcements?

Less for defensive conflict than to avert war by the presence of superior force, it seems clear that the United States should maintain in, or within easy steaming range of, the Caribbean Sea a fleet equal at least to that of any probable European enemy except England. Less than this would be inadequate for the full protection of our eastern coast and of the Panama Canal and to meet the demands which, more and more, the Monroe Doctrine will impose for the display or use of strong naval force.

Similarly, if there were no Panama Canal, we should keep always in the North Pacific Ocean a fleet not of obsolete or obsolescent vessels, but of modern battleships equal to that of any Oriental nation. The opening of the canal may have lessened the urgency for this somewhat. As to this naval authorities differ. But, owing to the great distances, the possibility that the canal may be blocked and the further possibility of simultaneous attack on both coasts, it is evident that full security can be assured only by a Pacific fleet able, unaided, to meet any probable foe there. This does not mean that the Panama Canal has not increased the effectiveness of our navy. On the contrary, an overwhelming force swung swiftly through that short cut may some day prevent a war whose cost would be many times that of the canal.

All of this means a great navy, the second largest in the world; but better this—whatever be its cost—and peace than the dark ocean of blood which surges over desolate Europe today.