

**BRITAIN AT BAY**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649280643

Britain at bay by Spenser Wilkinson

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**SPENSER WILKINSON**

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BY

SPENSER WILKINSON

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# BRITAIN AT BAY

## I

### THE NATION AND THE PARTIES

"I do not believe in the perfection of the British constitution as an instrument of war . . . it is evident that there is something in your machinery that is wrong." These were the words of the late Marquis of Salisbury, speaking as Prime Minister in his place in the House of Lords on the 30th of January 1900. They amounted to a declaration by the British Government that it could not govern, for the first business of a Government is to be able to defend the State of which it has charge, that is, to carry on war. Strange to say, the people of England were undisturbed by so striking an admission of national failure.

On the 16th of March 1909 came a new declaration from another Prime Minister. Mr. Asquith, on the introduction of the Navy Estimates, explained to the House of Commons that the Government had been surprised at the rate