

would be the position of the great Dominion of Canada? The Dominion of Canada is bordered for three thousand miles by a most powerful neighbour, whose potentialities are infinitely greater than her actual resources. She comes into conflict in regard to the most important interests with the rising power of Japan, and even in regard to some of her interests with the great Empire of Russia. Now, let it not be supposed for a moment that I suggest as probable—I hardly like to think that it is even possible—that there should be a war between Canada, or on behalf of Canada, either with the United States of America or with any of the other Powers with which she may come into contact; but what I do say is this: that if Canada had not behind her to-day, and does not continue to have behind her, this great military and naval power of Great Britain she would have to make concessions to her neighbours, and to accept views which might be extremely distasteful to her, in order to remain permanently on good terms with them. She would not be able to—it would be impossible that she should—herself control all the details of her own destiny; she would be, to a greater or less extent, in spite of the bravery of her population and the patriotism of her people, she would still be, to a great extent, a dependent country.

“Look at Australia, again. I need not dwell on the point at any length, but we find the same thing. The interests of Australia have already, on more than one occasion, threatened to come into conflict with those of two of the greatest military nations of the Continent, and military nations, let me add, who also possess each of them a very large, one of them an enormous, fleet. There may be also questions of difficulty arising with Eastern nations, with Japan or even with China, and under those circumstances the Australasian Colonies are in precisely the same position as the Dominion of Canada. In South Africa, in addition to the ambitions of foreign countries, to which I need not further allude, our colonies there have domestic rivals who are heavily armed, prepared both for offence and for defence; and, again I say, nothing could be more suicidal or more fatal than for any of those great groups of colonies either to separate themselves in the present stage from the protecting forces of the Mother-country or to neglect themselves to take their fair share in those protective resources.

“What, then, I want to urge upon you is, and in doing so I think I am speaking to those who are already converted, that we have a common interest in this matter, and certainly it has been a great pleasure to us—a great pride to us—that Australia, in the first instance, offered voluntarily a contribution in aid of the British navy besides taking her full share of her own military defences. Now we have to recognise that the Cape Colony has followed in that patriotic course. I do not know upon what conditions these gifts may be offered or continued, but, at all events, the spirit in which they have been made is most heartily reciprocated in this country. The amount, of course, is at the present time absolutely trifling, but that is not the point. We are looking to the colonies as still children, but rapidly approaching manhood. In the lifetime, perhaps, of some of us we shall see the population doubled, and certainly in the lifetime of our descendants there will be great nations where now there are comparatively sparse populations; and to establish in the early days this principle of mutual support and of a truly Imperial patriotism is a great thing of which our colonial statesmen may well be proud.

“I shall be very glad to hear the views of the Premiers in regard to this question of any contribution which they think the colonies would be willing to make in order to establish this principle in regard to the naval defence of the Empire. As regards the military defence of the Empire, I am bound to say that we are still behindhand, although a good deal has been done in recent years. As you know, the Colonial Defence Committee of experts has been sitting, and has accomplished already, with the assistance of the colonies, a very great improvement in the state of things which existed before; but I cannot say from the information at my disposal that with all the magnificent resources of the colonies their organization at present is satisfactory. This is more a matter of detail, and I do not propose to dwell upon it now, but I would remind the Premiers assembled that if war breaks out, war will be sudden, and there will be no time for preparation then. Therefore it is of the first importance that we, all having a common interest, should have beforehand a scheme of common defence against any possible or, at all events, any probable enemy, and we ought to have these schemes of defence before us. In the case of some of the colonies schemes have already been prepared; in others no scheme has been prepared or concerted up to the present time, and I believe it is most desirable that that omission should be repaired. It is also most desirable, in Australia especially, and to a lesser extent, although still to an important extent, in South Africa, that there should be an uniformity in regard to the military preparations. An uniformity of arms is, I need scarcely say, of immense importance, as it gives us interchangeability of weapon, and there are also uniformity of equipment, some central provision for stores, and for the military instruction of the local forces, all of which can be arranged with the assistance of the colonies, and, I believe, very much to their advantage.

EXCHANGE OF MILITARY FORCES.

“But I am looking forward to something more than that. The interchangeability in the several groups is a matter of great importance, but how much greater it would be if there were interchangeability between the whole forces of the Empire, between the forces which you have in the several colonies and the forces of which you have seen some examples at Home since you came to these shores. That is a matter which also can be arranged, and to which we can bring, at all events, the utmost good-will. If you have, as Canada has at Kingston, an important military college, it may be possible for us to offer occasionally to the cadets of that college commissions in the British army. But a still more important matter which has suggested itself to my mind, and which now I desire to commend to your earnest attention, is a proposal which may be described as the interchangeability of military duties. To put it into plain English it means this: that, for instance, a Canadian regiment should come to this country, take up its quarters for a period of time, at least twelve months, with the British army, and form, during the whole time that it is in