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Great Britain's Naval Programme. The speech of the Right Hon. George J. Goschen, First Lord of the Admiralty, in connection with the submitting of the Navy estimates to the Imperial House of Commons, shows that the Government still holds as firmly as ever the doctrine that the best way of avoiding war is to be fully prepared for all contingencies connected with the action of other nations. Mr. Goschen alluded to the unique circumstances under which the present estimates were submitted. Ahead was the Conference on the subject of international disarmament, and behind were the incidents of last November, which the nation has passed through with equanimity because a comparison of the British navy with those of other nations justified the confidence that Great Britain was not unprepared for emergencies. That the country was strengthening its navy with a view to aggressive action in any direction—a supposition which had disturbed some of the Continental Powers—Mr. Goschen said had never entered the mind of the Government. The action of other nations in adding materially to their naval forces had made it necessary for Great Britain, in order to maintain her relative position of power, to continue to expend large sums upon her navy. So the old policy is kept up, and the old rivalry between the nations to outdo each other in military and naval equipments is continued, the forces of the world are wasted and the people impoverished to provide what would be absolutely unnecessary except for international greed and jealousy. The human mind cannot measure how different the condition of the world would soon become, if the thought and the wealth which are now being expended to prepare each nation for aggressive or defensive warfare should be expended in efforts to promote the best conditions for moral and physical improvement among the peoples of the world. While expressing the wish that the results of the Czar's Conference might make it possible for the Government to modify its programme and announcing on behalf of Her Majesty's Government that if the other powers were prepared to diminish their programmes, Great Britain was prepared to modify hers, Mr. Goschen expressed the hope that if this could not be the opponents of Government would not attempt to dissuade the people from bearing the taxation necessary to carry on the duties of the empire.

In explaining the details of the Naval programme Mr. Goschen said that Her Majesty's Government propose to make Wei-Hai-Wei—a port on the northern coast of the Shan-Tung peninsula, a secondary naval base, since it afforded a most valuable anchorage and would be of the greatest importance in Chinese waters. It is accordingly proposed to expend on Wei-Hai-Wei during the present year £1,300,000, and £1,500,000 more next year. The personnel of the navy, Mr. Goschen said, would be increased by 4,250 men, making a total of 110,640, at a cost of £7,474,000. Comparing the pay of the naval forces it was shown that Great Britain expended £7,000,000, France £3,000,000, and Russia, according to the published estimates, only £445,000, but Mr. Goschen did not understand how the figures given by Russia could be correct. In the matter of shipbuilding, the British programme had been framed after the consideration of those of other powers, and in view of the increased activity of other nations in this matter the Government had felt it necessary to enlarge its plans as to shipbuilding, which now include the building of two iron-clads, two armored cruisers and three small cruisers of a specially high speed. The total sum required for shipbuilding, including the liabilities for last year's original and supplementary programme, is £12,877,000, an increase of over £2,000,000. The total estimates for naval expenditures for the year are £26,549,000. Mr. Goschen emphasized the purely defensive object of the naval increase, but said that in view of the construction by her rivals of fast cruisers with the avowed purpose of preying upon British commerce and Great Britain's food supply in the event of war, England was forced to build five new cruisers particularly swift, in order to circumvent these schemes. He also said that the four armored cruisers now being built under the original programme would be the most powerful ships in the world.

China. Indications multiply of the approaching breaking up of the Chinese Empire and its partition among the European powers. It is reported that Russia is pouring troops into Port Arthur and Talien Wan under pretence that the force now garrisoning those places is too small in view of the apparent discontent of the inhabitants of the Liao-Tung peninsula. It is said that no less than 9,000 men have landed at Port Arthur during the past month or so, and it is intended to add 25,000 more, in addition to garrisons of 15,000 for Port Arthur and 8,000 for Talien Wan, making altogether a force of not much short of 60,000. Russia has also protested against the acceptance by China of the British loan for the construction of the Niu Chang railway. It is believed, however, that Russia's purpose is rather to make the protest a basis for a demand on China for the cession of more territory, than to prevent the building of the railway. Italy has recently approached the Chinese Government with a proposal for a lease of certain territory at San Mun, in the province of Che-Kiang. The refusal of the Chinese Government to consider the proposal is said to have given great offense to Italy. Probably Italy will find means, as the other European powers have done, to secure from China the desired concession. The report that Great Britain is interested in this action of Italy is not improbable. If the territory of China is to be disposed of by the vote of the powers, the voice of Italy will be valuable to Great Britain in her contention with Russia, France and Germany. Japan also is expected to act with Britain and the policy of the United States is understood to be neutral. Lord Charles Beresford, who has just returned to England from a visit to China, still strongly advocates "the open door" policy. He says that to attempt to partition China into "spheres of influence" will lead to quarrels and war. He does not suggest "a cut and dried alliance," and does not think that America would join in such an alliance, but thinks that America might unite with England, Germany and Japan to maintain the open door. "The real power in the Government of China," Sir Charles says, "is the Empress Dowager, who is a very clever woman. She signs the popular edicts herself and makes the Emperor sign the unpopular ones. The provincial rulers are more progressive than those at Peking. They all favor the open door policy, and only want to save China's face; but they think they are afraid of Russia. We must help stiffen China, which will not be a difficult task."

Concerning Prohibition. It will be remembered that a large delegation from the Dominion Temperance Alliance waited upon the Government at Ottawa last fall to urge upon the Government, as a consequence of the plebiscite vote, the introduction of a Prohibitory Liquor Law. No definite answer was at that time made to the delegation, but within the past week there has been published a letter from the Premier,

Sir Wilfrid Laurier, to Mr. F. S. Spence, of Toronto, which gives the reply of the Government to the request of the Alliance. That reply is, to quote the words of the Premier, "that in our judgment the expression of public opinion recorded at the polls in favor of prohibition did not represent such a proportion of the electorate as would justify the introduction by the Government of a prohibitory measure." The Government bases its conclusion not on the size of the negative vote or on the fact that the majority for prohibition throughout the Dominion was comparatively small, but on the ground that the positive vote, being only 23 per cent., or a little over one-fifth of the entire electoral strength of the Dominion, was not sufficient to justify the enactment of a prohibitory law. In reference to the position which the Government has now taken upon the subject of prohibition, Mr. Spence has spoken very freely to a representative of the Toronto 'Globe,' and his remarks are published in that paper in connection with the Premier's letter. Mr. Spence considers that the Government's reply to the Alliance will be a great disappointment to that body and that the prohibitionists of the country will strongly resent the refusal of the Government to accept the result of the plebiscite as a popular mandate in favor of prohibition. Mr. Spence contends that the actual electorate is always much smaller than the voters' list and that therefore the positive vote in the plebiscite amounts to much more than 23 per cent; that it is as fair to count the stay-at-homes for prohibition as against it; that in Quebec Province there is ample evidence of fraudulent manipulation of the vote in the anti-prohibition interest, and that in English-speaking Provinces the vote was strongly in favor of prohibition. "They voted for prohibition by a majority of 107,499. Out of 148 constituencies the prohibitionists carried 120. Their average majority was 1042. The prohibitionists polled nearly 23 per cent. of the voters' list while the opponents of prohibition polled less than 16 per cent." Taking the Maritime Provinces alone, Mr. Spence shows, the result in favor of prohibition was still more decisive. He considers it therefore an absurdity to say that the minority percentage is warrant enough for continuing the legalization of the liquor traffic, and the larger percentage is not warrant for any legislation at all. The Montreal 'Witness' believes that the policy which the Government is now adopting in reference to the question of prohibition will evoke wide-spread, resentment and bitter denunciations. The 'Witness' admits, and says that the great body of the prohibitionists will recognize, that the result of the plebiscite has created a very difficult situation. Apparently the 'Witness' does not think that the Government should be denounced if, under the circumstances, it declined to introduce a general prohibitory law for the Dominion, but it strongly censures the Government for its apparent disposition to take no action. "The right way to face the situation," it says, "would have been to show some signs of a desire to fulfil its requirements. If it was thought that prohibition should not be forced on a people that had no convictions in its favor, and had indeed recorded an almost undivided conviction against it, it was for them [the Government] to say how the rest of the country was to get what it wanted without doing this. If it was held that even in the country generally the conviction of the people was not strong enough to give efficacy to the law—and that is the ground taken by the Premier—it was for them to determine what measure of prohibition the country was ready for, and offer the people at least that. We are convinced that in shelving this great question by a simple flat refusal the Government has taken a most perilous course, throwing itself open both to the taunts of its political opponents in the House and to the anger of disappointed patriots in the country."