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***Our Second Line
of Defences***

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NO. I.

Britannia needs no bulwarks,
No towers along the steep;
Her march is o'er the mountain wave,
Her home is on the deep.

So sang Thomas Campbell, just at the close of the last century, when men's minds were full of the achievements of Howe, and Jervis, and Duncan, and Nelson, and so singing he merely embodied the national sentiment and expounded the national faith. Nor has the sentiment been altered or the faith been shaken from his days down to ours. The descendants of the old Sea Kings show still—as ever—the quality of the blood which runs in their veins, as clearly and unmistakably as their nearest continental neighbours exhibit in their strange admixture of fierceness and levity their mixed derivation from the Frank and the Gaul.

And in one sense it is as true now as it was then, that England's true defence is her fleet. In 1805 the presence of our fleet in the Channel effectually prevented the execution of that vast project of invasion for which Napoleon I. only asked for eight-and-forty hours of clear Channel; nor in the teeth of such a Channel fleet as we could now muster is it likely that any other Napoleon would be disposed to attempt a similar manœuvre. But in some other respects the times are changed.

In the first place, steam has revolutionised naval warfare altogether. Things which were not possible for sailing ships are every-day affairs with steam vessels. There can be no