

emergency which has not arisen; but what I do trust very strongly is this: that in case of an emergency, and in case of different colonies being willing to come to the support of the Mother-country in such emergency, they should be in a position to do so with a body of troops, however moderate in number, which could be put in line with our own regular troops against a European Power. I am not, of course, speaking of action on the Continent of Europe, but it will not be necessary for any of us to go far to conceive cases in which in support of our colonies it might be necessary to send a large British force, and in some cases in quarrels in which Great Britain's interest would be considerably less than that of the colony affected. Therefore I am not asking that this should be regarded simply as a donative on the part of the colonies out of loyalty. I ask it rather on the ground of reciprocity, and I ask it also because, if you take some parts of the world in which our interests might be threatened, it must be perfectly obvious that it would not be in the power of the Mother-country to perform her part of the business effectively without some support.

Take, for instance, the case of China. We have recently come to an agreement with Japan—an agreement which you will recollect is not one for offensive action, since it only comes into force in the case of aggressive action by other Powers. Obviously in any plan of campaign which might be found necessary to protect our trade with China against encroachment and against aggression we should be bound, and we should wish, to give Japan, our ally, every support in our power. It is equally obvious that our interests would be strongly threatened in other parts of the globe at the same time. A campaign between two great Powers is not fought out solely on the spot at which the quarrel has arisen. In the case of any trouble which threatened our Indian Empire we are bound to send large reinforcements from here. In the case of war which involved European Powers our striking effect would necessarily be exercised on some of their dependencies. That is what Great Britain ought to be prepared to do; but by propinquity and also from other causes nothing could assist us more, supposing that quarrel forced upon us by others also obtained for us the support of the different colonial Governments, than that we should be able to count on being able to support our ally in China with a small body—but, at the same time, a well-organized body—of colonial force from those colonies which are nearest and which are most conveniently situated for supporting us in China.

Well, now, what is the present position? We have had a memorandum which I think has been probably read by all the authorities who are present, and which shows that we have nominally of all ranks a very large permanent force in Australia, something like 27,000 men; in Canada, 38,000; in New Zealand, 17,000; and making up with South Africa, say, probably something like 100,000 men. Well, what is the military value of the force? That is the question we have to put to ourselves; what is its military value for the defence of the colonies themselves? and what is its military value for assistance to the Empire at large, to the extent to which it is asked to contribute? Well, I hope I shall not be accused, if I am frank, of in any way disparaging our colonial troops. I began by saying that all, and more than all, that may be said as to their diversity may be said as to the diversity of the Imperial forces outside the regular army, but the diversity is exactly what my military advisers are engaged in reducing to the best of their ability, so that we may know exactly what we have to depend upon.

Take the case, first of all, of Canada: Canada has nearly forty thousand men. We know that in no part of the Empire has better fighting material been found in the recent war than among the Canadians; but I see from the last annual report from the General Officer commanding the Canadian Militia—a report which was referred to in high terms in a recent debate on the militia in the Canadian Parliament—that the city corps have absolutely no training whatever in the field duties of a soldier, and that the rural corps “will never be made even fairly fit to take the field with the limited period of annual training that they receive under existing conditions.” In the urban corps it is further stated to be impossible at present to give anything beyond theoretical instruction in the more important duties of a soldier, such as scouting, outpost-work, entrenchment, and tactical exercises. As regards the cavalry, the general officer regretted his inability to report that as cavalry they can be considered to be in any instance more than barely efficient. Beyond that, we know that Canada has at present no trained staff, or a system of training of staff officers; and very recently a rifle has been adopted in Canada which, although carrying the same cartridge as our British rifle, is of a different pattern, which in itself, we think, is a little unfortunate, as breaking the uniformity and the interchangeability from the one to the other in case troops are employed together. Anybody who reads the report will see that, however fine might be the patriotic ardour and keenness of Canada at a given moment, troops hastily improvised from such material can only be placed by a general against trained troops with very considerable caution.

Well, then again, in regard to Australia, there was a Military Committee of Inquiry which was assembled last year by the Commonwealth Government to report on the organization and the state of instruction of the guards of the various Australian States. Those reports point out much that I dare say might have been said with equal truth of our organization here no more than fifteen or twenty years ago, but I hope we have progressed here. The troops vary very much in quality, and are deficient as regards the departmental corps which are necessary to accompany them in the field—Army Service Corps, and Ordnance and Army Medical Departments. In some States there are none. Victoria has only a reserve of seventeen rounds of small-arms ammunition per rifle. Western Australia only twenty-eight rounds reserve. And, again, there has not been any military administrative staff to deal with supply or other arrangements, and only in one State is there periodical inspection of ammunition and warlike stores. The engineer units do not receive a continuous annual training, and, like the great variety of armaments and ammunition, anybody who reads those reports will see that, however magnificent the material, however loyal and patriotic the feeling, you can only treat contingents which are got together on the spur of the moment and hastily improvised, as a moral force, a moral support to the Empire