

**THE BRITISH FLEET  
IN THE GREAT WAR**

**ARCHIBALD HURD**



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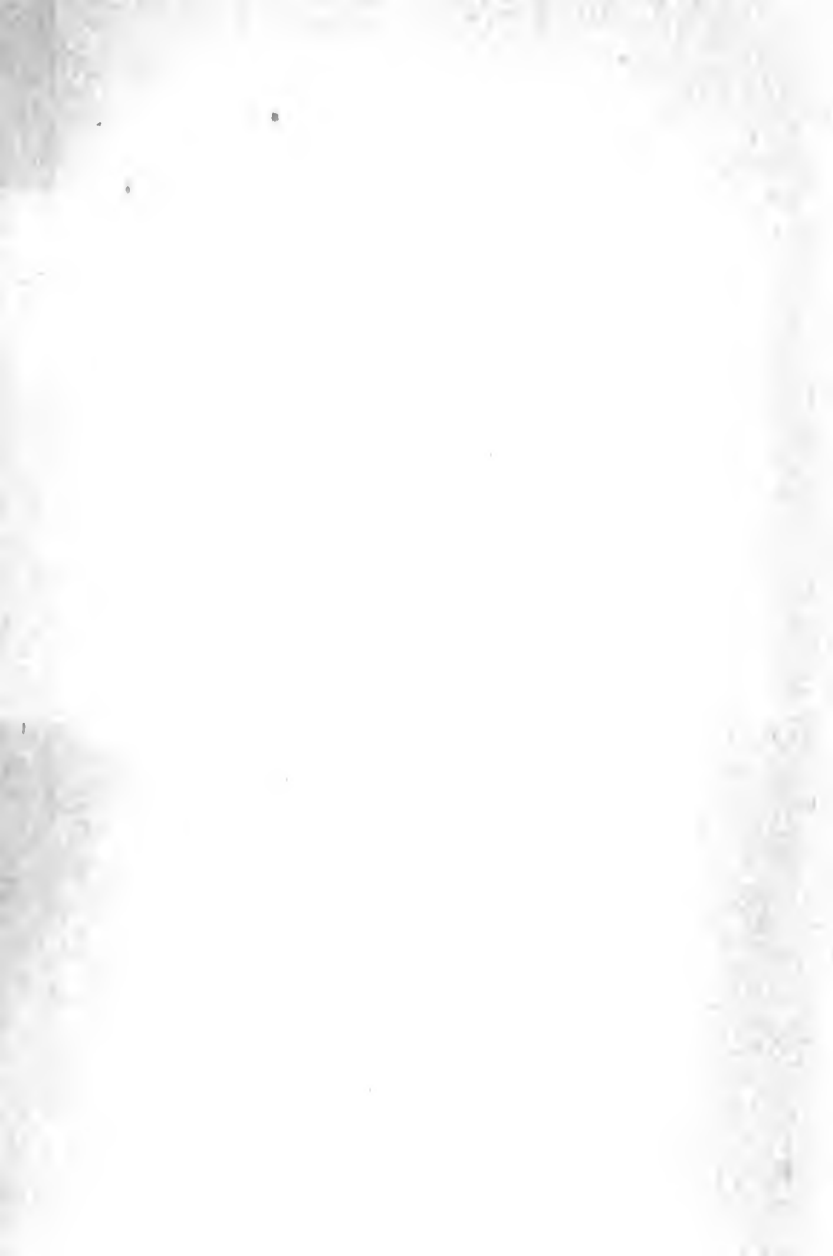
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BY  
ARCHIBALD HURD

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## INTRODUCTION

**I**N March, 1914, it was announced in the House of Commons that in place of the annual manœuvres, making a spectacular appeal to the popular imagination, it had been determined to carry out a test mobilization of the Reserves in order to place a large proportion of the older ships of the Navy—the Third Fleet—on a war footing. The decision proved fortunate. On Wednesday, July 15th and succeeding days, the First, Second and Third Fleets, as they were styled, assembled at Spithead, and on the following Monday the various squadrons and the flotillas of destroyers and submarines put to sea for exercises in the Channel, led as far as the Nab Lightship by the King in the Royal yacht *Victoria and Albert*. Four days later the First Fleet, consisting of fully commissioned ships, which was afterwards to be known as the Grand Fleet, steamed to its base at Portland, and the Second and Third Fleets went to their home ports, the latter to land reservists so that they might return to their homes. In the meantime dark clouds had been gathering on the European horizon. Mr. Winston Churchill was then First Lord of the Admiralty, and Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg (now the Marquis of Milford Haven) First Sea Lord. About midnight on Sunday, July 26th, notice was issued by the Admiralty that “Orders have been given to the First Fleet, which is concentrated at Port-

land, not to disperse for manœuvre leave for the present." It was added that "all vessels of the Second Fleet are remaining at their home ports in proximity to their balance crews." These were ships normally provided with nucleus crews of active service ratings, receiving their balance crews from the depots and training establishments of their home ports in any sudden emergency. On the morning of the 29th, the First Fleet, unknown to the nation, left Portland, under the command of Admiral Sir George Callaghan, for its war bases. Naval movements affecting the squadrons on foreign stations took place simultaneously, and the whole active portion of the British Navy, consisting of men-of-war fully manned and complete with stores and ammunition, was in a state of readiness for war. Other measures at the ports and on the coast, for which arrangements had been made in preceding years, also came into operation.

The circumstances in which these precautionary measures were taken have been the subject of controversy. The facts are beyond dispute. Mr. Winston Churchill had planned to be away from London during the weekend, July 25-27, in order that he might be with his wife, who was ill at Cromer. On the Friday night the probability of this country becoming involved in a European war seemed remote. The First Sea Lord, by immemorial custom, was in supreme control of the naval administration at Whitehall in the absence of the Minister. This officer had thoroughly mastered the German system of warfare, in which everything depends upon rapid mobilization and getting in the first blow. On the Saturday political events began to move with increasing speed. The German Fleet was known to be at sea, cruising in

Norwegian waters. The First Sea Lord determined that no precautions should be neglected, and he acted accordingly in a fine spirit of patriotism and with the decision characteristic of the British naval service, taking on himself a heavy responsibility. He has since explained exactly what happened in a letter to Mr. Churchill :—

“ The news from abroad on the morning of July 26th was certainly, in my opinion, very disquieting, and when you called me up on the telephone from Cromer about lunch-time I was not at all surprised to hear you express the same view. You then asked me to take any steps which, in view of the foreign situation, might appear desirable. You reminded me, however, that I was in charge of the Admiralty, and should act without waiting to consult you. You also informed me you would return that night instead of next morning.

“ After making myself acquainted with all the telegrams which had reached the Foreign Office, and considering the different steps towards demobilization, which, in the ordinary course of events, would have commenced early next morning, I directed the Secretary, as a first step, to send an Admiralty Order by telegraph to the Commander-in-Chief of the Home Fleets at Portland to the effect that no ship was to leave that anchorage until further orders. For the time this was sufficient.

“ You fully approved of this when you returned, and we then, in perfect accord, decided upon the further orders as they became necessary, day by day.”

The German declaration of war against Russia and the invasion of Luxemburg as a preliminary to the over-running of Belgium moved the Admiralty on August 2nd to take the final step in placing the whole Navy on a war footing by calling out all the Reserves :

Notice is hereby given by their lordships that all Naval and Marine Pensioners under the age of fifty-five,

and all men of the Naval Fleet Reserve and Royal Navy Reserve, are to proceed forthwith to the ship or establishment already notified them, or, failing any previous orders, they are to report themselves in person immediately, as shown below, viz: Naval and Marine Pensioners, including men of Class A, Royal Fleet Reserve, to their pensioner centre officer. Royal Fleet Reserve, Class B, to their registrar at their port of enrolment. Royal Fleet Reserve, Immediate Class, in accordance with instructions already issued. Royal Navy Reserve, all classes, to the nearest registrar of Naval Reserve (superintendent of a Mercantile Marine office). Men of the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve are all to report themselves immediately to their officer instructor or volunteer mobilizing officer, irrespective of whether they have been previously appropriated or not. All men should, if possible, appear in uniform and bring with them their registration kit, certificate book or Service certificate, and in the case of pensioners their pension identity certificate. Men who through absence at sea, or for other unavoidable cause, are unable to join immediately, are to report themselves as soon as possible. Reasonable travelling expenses will be allowed. By command of the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty.

So admirable was the organization affecting the personnel which the naval authorities had built up during peace that on the evening of August 3rd the Admiralty were able to announce:—

The mobilization of the British Navy was completed in all respects at 4 o'clock this morning. This is due to

the measures taken and the voluntary response of the Reserve men in advance of the Royal Proclamation which has now been issued. The entire Navy is now on a war footing.

It was subsequently reported from the Foreign Office that a state of war existed between Great Britain and Germany as from 11 p.m. of August 4th, on which day Admiral Sir John Jellicoe relieved Sir George Callaghan,<sup>1</sup> an experienced and trusted officer who was unfortunately in his sixty-second year, as Commander-in-Chief, hoisting his flag in the battleship *Iron Duke*. On his appointment, the King sent the following message to Admiral Jellicoe :—

“ At this grave moment in our national history I send to you, and through you to the officers and men of the Fleets of which you have assumed command, the assurance of my confidence that under your direction they will revive and renew the old glories of the Royal Navy, and prove once again the sure shield of Britain and of her Empire in the hour of trial.”

In those circumstances the Navy was placed on a war footing before a state of war formally existed, and this country gained the initiative at sea. What did that mean? It meant that the British Fleet took the offensive against the enemy, and it has been on the offensive ever since. From the day when war was declared the German High Seas Fleet has never advanced beyond its shore guns and mine-protected areas without being impeached by

<sup>1</sup> Sir George Callaghan had flown his flag at sea continuously since November 16, 1906, when he hoisted it in the *Illustrious* as Rear-Admiral in the Channel Fleet, and in those eight years he had done much to increase the fighting efficiency and readiness of the Navy in Home waters. On coming ashore, he was appointed for special service on the Admiralty War Staff, and subsequently became Commander-in-Chief at the Nore.

British seamen and suffering loss. The successful mobilization of the British naval forces was no small incident to be dismissed as of little importance, but in fact changed the whole character of the war by sea and by land. It explains in large measure the subsequent course of events, and the absence of those dramatic incidents on which persons unfamiliar with sea affairs had confidently counted. The British Fleet imposed its will upon the enemy in virtue both of its material and moral strength, and the Germans over a period of three and a half years have persistently refused the challenge to a fight to a finish. They have thus exhibited wisdom, adopting, indeed, the only reasonable course which could be pursued in the circumstances.

There is a fundamental difference between naval power and military power. The latter attempts to invade an enemy's territory and overwhelm his army; sometimes, as for instance at Sedan, the whole defeated force surrenders with its accoutrements and baggage to the victorious troops. In naval war no contest for territory takes place as it takes place on land. The seas are all one, and to their use all the Powers of the world have a claim based in the indisputable law of nations. When war occurs between two maritime states, it is the object of each side to deny to the other freedom of the seas for military and economic purposes. The objective may be obtained either by driving the enemy fleets into their ports, or by destroying them. The former has been the invariable experience in modern times; never has a navy been absolutely destroyed. The nearest approximation to annihilation was provided in the Far East, when the Russian Fleet, badly found, badly manned, badly trained,

and badly handled, was defeated by the Japanese. The conditions of the war, particularly the strategical conditions, were quite exceptional, and no general conclusions can be drawn from the Japanese victory owing to the disparity in the standards of efficiency in the Russian and Japanese fleets.

When the British Fleet in the opening days of August, 1914, forced the German Fleet to adopt the defensive, it became certain that the war—at least in its early stages—would be marked by few dramatic occurrences at sea of the first importance, and certainly by no general fleet action. Apart from “incidents” which in the perspective of history will be regarded as unimportant, what has occurred at sea in a period of three and a half years? The record may be given in convenient summary form:—

August 28, 1914, Action in Heligoland Bight, resulting in the destruction of the German light cruisers *Mainz*, *Ariadne*, *Köln*, and several destroyers, with no loss of British ships. This daring exploit led the Germans to develop an elaborate scheme of defence in those waters by means of mines, submarines, destroyers, and aircraft.

November 1, 1914, Battle of Coronel. The armoured cruisers *Good Hope* and *Monmouth* and the light cruiser *Glasgow*, under Rear-Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock, were engaged by the German cruisers *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau*, *Leipzig* and *Nürnberg*, under Admiral von Spee, off Coronel, Chile, and the two first-named ships were sunk.

December 8, 1914, Battle of the Falkland Islands. Admiral von Spee's Squadron was defeated by a British

force under Admiral Sir F. C. Doveton Sturdee, every ship being sunk except the *Dresden*, which was scuttled at Juan Fernandez, off the Chilian coast, on March 15, 1915.

January 24, 1915, Action off the Dogger Bank. A number of German battle-cruisers and other ships, which were on their way to bombard the British coast, were intercepted by Admiral Sir David Beatty, with the result that the armoured cruiser *Blücher* was sunk and two German battle-cruisers, the *Seydlitz* and *Derfflinger*, seriously injured.

May 31, 1916, The Battle of Jutland. The German High Seas Fleet was drawn by Sir David Beatty on to the British Battle Fleet, broke off the action, and returned to its home ports, heavy losses being suffered on both sides, leaving the Grand Fleet in reaffirmed command of the North Sea.

That constitutes, in brief, the record of the only events at sea of primary importance, apart from the illegal and inhuman war conducted by enemy submarines.

The contrast between land and naval warfare, it is thus apparent, is most marked. During the whole or part of this period of three and a half years the armies of nine Powers—France, Russia, Italy, Great Britain, Belgium, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey and Bulgaria—were engaged in battles of great, if not first-class, importance. Millions of troops swept backwards and forwards over Central Europe, leaving scenes of desolation and misery in their train, no fewer than 5,000,000 prisoners being taken. On the other hand, the main fleets have exhibited little activity. No small



section of the inhabitants of the United Kingdom certainly experienced a sense of disappointment as week succeeded week in 1914, in 1915, in 1916 and in 1917, and no great and decisive naval battle was recorded either in the main strategical theatre—the North Sea—or in the Mediterranean.

That sense of disappointment is traceable to a misunderstanding of the radical differences between military and naval power. When the war opened, Germany and Austria-Hungary instantly took the offensive on land. This on the one hand. No sooner was the mobilization of the armies of France, Russia, Belgium, and Great Britain completed than it was assumed that news would soon come of more or less decisive engagements. That anticipation was realized. It rested upon the knowledge that each of these six armies had been created and mobilized for the purpose of invading the enemy's territory, or at least of defending its own, and by means of conquest forcing from a foe terms of peace which he would not concede except under pressure. Almost from the day on which hostilities became general in Central Europe, all the familiar frontiers were expunged. The boundaries of peace are artificial. They correspond neither with racial nor religious divisions ; they are the legacies of past wars. As soon as peace was broken, those frontiers ceased to have any permanent significance, because each of the Great Powers on the Continent entered upon war determined to do its best to change the line of demarcation between itself and neighbouring States. In no single case did a country submit to invasion without making strenuous efforts to resist the advance of the foe. The ultimate aims, offensive and defensive, of the Governments of the

belligerents on the Continent were identical ; they were all inspired with an ambition to hold what they had, and all except Great Britain and Belgium were determined to wrest from the enemy by force of arms something which they wanted, either in the way of territory, treasure, or political advantage.

On sea the conditions were entirely different. When the war became general, Germany faced the Russian Fleet on the one hand and the concentrated naval strength of Great Britain on the other ; in the Mediterranean the French Fleet, supported by a British Squadron, confronted the inferior Austro-Hungarian Navy ; in the Far East the naval forces of Japan, aided by the British Squadron in China waters, were opposed to small detachments of German and Austro-Hungarian men-of-war. In the land warfare on the Continent, as has been remarked, no single Power entertained for one moment the idea of voluntarily submitting to the will of an opposing belligerent. That, however, was precisely what the Central Powers did on the sea. With the exception of a relatively small number of German cruisers, the great navies of Germany and Austria-Hungary submitted voluntarily to the control of the seas by the fleets of the Allies.

This is not the place for paying tribute to the achievement of the British armies—in Belgium and in France, in the Near East and in Egypt, in Mesopotamia and Palestine, and in German East Africa, and it would be invidious to attempt to contrast the record of British arms ashore with the record of British arms by sea. But, on the other hand, in view of the distinctive features of naval and military war—the former silent, and the latter

marked by frequent incidents of a stirring character appealing to the popular imagination—some attempt may be made to answer the oft-repeated question, “ What has the Navy done ? ”

Since the opening of the war the British Fleet, acting on the offensive from August 4th, 1914, onwards, has achieved with triumphant success ends of primary military value.

(1) The High Seas Fleet of Germany, the creation of which involved an outlay of £300,000,000, has been “ contained ” in its home ports. The inconveniences of war to the British people, and to the peoples of neutral countries, have thus been largely localized ; those inconveniences would have been far greater, for instance, if the struggle in the early phase of the war had seriously interfered with movements in the Atlantic or the Pacific—if, in short, the war had not been strictly localized so far as the main fleets were concerned. The British Fleet also rendered invaluable aid to the Allied cause by assisting to check the rush of the German armies down the coast to Calais, which was determined upon by the Germans as an alternative to the seizure of Paris, when the scheme to reach the capital was defeated.

(2) Five and a half million gross tons of German shipping and one million gross tons of Austrian shipping have been driven off the seas or captured. Germany's mercantile marine ranked second only to that of Great Britain ; for some years she held “ the blue ribbon of the Atlantic ” ; she was Britain's serious rival in every sea, and had practically captured the trade on the West Coast of Africa and with Brazil and Argentina. All the activities in the Seven Seas of the German and Austro-

Hungarian mercantile marines ceased from the first week of August, 1914. That paralysis has represented an immense loss of income, heavy depreciation, and colossal charges for the maintenance of the vessels besieged in neutral ports, while a large tonnage has been captured.

(3) The oversea trade of Germany and Austria-Hungary has been strangled, owing to the ubiquity and efficiency of British sea-power. In 1913 the foreign trade of Germany amounted to £1,021,400,000, and of this about 70 per cent was ocean borne. The foreign trade of Austria-Hungary in the same year was valued at £256,562,000; 50 per cent of this trade was probably ocean borne. Consequently Germany and her ally have been denied, by the loss of their sea communications, trade of an annual value of £863,260,000; that represents the fine which the British Fleet, in association with the fleets of the Allies, has imposed on these two belligerents since war broke out. Some trade in neutral bottoms was carried on in the early days of the war, and the net loss has probably amounted to about £2,500,000,000 in the past three and a half years.

(4) The German Colonial Empire has been torn from the enemy. On these possessions, representing five times the area of the Fatherland, Germany, down to 1908, had spent £56,990,000, and the outlay in the subsequent six years having been at the rate approximately of £1,500,000 a year, she must have spent upon her colonies altogether £66,000,000. The results of that expenditure have been lost to Germany, owing to the isolation which British sea-power imposed when the war opened, and the subsequent overseas expeditions which were undertaken by Britain and her Dominions and by Japan.

(5) There were about 30,000,000 persons of German, Austrian, or Hungarian nationality, or origin, resident in foreign countries when the war opened. At the lowest estimate, 2,000,000 were men of military age who might have crossed the seas to fight in Europe but for the barrier imposed by British men-of-war. In this way, the supreme naval Power made no inconsiderable contribution to the comparative strength of the Allied armies. The two million of additional men might have turned the scale decisively in the earlier period of the war.

That statement represents offensive blows struck at the Central Powers by the supreme British Fleet, supported by the navies of the Allies. On the other hand, the British Fleet, while denying to the enemies the use of the seas, has secured to the British peoples and their Allies ocean communication with the markets of the world. It is impossible to present in a few sentences a complete conspectus on this side of the war ledger of the aid which British sea-power has rendered. The following is a brief summary :—

(1) British shipping has been as active in war time as it was during peace, and had suffered only insignificant losses until the enemies resorted to piracy with the aid of submarines.

(2) British oversea trade, except with the belligerents, has been maintained, subject, of course, to the weakening process resulting from the absorption of man power in the new armies.

(3) Neither the United Kingdom nor a single British Dominion, Colony, or Dependency has been invaded or seriously molested by enemy naval forces.

(4) Forty-five million people of the United Kingdom

have been fed from day to day, whereas it was once believed by those who had little fear of invasion that they might have to suffer grievous privation, even if the poorest and least thrifty were not brought face to face with starvation.

(5) Apart from preventing enemy subjects and sympathizers from neutral countries reaching Europe, the British Fleet has contributed materially to the military strength of the Allies on the Continent—

(a) By guarding the transport to the Continent of the original Expeditionary Force and large reinforcements and maintaining a constant stream of supplies. About 15,000,000 soldiers, nurses and others have been escorted oversea, together with 2,250,000 horses and mules, 250,000,000 tons of explosives and Army supplies, and upwards of 500,000 tons of vehicles.

(b) By providing safe escort for the original contingents and subsequent reinforcements from the Oversea Dominions and India.

(c) By providing a screen behind which the new British Armies have been recruited, trained, and equipped in perfect security and tranquillity. In the spring of 1914 the active Army—Regular forces—voted by Parliament numbered 178,000 men; in the early months of 1917 the numbers in the active Army voted by Parliament had been increased to 5,500,000, apart from troops contributed by the British Dominions and Colonies and the aid furnished by India.

(d) By giving the British military authorities and the Governments of Belgium, France, and Russia access to the world's markets for war munitions, food and clothing.

(6) British finance and British credit, as well as that of the Allies, have been reinforced by the completeness with which the British Navy has supported British prestige in the eyes of the world, and given security to commercial activities. By enabling British and other firms to make good deficiencies in the supplies which the Allies needed British sea-power has contributed to bring unemployment in the United Kingdom down to a lower figure than has been experienced in this country at any period in the past.

The influence which the course of the naval war has had upon the German Empire and upon the psychological condition of the German people can be appreciated only at its real value if the hopes and anticipations with which the German Navy was created are borne in mind. The people of the German Empire were told that the British Empire was a house of cards, to fall apart at the first touch ; that the British people were effete and could not fight ; and that British naval supremacy, the mainstay of the Empire, was so monstrous a yoke on other nations that it was only necessary for one country—Germany in her might and efficiency—to declare war for all the rest to come into line with her.

“What is the sense,” wrote Dehn, “of this seizure of hundreds of islands and thousands of territories in all quarters of the globe? There is no land- or sea-Power capable of maintaining for ever such a system of occupation. A good shove, and the ill-jointed mosaic falls in ruins.” Rathgen added that “German colonies are not now of much account, but we must remember that in 1600 the world was divided between Spaniards and Portuguese till the Netherlands, France, and above

all, England divided it anew. What has happened once may happen again."

When the moment came for Germany to strike, the British Empire was to fall to pieces, and the Germans were to take what they liked of it. That is what the people of Germany were led to believe. The goal was to be reached by the exercise of sea-power, giving length of reach to the supreme German Army. The German troops were to be escorted by the Fleet to any part of the world where German ambition had a task to perform. Germans were told by Ratzel that "the present great naval superiority of Britain is a relic from the past, surviving into the present. The old sharp contrast between sea-Powers and land-Powers is gone. The nineteenth-century wars, which were decided exclusively by land, will soon be looked upon with wonder." That was the underlying thought of the famous Memorandum which accompanied the Navy Act of 1900. "Our future lies on the water," the Kaiser urged; "the trident must be in our hands." "We are undoubtedly the best warrior people in the world" declared Bley; "we are the best soldiers, the best seamen, even the best merchants; the modern world owes to us Germans pretty well everything in the way of great achievement that it has to show."

Ten or twelve years ago the average Englishman regarded those statements as indications of individual swelled-head; they were, in fact, characteristic of the nation. The German people believed that they were the chosen race of the future, that the British people were effete, that the German Fleet would defeat the British Fleet—an old, conservative, and inefficient institution, and that they would inherit the British Empire, which



was destined to go the way of the Empires of Greece, Rome, Holland, Spain, and Portugal. The twentieth century was, they held, by every right Germany's, and by the use of her sea-power she would make it hers. Militarism ashore was to be yoked to navalism afloat, and Germany—supreme on land and sea—would place the world in her double harness. "Here we are," wrote Sering, in the early days of the naval movement, "a people of nearly sixty millions, on a territory smaller than Texas, with a yearly increment of 800,000 souls, with a gigantic export industry and foreign trade—threatened in the highest degree by the policy of exclusion and annexation on which the world-empires have embarked." Treitschke years ago hoped "to live to see the collapse of the British maritime supremacy"; every German entertained the same confident hope in August, 1914.

Such were the views that were expressed unofficially in Germany during the period when, with all haste and at a vast sacrifice of treasure, the new German Fleet was being created. But we have official declarations as well as these unofficial statements to remind us of what the Germans believed their sea-power would achieve. The Memorandum which accompanied the German Navy Act of 1900 contained an exposition of German naval policy, expressed with all the restraint suitable to an official document. In this declaration of policy the Germans were reminded of the disaster which would overtake them if they were unable to retain the use of the seas :—

"For the German Empire of to-day the security of its economic development, and especially of its world-trade, is a life question. For this purpose the German Empire needs not only peace on land, but also peace at sea—not, however, peace

at any price, but peace with honour, which satisfies its just requirements.

“ A naval war for economic interests, particularly for commercial interests, will probably be of long duration, for the aim of a superior opponent will be all the more completely reached the longer the war lasts. To this must be added that a naval war which, after the destruction or shutting-up of the German sea-fighting force, was confined to the blockade of the coast and the capture of merchant ships, would cost the opponent little; indeed, he would, on the contrary, amply cover the expenses of the war by the simultaneous improvement of his own trade.

*“ An unsuccessful naval war of the duration of even only a year would destroy Germany's sea trade, and would thereby bring about the most disastrous conditions, first in her economic, and then, as an immediate consequence of that, in her social life.*

“ Quite apart from the consequences of the possible peace conditions, the destruction of our sea trade during the war could not, even at the close of it, be made good within measurable time, and would thus add to the sacrifices of the war a serious economic depression.”

It was assumed throughout the Memorandum that the new German Fleet would be able to protect Germany's territory, sea trade, and colonies. “ For this purpose it is not absolutely necessary that the German battle fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest naval Power, for a great naval Power will not, as a rule, be in a position to concentrate all its striking forces against us.” That anticipation, owing to the reorganization and redistribution of the British Navy carried out under the inspiration of Lord Fisher, was not realized. In the outer seas German cruisers were to conduct active operations against the British Dominions and against British ocean-borne trade. Within a few months this corsair policy, so diffi-

cult to defeat in view of the vast areas of sea to be covered, fell in ruins.

In the circumstances it is not difficult to gauge the bitter feelings of a proud and boastful people, nurtured on fantastic hopes, when confronted with the series of events which have occurred in the naval war since August, 1914. Submarine piracy was not only an infraction of the laws of nations, since submarines cannot rescue crews or passengers, but an admission of defeat on the sea, wrung from a country desperate in the knowledge of her increasing weakness owing to the economic pressure exercised on her vast population of nearly 70,000,000 souls.

The British Navy has produced an exhibit of which officers and men may be proud. It has achieved in less than four years more than the British Navy of a hundred years or so ago accomplished in twenty years.

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## THE ARMY TO THE NAVY

“THE debt which the Army owes to the Navy grows ever greater as the years pass, and is deeply realised by all ranks of the British Armies in France. As the result of the unceasing vigilance of the Navy, the enemy's hope that his policy of unrestricted submarine warfare would hamper our operations in France and Flanders has been most signally disappointed. The immense quantities of ammunition and material required by the Army, and the large numbers of men sent to us as drafts, continue to reach us with unfailing regularity.”—Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig's Despatch, *London Gazette*, January 18, 1918.



# THE BRITISH FLEET IN THE GREAT WAR

## CHAPTER I

### THE FOUNDATIONS OF VICTORY

WE have been saved by our Navy, built under the influence of panics, from the worst consequences of war—the invasion of these islands, the disintegration of the Empire, and the strangulation of our ocean-borne commerce, which is the life-blood of the British peoples, distributed over the world's seas. The Fleet has also enabled us to save Europe and, it may be, the world from the domination of Germany. Behind the screen provided by the Navy we have trained and equipped new armies, constituted ourselves, in some degree, the paymasters of the Allies, and placed at their disposal the industrial resources of the United Kingdom and, in large measure also, of the United States, besides assuring to them and ourselves supplies of raw material which have been readily obtainable, owing to our command of the sea, from British Dominions as well as distant foreign countries.

That we narrowly escaped the worst results of unpreparedness is open to no serious doubt. Rightly or wrongly—and the matter is one of some complexity—we persisted, in spite of the gathering clouds on the Continent,

in our intention to provide only an Expeditionary Force for Imperial purposes, supported by a volunteer army for home defence. That on the one hand. On the other, if we had possessed an army comparable in size and in organization with that of Germany, and had neglected to provide a Navy adequate for the defence of the Empire's maritime communications, all our efforts, our money, and our organization would have been in vain. From the day when the war began, the British Fleet, inferior to the naval forces possessed by the enemy, would have been compelled to fight with the odds against it, possibly sustaining defeat, or would have been led by its very weakness to shelter in its harbours as the German Navy has done. In either event we should not have possessed any sort of command of the sea. The Empire would have become an unassociated collection of territories, each open to naval attack; British oversea commerce, if not strangled from the first, would have been conducted in an atmosphere of danger afloat which would have quickly brought about conditions of the gravest privation, perhaps actual starvation, in the British Isles; shipowners, rather than face the risks, would have sent their vessels into neutral ports. Our divorce from the sea would have resulted in the defeat of all our hopes, and, in due course, in our ruin. The Expeditionary Force, or any greater Army, would have been imprisoned in the United Kingdom, and it would have been a useless task—if not impossible—to raise great armies, unneeded for the purposes of home defence and unable to fulfil their destined rôle on the Continent owing to the command of the sea being in dispute, or having passed into the hands of the enemy. The cable from day to day would have told us of the

patriotic devotion with which the Dominions looked to the Mother Country in her hour of trial, and we should have realized that their spirit of loyalty could find no form of expression owing to the snapping of the life-line of the Empire.

These would have been some of the consequences resulting from armed weakness at sea, so far as the people of the British Isles were concerned. But the consequences would have been widespread. What would have been the fate of Europe? There can be no doubt that Russia, rather than abandon the Slavs of the Balkans to Teutonic spoliation, would, in the temper of July, 1914, have thrown down the gage to Austria; under their treaty engagements Germany and France would have joined in the war. Whatever the feelings of the people of the British Isles, they would have been unable to render to our Allies of today any assistance, naval, military, financial, or industrial. The inhabitants of the United Kingdom and of the great Dominions overseas would have been the helpless spectators of a course of events that must have left civilization wounded, if not lifeless, and have forced the world to contemplate a new era in which, north, east, south, and west, might on land and on sea would have been right; the figure of the German Kaiser would have stood out from the graveyard of a Europe murdered and trampled under foot, as the master of the world's destinies in virtue of his command of its largest and most efficient army and its unconquered fleet.<sup>1</sup>

That is the fate from which we and the world narrowly escaped. Those who doubt the imminence of the triumph

<sup>1</sup> The German Navy was second only in strength to the British Fleet at the opening of the war, and was superior to the combined navies of France, Italy, and Russia.

of a regime reminiscent of the dark Middle Ages must be unfamiliar with the records of Hansard, containing the reports of the debates on successive Navy Estimates, and must have forgotten the attitude adopted by a large section of the people of the British Isles—or, at any rate, of their representatives in the House of Commons—towards our naval defences.

The Fleet with which we won the command of the sea on August 3rd, 1914, was a panic-built Fleet. Let that fact be noted by those who take pride in the part we are playing in the war now convulsing the world. How we obtained our Navy is a story told up to a point by Mr. Cobden, the sequel being supplied by Mr. F. W. Hirst, whose efforts were supplemented by publications issued by the National Peace Council. Further light was thrown on the subject by a volume entitled *The Burden of Armaments*, issued under the auspices of the Cobden Club in 1905. Those books and pamphlets were written with the intention of making the flesh creep of those persons who had inherited, in all their purity, the economic principles of the Manchester school. They were issued in order to exhibit, in the naked light of pacificism, the vast sums of money spent on armaments, and particularly naval armaments, to no useful purpose, as was claimed. The contention was that the country had been made, on successive occasions, the dupe of armament firms, described generically as "war traders," who had used their influence with the "armour-plate" Press—into which category came all papers which patriotically demanded "an unchallengeable Fleet," to borrow Mr. Asquith's phrase.

How did we, in fact, obtain our Fleet? The answer



may be found in a volume entitled *The Six Panics*.<sup>1</sup> The purpose with which this volume was written was explained by the author in a preface :—

“ My object in writing *The Six Panics* has not been so much to prevent the recurrence of false alarms in a sensational Press—for no reasonable man can hope to do that—as to prevent the abominable waste of public money in which a panic always ends. It is all-important that the governing classes and the leading statesmen, who are trustees for the nation and for the public funds, should feel ashamed of the hoax which has now been practised upon them so often. If this little volume serves to supply them with defensive armour against the arrows of future panic-mongers, I shall be very well satisfied.”

The author proceeded to give, from his narrow point of view, the history of the series of movements for more adequate armaments, and to describe, in particular, the methods by which the sea instinct and the dangers associated with its neglect were emphasized by the most intelligent section of the British people between the years 1847 and 1913. In the later years of the nineteenth, and during the present century, the naval movement owed much to the patriotism of members of the Navy League, with its branches throughout this country and the Dominions. It focussed the anxiety which was expressed from time to time as to the adequacy of our naval defences, and to the Navy League the nation is indebted in large degree for the repeated measures which were adopted for strengthening the Fleet.

First Panic.—Due to a letter in *The Times* from the great Duke of Wellington, pointing out the inadequacy of

<sup>1</sup> *The Six Panics and other Essays*, by F. W. Hirst. (Methuen & Co., 1913.)

the Fleet and urging the need for a larger Army to prevent invasion.

Second Panic, 1852.—This was due to the *coup d'état* of the previous December and the re-election of Louis Napoleon as President of the French Republic.

Third Panic, 1859—1861.—Public uneasiness was occasioned by the writings and speeches of Admiral Sir Charles Napier and the provocation offered by Napoleon III.

Fourth Panic, 1884.—Mr. W. T. Stead, assisted by Mr. H. O. Arnold Foster (both of them inspired, as is now well known, by Admiral of the Fleet Lord Fisher), published a series of articles in the *Pall Mall Gazette* exposing to the astonished country the weakness of the Navy.

Lord Northbrooke, in the House of Lords, had stated, in reply to a speech by the Marquis of Salisbury, that he would be at a loss to spend the money if the House of Commons put three millions into his hand. Mr. Stead's subsequent articles and the statements which appeared over the initials "A. F.," together with many letters from distinguished naval officers and others, led to a crisis. "A cry of patriotic anxiety rising in the country to which no Ministry could close its ears" eventually led the Government to introduce a special programme covering five years and involving an expenditure of five and a half millions sterling on shipbuilding, naval ordnance, and coaling stations. Lord Northbrooke's proposals were demonstrably inadequate, and the agitation continued, with increasing fervour, until Lord George Hamilton introduced the Naval Defence Act, 1889, to be followed by the extension programme, which will always be honourably associated with the name of the late Earl Spencer.

Fifth, or Dreadnought, Panic, 1909.—“By what means,” it was remarked in this connection in *The Six Panics*—and the words bear recalling to-day—“the armament people managed to induce Mr. Balfour’s Government to build the first Dreadnought and to advertize it as a ship which had made all previous battleships obsolete is a mystery not likely to be cleared up during the lifetime of the individuals chiefly concerned.” The author of those words was wrong in this, as in other statements in his book, for Germany has already supplied the solution. “The Dreadnoughts,” he added, “cost far more than they appeared to do. Even if they had not been imitated they would have been an economic and naval blunder of the first magnitude”; and he made the statement that “in February (1909) it leaked out that Mr. McKenna [then First Lord of the Admiralty] had put forward demands for a great increase of naval expenditure. It was broadly hinted in the Press that otherwise his Naval Board would have mutinied, and it was reported in reliable quarters that dissensions had broken out in the Cabinet.<sup>1</sup> The main question was whether four Dreadnoughts or more should be provided. It also became known that Mr. McKenna had come back from a trip in the Admiralty yacht ‘converted,’ as the *Annual Register* puts it, ‘by Sir John Fisher to the principle of a strong Navy.’”

Sixth, or Airship, Panic, 1913.—“Towards the end of February, 1913,” it was stated by the author of *The Six Panics*, “after Mr. Churchill’s proposal for a 1·6 ratio (eight Dreadnoughts British to five German) had been

<sup>1</sup> The Board of Admiralty in fact resigned in order to bring the majority of Mr. Asquith’s Cabinet to reason.

accepted by Admiral von Tirpitz,<sup>1</sup> the panic-mongers decided that the naval situation was too unpromising, and fell back upon air. Public anxiety was aroused by reports of airships appearing over England."

There is little reason to doubt that the airships came from Germany, and were carrying out reconnaissances. Commenting upon the series of disturbing incidents which then occurred, the author of this volume declared: "The Zeppelins may be the best airships in existence, but their value for offensive purposes is practically nil, and their value as observation vessels is much disputed even by German experts, who point out that the great disadvantage of the rigid system is the complete dependence of the ship upon its shed, to which it must return at the end of every trip."

That, in briefest summary, is the record of the six panics. If it had not been for those outbursts of public opinion, how should we have been situated in August, 1914? Gradually in the years following upon the Crimean War the Navy had been reduced until it was a mere shadow of its necessary size. Had this movement continued, and had no panics occurred, we should have awakened from our policy of "peace, retrenchment, and reform" to find the life-line of the Empire gone and the Germans masters of the sea. That was the enemy's confident anticipation in 1900, when his second Navy Act was passed, providing for a Fleet comprising thirty-eight battleships, sixteen large cruisers, and thirty small cruisers, besides large torpedo flotillas. Such an establishment of modern battleships exceeded that to which we

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Churchill of course made no such unconditional offer, nor was Mr. Churchill's suggestion accepted by the German Government.

had attained, even with the aid of the succession of panics, by the beginning of the present century, and the Germans unquestionably looked forward to commanding the sea against us. Fortunately public opinion on the British side of the North Sea was kept alive to the danger, and the peril was averted.

The fourth and fifth panics are of peculiar interest. The former led to the adoption of the principle of the Two Power Standard, to which both the great political Parties in this country at least paid lip service ; and the latter gave us the large armoured ships—super-Dreadnoughts—which decisively turned the scale in our favour when the European War broke out and discouraged the Germans from making any attempt to dispute the command of the sea.

As we owe the survival of the sea instinct in our midst to the succession of panics which took place during the Victorian period, so our success at sea during the present war may be traced in large measure to the foresight, political wisdom, and technical skill which led to the adoption of the all-big-gun principle in the battleship *Dreadnought*. Between 1900 and the opening of what may be described as the Dreadnought era—the era of the all-big-gun ship—the number of battleships with mixed armaments laid down by the leading naval Powers was as follows :—

	Number laid down between 1900 and 1906.
Great Britain . . . . .	15
Germany . . . . .	12
United States . . . . .	14
France . . . . .	11
Italy . . . . .	5
Austria . . . . .	6
Japan . . . . .	3

What was the situation in 1905, when the design of the Dreadnought was prepared and approved? That question is the vital one, if any effort is to be made to judge the value of the Dreadnought revolution. The war with Japan was drawing to a close. It was already apparent that Russia would emerge from the struggle practically denuded of all naval strength. Therefore the old basis upon which the Two Power Standard rested, namely, a 10 per cent superiority in battleships over the next two greatest naval Powers, which for many years had been France and Russia, would be unsound, and it was realized that for the future the Fleet which would most powerfully influence British policy would be that of Germany. The German Navy Law of 1900 was about to be amended so as to increase the provision of large cruisers; an agitation was already under way for a further acceleration of battleship construction, and this agitation eventually culminated in the further amending Act of 1908, which increased the number of battleships to be provided immediately for the fleet. At this moment of extreme difficulty the war in the Far East, happily for British sea-power, shed a new light upon many naval problems, and in particular it showed that the decisive factor in a naval engagement was not, as had been supposed, the secondary armament of battleships—6-inch guns—but the primary armament of heavy weapons, 12-inch or larger guns. The aim of British policy, as soon as this truth was recognized, was to design a new type of battleship carrying the maximum number of 12-inch guns to bear upon the broadside. The war also illustrated the great strategical and tactical advantage of high speed, and further showed the necessity

of strengthening the hulls of ships in order the better to resist torpedo attack.

Those were the conditions when it was found that British sea-power had been challenged by Germany and was declining. Realizing that the Dreadnought design was inevitable, the British Admiralty determined to lead the way and gain every possible naval and economic advantage. Having what was roughly a numerical equality with the United States, on the one hand, and with Germany on the other, in modern mixed calibre ships, we reasserted our superiority in all-big-gun ships. The essential character of the Dreadnought was not great size or cost, but great hitting capacity, great speed, and great power of resistance on a limited displacement to an enemy's attack.

At that time our naval power rested mainly upon the very large number of ships which had been built under the Naval Defence Act of 1889 and under the Spencer programme. Those ships in 1905 were becoming obsolete, and it was realized that either they must be replaced within the next few years or our naval supremacy would be a thing of the past. Heavy arrears were accumulating. As a result of a very careful consideration of all the factors of the situation, the Dreadnought was adopted. What was the effect upon foreign rivalry ?

(1) For over eighteen months the design of armoured ships in foreign countries ceased, because details of our new types were kept secret, while the British shipyards were engaged in the construction of the *Dreadnought* and the three *Invincibles* and their younger sisters.

(2) Simultaneously with the appearance of the *Dreadnought*, the pre-Dreadnought ships then in hand in foreign

yards became obsolescent. It is true the same depreciation was inflicted upon the vessels in hand for the British Navy, but the effect at home was slight in comparison with that upon foreign construction. The British Fleet had in hand only 7 ships, five of the *King Edward* class of 16,350 tons, and the *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon* of 16,500 tons; on the other hand, the United States had under construction 13 vessels; Germany, 8; France, 6; Russia, 5; Italy, 4; and Japan, 2. While the *Dreadnought* affected injuriously the value of seven British vessels then under construction, it relegated to the background thirty-eight ships then building for the six other great Powers of the world.

(3) By this courageous stroke of policy the Admiralty avoided the necessity of making good arrears of armoured shipbuilding which were mounting up. Instead of replacing the obsolescent British battleships with vessels ranking, *pari passu*, with the men-of-war with mixed armaments then building in foreign yards, it practically "cleaned the slate," and started upon a fresh basis with a type of ship so immensely superior as a fighting machine to anything which had been known hitherto that at once foreign naval departments were paralysed. And thus the British Fleet regained by one stroke of policy the naval supremacy which it was in serious danger of losing.

(4) The introduction of the Dreadnought consequently effected a vast saving, since arrears were wiped out in the construction of mixed armament ships which otherwise would have had to be made up, and we were enabled to begin afresh with a start of about eighteen months over all rivals.

The war has supplied the most ample confirmation of



the wisdom of the action taken by the Board of Admiralty when, in all secrecy, the first Dreadnought battleship and the first three Dreadnought battle-cruisers were built for the British Navy and the new shipbuilding policy was inaugurated. The proof is conclusive. In an article which he contributed to the *New York World*, at the conclusion of the first year of naval war, Count Reventlow remarked :—

“ When, a year ago, the German Fleet entered the great contest it was not in a state of completion, as many persons abroad believe it to have been.

“ At that time the German Fleet had been for some fifteen years in the process of being regularly built up, for the ‘ big Navy ’ Bill had not become law until the autumn of 1900. . . . It was calculated at that time that the rebuilding of the Fleet would be completed in 1920.

“ *In 1906, however, came the great Dreadnought revolution in shipbuilding, which quickly rendered worthless all ships built before that time (pre-Dreadnoughts), and compelled tremendous enlargements of wharves, harbours, and canals, gigantic extension of organization, etc.* The work of completing the German Fleet would have extended itself far beyond the year 1920 under these conditions. If one, furthermore, takes into consideration that, as the authorities of all lands acknowledge, experience shows that it requires not fifteen, but thirty years to build up a fleet, with everything that belongs thereto on water and on land, it is clear that the German Fleet was far from being ready in the summer of 1914. . . .”

This confession of the success of British naval policy was wrung from Count Reventlow, the satellite of Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, at that time the Naval Secretary, by the failure of the German Fleet to achieve any one of the purposes for which it was created. For once this German naval writer was right. The Dreadnought policy

of Lord Fisher postponed the completion of the German Fleet for a period of ten years, with the result that the task was only half completed when the war occurred. But for the construction of this revolutionary ship, the German Navy, owing to the policy laid down in the Navy Act of 1900, would have been in a favourable position to contest the command of the sea with us unless in 1905, or a somewhat later year, in place of the construction of the *Dreadnought*, we had had another panic. In that event far larger expenditure would have been thrown upon British taxpayers in the effort to overtake the arrears in mixed armament battleships which had already accumulated.

But the Dreadnought policy achieved an even greater success than that represented by making obsolete Germany's pre-Dreadnought battleships. It threw on Germany the necessity of a vast expenditure, out of all proportion to the similar expenditure we had to incur. The whole naval organization of Germany had been created on the basis of a 13,000-ton battleship. The coming of the *Dreadnought* rendered it obligatory to spend upwards of £11,000,000 on the enlargement of the Kiel Canal, and other large sums had to be devoted to deepening Germany's shallow harbours, enlarging dockyards and workshops, while Krupp's were forced to extend their facilities for the manufacture of large naval guns. All these developments took time, and it was time lost to Germany and time gained to us in reasserting our supremacy at a minimum of cost. As a result of, first, the Dreadnought policy, secondly, the panic of 1909, when Mr. McKenna shared the honours with Lord Fisher, and, thirdly, the education of public opinion by the

“sensational Press” as to the primary importance of the Fleet, when the war occurred we had reasserted the supremacy which ten years before was assured only by a margin in ships then obsolescent.

And when at last the war closes—as close it will in the triumph of our cause, owing in the main to the triumph of our sea-power—what will be the attitude of the British people towards the Navy? Over a hundred years ago we won the command of the sea at a vast expenditure of men and treasure, and then, with the support of the Fleet, fought with our armies on the Continent, as we are fighting to-day, and brought to Europe the blessings of peace after more than twenty years of almost uninterrupted war. How were the lessons of the war applied? In 1815, the expenditure upon the Navy amounted to nearly nine times the sum at which it had stood in 1790; whereas in the latter year the number of officers and men voted was 20,000, under the pressure of war the personnel eventually reached a total of 145,000, largely owing to the energetic action of the press-gang. Our forefathers concluded that peace had come to stay, a permanent guest of the peoples of the Old and New Worlds. Gradually the demand for peace, retrenchment, and reform gained in strength, and all political parties, in varying degree, conspired to reduce our defences to a mere shadow of what was necessary for security. The expenditure on the Navy, which exceeded £19,000,000 in 1815 (including £2,000,000 towards paying off the Navy Debt), rapidly fell until in 1835 it amounted to only £4,434,783, and the number of officers and men was reduced to 26,041. It was not until the Crimean War occurred to convict the nation, for the moment only, of its folly by revealing our defences in a condition of chaotic

confusion and deplorable inadequacy, that the Navy Estimates were increased. Whereas they stood at just over £7,000,000 in 1853, they were raised in the following year to upwards of £15,000,000, and then jumped to £19,500,000 in 1855, though the Russian Navy could exert little influence on the course of events. Those were days when, owing to the wooden sailing ships and the close relations existing between the merchant fleet and the war navy, still untouched by the hand of science, naval power could be created, at a cost, swiftly and more or less efficiently. A naval "slump" occurred on the conclusion of peace, and it persisted almost without a break until the Naval Defence Act was passed in 1889, for the panics, which intervened, never gave to the country that margin of strength which would ensure its safety beyond peradventure.

Our naval policy in the years which followed the Crimean War was overlaid by a misunderstanding of the significance of events. The Crimean War was succeeded by the Indian Mutiny, the Second and Third Chinese Wars, the Abyssinian Expedition, the Ashantee War, the operations in Afghanistan, the Zulu War, the campaign in the Transvaal, and the operations in Egypt, all fixing on the mind of the public the importance of the Army. It was not realized that the military forces, on each and every occasion, were carried by the Fleet, and that without command of the sea no one of those operations could have been prosecuted. Over a long period of years the House of Commons, ignoring the basic principles by which a maritime empire must be defended, voted sums for the Army which exceeded the amounts expended on the Fleet. It was not until 1895 that the Navy

Estimates, for the first time in our modern history, exceeded the sum devoted to the maintenance of the Army. In this wise were the lessons enforced by the series of events which linked the Battle of Trafalgar with the Bombardment of Alexandria interpreted by successive Governments.

We are again engaged in war, the greatest war which has ever been waged. From day to day the newspapers report the doings of the armies confronting each other in Europe, in Asia, and in Africa. Our gaze is fixed in fascination on the terrible picture which the reports suggest of the activities of vast forces in the eastern and western theatres across the Channel, and we have watched with anguish the heroic struggles in the Gallipoli Peninsula, in Mesopotamia, in Palestine, and in East Africa. When peace, the only possible peace, is proclaimed, what will be the insistent lesson which we shall draw from this titanic struggle? The apparent glory of achievement will rest with the heroic armies of the Entente Powers. Seeing the effects of victory, shall we fail to see behind the gallant troops the shadowy forms of the battleships, cruisers, destroyers, and submarines of the supreme British Fleet, reinforced by the inferior naval forces of France, Italy, and the United States? Shall we translate our impressions into acts imperilling the existence of every British interest, and swell our military budget to the neglect of the first line of our defence?

That is the danger which will confront the country when the war draws to its close. Never more than at that moment will the country stand in need of wise and clear-sighted interpreters of the meaning and significance of events. However heavy the casualties, several million

officers and men of the new armies will return to their homes to receive the hardly-won wreaths of victory. They will be missionaries in our midst. They will bring to us their personal experiences of the battlefield. They will be impressed—as who would not be impressed?—by all that they will have seen and done and suffered. The tendency will be to repeat in our political experience the errors of policy which were committed by our forefathers ; impressed by the influence of military power, and forgetful of the silent and overwhelming pressure of naval power, the temptation will be to make such a division of the necessarily limited defence fund of a commonwealth of islanders as will lead to the expansion of our military forces to the inevitable neglect of the Navy.

## CHAPTER II

### NAVAL AND MILITARY POWER

**I**N the Armageddon which has laid waste vast areas of the continent of Europe, we must win by the invincible influence of the weapons which we wield as a sea-surrounded kingdom, the island fortress of a great maritime Empire knit together by the seas which we command. Moreover, we shall win our final victories by our military and economic strength. That may seem a strange saying. We are a people who make it our boast in time of peace that we have "a supreme Fleet, but practically no Army." Nevertheless, it is by our land power, the extension of our sea power—the sword which we are drawing from the sea—that we shall triumph on the final day over the great armies of our enemies. The British Army is, and must always be, the extension of invincible sea power.

In times of peace we resisted the temptation to take upon ourselves the burden of conscription. We are now reaping from the land the harvest of the seed we sowed in the sea. Owing to our geographical situation we were able to employ our manhood in the years of peace in creating those economic factors in the State which are among its most powerful weapons: our gold and silver bullets are more deadly than bullets from rifles. It was upon those economic foundations, screened from serious injury by the fleets at sea while continental countries were suffer-

ing the exhaustion which necessarily accompanies war on land, that we built up the military machine which must inevitably, in association with the armies of the Allies, humble to the dust the sixth military tyrant who has risen in the world since the British people became the guardians of liberty. Charlemagne, Charles V, Philip II of Spain, Louis XIV of France, and Napoleon in turn struggled to become the master of Europe. In each case the aspirant to dominion was brought to defeat by a country which has never possessed a great standing army—has never been a nation in arms—but has believed that its power rests on the sea, and that from the sea that power will arise in time of crisis to repel the deadliest blows.

The peace strategy of a maritime Power differs essentially from that of a military Power. When war comes there is also a fundamental difference between the war strategy of the one and the other, and the means by which organized violence is exercised in pursuit of national policy. Lord Kitchener, in a memorandum on Imperial defence which he prepared for the Commonwealth Government, made a statement which may be recalled with profit at this moment :—

“ It is an axiom held by the British Government that the Empire’s existence depends primarily upon the maintenance of adequate and efficient naval forces.”

The British peoples are incurably maritime—by geographical distribution, by instinct, and by political bias, because sea power has always suggested freedom. At the moment when war broke out our naval power stood high—we were nearly twice as strong as the next greatest sea-



Power ; at the moment, but only at the moment, our military power stood low in comparison with the enormous forces—a total of about 15,000,000 men—which were immediately mobilized in Europe. Consequently, in the early stages of the war, the influence which we could exert most powerfully and most usefully to ourselves and those associated with us was at sea. From the beginning our first line of defence was our first line of offence. The North Sea became “ a closed lake.” German trade was strangled, German shipping driven off the seas, and the German colonial empire divorced from the motherland and overwhelmed in detail.

In the circumstances which came into view in the last days of July, 1914, there was nothing in British policy which rendered necessary the employment of military force on the Continent. Although we had abandoned our former position of splendid isolation, and had formed close friendships with France and Russia, the British Government had its hands entirely free so far as the employment of military force was concerned. Sir Edward Grey, only a few weeks before the crisis arose, took the House of Commons into his confidence. As Foreign Minister he had recently accompanied the King on a State Visit to Paris, and rumours were current that the *entente* between the two countries had become something in the nature of an alliance. In these circumstances Sir Edward Grey (now Viscount Grey of Fallodon) spoke in the House of Commons on June 11th, 1914. He said that it was as true then as a year before that Great Britain was bound by no agreements committing her to participate in a European war, that no negotiations had been concluded, none were in progress, and none were likely to

be entered upon to make that statement less true. And, moreover, any such agreement, if made, would have to be submitted to Parliament. On the eve of hostilities the Foreign Minister made the position of this country still more clear. Speaking on the day preceding our declaration of war—August 3rd—Sir Edward Grey stated :—

“ Now I come to the question of British obligations. I have assured the House, and the Prime Minister has assured the House more than once, that if any crisis such as this arose, we should come before the House of Commons and be able to say that it was free to decide what the British attitude should be—that we would have no secret engagement to spring upon the House and tell the House that because we had entered into that engagement there was an obligation of honour on the country.

“ I will deal with that point and clear the ground first. There have been in Europe two diplomatic groups—the Triple Alliance and what has come to be known for some years as the Triple Entente. The Triple Entente was not an alliance ; it was a diplomatic group.

“ The House will remember that in 1908 there was a crisis, a Balkan crisis, which originated in the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Russian Minister, M. Izvolzky, came to London—his visit had been planned before the crisis broke out—and I told him definitely then that this being a Balkan affair I did not consider that public opinion in this country would justify us in promising him anything more than diplomatic support. More was never asked from us, more was never given, and more was never promised. In this present crisis up till *yesterday* (*August 2*) we had also given no promise of anything more than diplomatic support. Up till yesterday no promise of anything more than diplomatic support was given.”

Then, recalling the history of the *entente*, the Foreign Secretary observed that during the Agadir crisis of 1906 the British Government had stated that nothing could be

promised in the way of support to France in war against Germany unless such action was subsequently to receive the whole-hearted support of British public opinion when occasion arose. "I made no promises," declared Sir Edward Grey, "and I used no threats." The position as explained by Sir Edward Grey was accepted by the French Government, but they suggested that "unless between military and naval experts some conversation had taken place," England would not be able to give armed support, even if she wished to give it, when the time came. With the approval of the principal members of the Cabinet "conversations" between the chief naval and military experts of the two countries were authorized. This, then, was the situation at the close of the "conversations," and Sir Edward Grey told the House of Commons what passed subsequently<sup>1</sup> :—

"In 1912, after a discussion of the situation in the Cabinet, it was decided that we ought to have a definite undertaking in writing, though it was only in the form of an unofficial letter, that these conversations were not binding on the freedom of either Government. On November 22nd, 1912, I wrote to the French Ambassador the letter which I will now read to the House, and I received from him a letter in similar terms in reply. The letter which I have to read will be known to the public now as a record that, whatever took place between military and naval experts, they were not binding engagements on the Government. This is the letter :—

"MY DEAR AMBASSADOR—From time to time in recent years French and British naval and military experts have consulted together. It has always been understood that such consultation does not restrict the freedom of either Government to decide at any future time whether or not to assist the

<sup>1</sup> The French General Staff expressed themselves more than satisfied with the prospective support of the British Expeditionary Force.

other by armed force. We have agreed that consultation between experts is not, and ought not, to be regarded as an engagement which commits either Government to action in a contingency which has not yet arisen and may never arise. The disposition, for instance, of the French and British Fleets respectively at the present moment is not based on an engagement to co-operate in war.

“ ‘ You have, however, pointed out that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, it might become essential to know whether in that event it could depend on the armed assistance of the other. I agree that if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something which threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other whether both Governments should not act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and, if so, what measures they would be prepared to take in common.’

“ That is the starting-point for the Government with regard to the present crisis. I think it makes it clear that what the Prime Minister and I have said in the House of Commons was perfectly justified as regards our freedom to decide in a crisis what our line should be—whether we should intervene or abstain. The Government remained perfectly free. That I say to clear the ground from the point of view of obligations, and I think it was due to prove our good faith to the House of Commons, that I should give that full information to the House now and say, what I think is obvious from the letter I have just read, that we do not construe anything which has previously taken place in our diplomatic relations with other Powers in this matter as restricting the freedom of the Government to decide what attitude they shall take now or restricting the freedom of the House of Commons to decide what their attitude shall be.”

It is apparent from the exposure of policy which Sir Edward Grey subsequently made that the Cabinet in the circumstances which were then coming to a head deter-

mined to shield France from attack by the German Fleet, but to refrain, at any rate for the time being, from landing British troops on the Continent.

Then occurred a dramatic and unexpected incident which completely changed the complexion of affairs. France having stated in reply to a question from the British Government that she was resolved to respect the neutrality of Belgium, the German Government not only refused to give such an undertaking, but immediately invaded the country whose inviolability Germany had solemnly guaranteed. The touching appeal from the King of the Belgians to King George which followed upon this brutal disregard of treaty obligations led to an inevitable change in British policy. Forthwith the British people were compelled by every consideration of honour, self-respect, and self-preservation to use every power at their disposal to thwart the policy of Germany. Germany thus opened the war by the one act which could have consolidated British opinion—Liberal and Labour, as well as Unionist ; she made an attack on a small nationality whose independence she was pledged to defend !

Our ultimatum was issued, an interval of silence occurred, and then the curtain rose to reveal British troops fighting side by side with the soldiers of France and Belgium. It is not necessary here to consider the wisdom of sending so small a military force into the maelstrom on the Continent in direct conflict with two historic principles : first, that an island Power should secure command of the sea before it attempts to use the sea for military transport<sup>1</sup> ; and secondly, that any Power does well, on the highest strategic grounds, to use its strong

<sup>1</sup> That principle dates from the time of Torrington.

arm first and hold in reserve its weaker arm, in the meantime devoting the best efforts to its strengthening. The point is this :—

*The facts of British foreign policy as above set out show that down to the very day of the declaration of war the British Government had shaped its course so as not to render necessary the provision of a great army for use instantly on the Continent.*

Germany, when she invaded Belgium—an act of political madness, dictated by the military clique surrounding the Kaiser—believed that we should not fight for “a scrap of paper.” She was ready for war by land, but she was unready by sea. It is certain that when we intervened Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, the creator of the German Fleet, realized that his life’s work was in peril. He was a wise man if, as is credibly reported, he pleaded with the Kaiser for at least three weeks’ delay in order to enable him to complete his naval preparations, and get his armed liners and war cruisers out on our trade routes. Austria, when she realized the serious turn which events were taking, was willing to give Russia every possible assurance as to her action against Servia that she could desire. But the Germans, still convinced that we should not join in the struggle, were adamant ; they refused to let pass the opportunity of punishing France which they believed Fate had put in their way. Confident of victory on land—a confidence which rested largely on reports as to the slowness of Russia’s military mobilization—they determined to risk everything else, the German Fleet, German *welt-politik*, German oversea trade, German colonies and the condemnation of posterity. Germany staked her all on British indifference to the use of Belgium

by her troops. With a stupidity which has always characterized his statecraft, the Kaiser, supported by his blind military advisers, selected the one issue which could unite the whole British peoples at home and abroad—the inviolability of the frontiers and rights of small nationalities. Instantly party differences were forgotten. We staked our all on the British Fleet as the Kaiser staked his all on the German Army. His Imperial Majesty has never realized the mysterious influence of sea-power: a strong and unconquered navy can render invaluable aid to armies in the field by supplying them with reinforcements, food, and equipment, and by screening the preparation of further military power in a manner which this country and the United States have illustrated.

When the crisis came Lord Kitchener, at that time our representative in Egypt, happened by a happy chance to be in this country, and the Government decided to avail themselves of his high military reputation and personal popularity. Lord Kitchener accepted office as Secretary of State for War, and, with the persistent and relentless energy which he exhibited in the Soudan and in South Africa, he set to work to create the military instrument that the unexpected situation demanded. Behind the protective influence of the Fleet, energetic measures were at once taken to increase our military power. A nation which throughout its history had been jealous of a standing army, and had regarded conscription on the Continental method as impossible for its own people, was suddenly forced by the irresistible pressure of events to adapt itself to military conditions of the most exacting character.

It had never been the intention of any British Govern-

ment, irrespective of party, to rival the great Continental armies. The traditional policy of the British people was to maintain a predominant Fleet, a small, highly trained army for Imperial purposes, and a volunteer force for home defence. While peace was preserved, our high rate of naval insurance kept down to a low level the rate of our military insurance. Over and over again, the nation was assured on the highest official authority that, so long as it maintained the British Fleet in sufficiency and efficiency, it required no such military establishment as that of Germany or Austria on the one hand, or Russia and France on the other. The Navy, in other words, was our protection against the heavy burdens of taxation and service associated with the military systems adopted on the Continent. War dramatically changed the conditions. The very success of the Fleet involved us not only in war charges as high as those borne by either of our Allies, France or Russia, but in charges which are in fact very much higher than any country—friend or foe—is bearing. The Navy, which in peace conferred on us all the blessings of insularity, on the outbreak of war bridged not only the English Channel but every sea, and we became, in virtue of our position as the predominant Naval Power, one of the greatest military Powers, engaged in land operations on three continents.

That is the astounding paradox of the war. The very completeness of our success at sea placed upon our shoulders military and financial burdens far greater than this or any other country has ever had to bear in the past.

Reviewing pre-war policy with the aid of the wisdom which the war has given us, was it wrong? On the contrary, it was on the right lines. With limited funds



available for the purposes of defence, the British people consistently exhibited the highest strategy in the allocation of their available resources. On the eve of the war, the two fighting Services absorbed approximately 40 per cent of the national revenue, no mean proportion. The extent of the burden, as many speakers and writers reminded us, was due, in some measure, to adherence to the voluntary principle, which is synonymous with long service and victory afloat, and is the only principle upon which a maritime Power can raise a long-service Regular Army *for the defence of a vast oversea Empire*, as is universally admitted. Whatever difference of opinion may exist as to the manner of raising the home defence force, there is not to-day, and there never has been, any question as to the Regular Army. The basic principle was well expressed many years ago by the Duke of Wellington, when he declared that "the British Regular Army cannot be raised by conscription or ballot"; either of these alternatives might be permissible for home defence, but not for service overseas, whether for defending a settlement or foreign territory or for the purposes of conquest. "Men cannot, with justice, be taken," he remarked, "from their families and from their ordinary occupations and pursuits for such objects; the recruits of the Regular British Army must be volunteers."

Before this war occurred we could not even flirt with conscription for the Regular Army. But war changed the situation, our whole Army becoming a Home Defence Army; we have been reminded by a thousand incidents of the character of the war; we know that the men on the European Continent are directly defending this country. The battle is not on our soil, but the battle is as

much ours as though it were so fought. Consequently, while the application of compulsion for Continental service before the war would have been a dangerous and unconstitutional departure, as a war measure—and therefore to be justified by the present conditions—it is not only defensible even by those who are voluntarists, but it has proved unavoidable—as a temporary expedient.

Our relatively small Regular Army on the eve of the war cost approximately £30,000,000 a year, and we were spending a sum larger by over two-thirds on the Fleet. Admitting that it would have been impossible for any Government, in the state of opinion existing in the years immediately preceding the war, to obtain from the taxpayers a larger sum than about £80,000,000 for the two Services, was the allocation wise? In the light of experience there can be only one answer to that question. Presuming that more money could not be spent on the two Services, it cannot be doubted that successive Governments adopted the only safe policy in reinforcing our first line of defence which, as events have shown, was also our first line of offence.

To a maritime country the relationship between Navy and Army somewhat resembles that which exists between rifle and bayonet. When the war occurred we possessed in our naval rifle a weapon of enormous power for offence. It represented almost twice the power of the corresponding weapon possessed by the Germans, with the result that they came to the conclusion that an offensive policy at sea was impossible. Having won the initial and overwhelming success at sea on August 3rd, 1914, we proceeded at once to make a lunge at the enemy with our comparatively weak bayonet—the Expeditionary Force.

That bayonet was badly damaged at the Battle of Mons and even at the subsequent Battle of the Marne, but it showed, amid circumstances of unparalleled difficulty, the fine-tempered steel of which it had been made. Owing to the wisdom which marked our defence policy we gained and have retained our initiative at sea, and, while the original Expeditionary Force was covering itself with undying glory on the Continent, we were enabled, behind our "sure shield," to create a longer and stouter bayonet—a National Army—with which the Germans have become acquainted.

When Lord Kitchener first went to the War Office he was confronted with a democracy asking what it could do in the emergency.<sup>1</sup> He appealed for recruits for the new armies which it was necessary to raise, and he obtained them, not only in large numbers, but in numbers in excess of the capacity for equipping them. Equipment lagged behind recruiting for many months; men without rifles could not fight. It soon became apparent, moreover, that munitions must be prepared six or more months in advance both of recruiting and equipment; an army without heavy guns and suitable ammunition would have been exposed to destruction. During the period of army recruiting, equipment and munitioning, the Fleet not only provided a "sure shield" to these islands, apart from tip and run raids, but it gave the Allies freedom to obtain vast quantities of munitions and other war materials from neutral markets. In those circumstances British naval power was converted into military power, while at the same time the economic strength of the civil population of the British Isles and

<sup>1</sup> *Times* Correspondent.

of the far-flung Empire was maintained. It was not until almost the end of 1915 that the voluntary system proved inadequate to meet the continuing needs of the Army, and then it was that Lord Kitchener, who was the absolute dictator in all military matters, advised a form of compulsory service. We owe the armies of to-day to the influence exercised in the early days of the war by sea-power, the Fleet having since carried them to the scenes of action and provided that constant stream of supplies without which an army cannot fight.

The nation has cause for thankfulness that in the years preceding the war "the cart was not placed before the horse"—that no effort was made to provide an army at the expense of our naval expansion, in which event the troops would have been imprisoned in these islands owing to the existence of a disputed command of the sea. That state of naval weakness would have also denied to the Dominions the opportunity of speedily sending their troops to the European battlefield, and would have prevented Lord Kitchener carrying out the wonderful mobilization of our overseas troops which attested alike the War Secretary's genius in organization in face of an emergency and the inherent military strength of this maritime Empire.

There is a tendency to forget that our military power is and must always be an extension of our economic and naval power. The comparative ease with which the British people have stood the financial strain, unexampled in its character, which the war has thrown upon them, is traceable to the freedom enjoyed in the years before the war to build up those vast accumulations of wealth and that noble structure of credit which has proved the

salvation of the Allies. Our military and financial efforts in all circumstances are governed by the problem of sea transport. It is useless providing an army, however large and however well-equipped, which cannot be carried speedily oversea and there maintained in health and strength, and it is folly to store up wealth which cannot be used. We are apt to underestimate the influence that our maritime position exercises on our military effort even when, as at the outbreak of the present war, the sea passage is a matter of only forty or fifty miles. The troops, officers and men, with guns, ammunition, and all the paraphernalia of war, have to be embarked and disembarked, whether the voyage be long or short. It is a difficult, arduous, and dangerous operation. Owing to our triumphant sea-power, we were able to render France more aid, and that more quickly, than she had anticipated. It is doubtful if in the critical period of those early days of hostilities, we could have put many more men than we did across the Channel. At the moment when Belgium had been overrun and Paris and the Channel ports were in danger of passing into the hands of the enemy, what would have been the answer of the French General Staff if they had been free to choose between 100,000 men at once or a million men after the interval of six months or so? The military problem was a problem of rapid mobilization and rapid transport, and the British success based on sea-power is to be read in the glowing story of the Battle of Mons and the pages which tell of the struggle on the Marne.

“The old Regular Army was probably the finest force that has ever taken the field since Cæsar’s legions.”<sup>1</sup> Our

<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant-General Sir Francis Lloyd, Hackney, July 28, 1917.

initial military effort, which in large measure robbed Germany of the lightning victory promised to her people and changed the whole character of the war, was based upon sea-power, and on that foundation Lord Kitchener created the new armies. By the summer of 1917 between 5,000,000 and 5,500,000 men had been raised in Great Britain, apart from a million men who had responded to the urgent call from the Dominions and Colonies, and apart from 300,000 provided by India.

In the light of those figures and in the knowledge of the financial and economic support given to the Allies by the British people in virtue of their sea command, must we clothe ourselves in sackcloth and cover our heads with ashes in a spirit of humiliation and shame? The time is not yet ripe to tell, in proper perspective, the story of Britain's effort, but when it does come to be related in full detail posterity will not be slow to pay its tribute to those who were responsible for the creation of the co-ordinated naval and military engine which on the outbreak of war saved Europe during critical days from passing under the heel of Prussianism.

## CHAPTER III

### FIRST PHASE OF THE NAVAL WAR

THE British naval mobilization in the early days of August, 1914, rapid and complete, was the first decisive move in the contest. No gun was fired and no casualties sustained, but the enemy suffered defeat and was compelled by the overwhelming and well-organized and highly trained force arrayed against him to retire into his defended ports; and there he has remained, sheltering his ships behind his shore fortifications and minefields. The mobilization of the British Navy was in the nature of an attack. Its success was unqualified.

The Germans had openly confessed to preparations that would have enabled them to adopt any one of three alternative courses of action against the greatest sea Power. In the first place, in times of peace they aimed to maintain their navy on a war footing, and hence the rapid increase in the numbers of officers and men—three or four times as great, in proportion, as in the British Navy. They assumed that the British Navy, on the outbreak of war, would be in much the same condition as the British Army in the autumn of 1899, and that “a bolt from the blue” would radically change the naval situation from the very first, and enable Germany to pursue the war at sea with the advantages flowing from brilliant and successful initiative. If circumstances precluded the “bolt from the blue” being launched—and no German

latterly had entertained any doubt on that point—the German Navy was to retreat into its ports, sallying forth from time to time and dealing heavy strokes at details of the British Fleet—to pursue, in short, a war of attrition. This second alternative was discussed at length by Grand Admiral von Tirpitz in the Memorandum accompanying the German Navy Bill of 1900. Therein he reviewed the work of naval expansion carried on under the powers of the Navy Law of 1898. It was expressly stated that the law of 1898 was defective.

“ The justificatory Memorandum to the Navy Law (1898) left no doubt as to the military significance of the Battle Fleet. It is therein expressly stated : ‘ Against greater sea-powers the Battle Fleet would have importance merely as a sortie fleet.’ That is to say,” the Naval Secretary continued, “ the fleet would have to withdraw into the harbour and there wait for a favourable opportunity for making a sortie. Even if it could obtain a success in such a sortie, it would, nevertheless, like the enemy, suffer considerable loss of ships. The stronger enemy could make good his losses ; we could not.

“ In war with a substantially superior sea-power, the Battle Fleet provided for by the Navy Law (of 1898) would render a blockade more difficult, especially in the first phase of the war, but would never be able to prevent it. To subdue it, or, after it had been considerably weakened, to confine it in its own harbour, would always be merely a question of time. So soon as this had happened, no great State could be more easily cut off than Germany from all sea intercourse worthy of the name—of her own ships as also of the ships of neutral Powers. To effect this it would not be necessary to control long stretches of coast, but merely to blockade the few big seaports.

“ In the same way as the traffic to the Home ports, the German mercantile ships on all the seas of the world would be left to the mercy of an enemy who was more powerful on the sea. Hostile cruisers on the main trade-routes, in the



Skager Rack, in the English Channel, off the north of Scotland, in the Straits of Gibraltar, at the entrance to the Suez Canal, and at the Cape of Good Hope, would render German shipping practically impossible."

Grand Admiral von Tirpitz condemned the Law of 1898 as inadequate to Germany's needs and convinced the Reichstag that, while something might be said for the theory of "a sortie fleet," in fact, "for the protection of sea trade and colonies there is only one means—a strong battle fleet" which could meet even the British Fleet, and if not victorious, at least so cripple it that it would no longer have the mastery of the sea. That constituted the third alternative—a fleet action in which British sea-power would be crippled, if not crushed. Proceeding to discuss his new and more ambitious policy, which supplemented but did not supersede the former policy, with its two alternatives, the Naval Secretary added:—

"To protect Germany's sea trade and colonies in the existing circumstances there is only one means—Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that even for the adversary with the greatest sea-power a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil his position in the world.

"For this purpose it is not absolutely necessary that the German Battle Fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest naval Power, for *a great naval Power will not, as a rule, be in a position to concentrate all its striking forces against us.* But even if it should succeed in meeting us with considerable superiority of strength, the defeat of a strong German Fleet would so substantially weaken the enemy that, in spite of the victory he might have obtained, his own position in the world would no longer be secured by an adequate fleet."

Lord Fisher, when he went to the Admiralty as First Sea Lord in 1904, realized this danger to the British Fleet, and reorganized and redistributed the British squadrons.

Rear-Admiral Lionel Halsey, Third Sea Lord, in a lecture on "The Work of the Navy in the War" in July, 1917, said :—

"Thirty years ago the majority of ships were far distant from the waters round the British Isles, and the officers and men of the Fleet, serving nominally on a three years' commission, seldom returned home for four and sometimes five years. In 1887 the only really active fleet in Home waters was the old Channel Fleet, consisting of six of the original iron-clads. These were capable of steaming 12 knots with auxiliary sail power and had an armament of muzzle-loading guns. At the Jubilee Review, held in that year at Spithead, the Fleet consisted of about forty ships, whereas to-day the Grand Fleet alone has grown to more than six times that number. In 1902 it was realized that there would be very little parleying on a declaration of war, and that it was necessary to concentrate the Fleet in such a position as to prevent any hostile fleet from getting the mastery of the seas and depriving the British Empire of its vital heritage. The strategic spot was the neighbourhood of the British Isles. There was a great divergence of opinion at the time, but the policy has proved to be the correct one, for, when the belt from the blue came in 1914, the whole naval fighting force of the Empire, fully manned and efficient, was ready—before the declaration of war—to take charge of the North Sea."

Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, in the same Memorandum, discussed the necessary strength and organization of the battle fleet in full detail, and reminded the Reichstag that "as the ship establishment of the German Navy, even after the carrying out of the projected increase, will still be more or less inferior to the ship establishments of other great Powers, compensation must be sought in the training of the personnel and in tactical training in the larger combinations." In other words, Germany was convinced that by a war organization resembling that of her Army,

and an intensive training of the personnel she could, in spite of the disadvantages of the conscriptive system of manning, obtain an instrument of war which, though inferior on paper, would be superior in action, even if confronted with the greatest sea Power.<sup>1</sup> The superman was to triumph afloat as well as ashore.

For the formation of the Battle Fleet of his dreams, the Reichstag granted Grand Admiral von Tirpitz all that he desired ; it limited for a time, but only for a time, the proposed increase of the foreign service ships. In the latter connection the Naval Secretary, for some unexplained reason, failed to impress the members of the Reichstag, though he presented to them an alluring picture :—

“ Besides the increase of the Home Battle Fleet, an increase of the Foreign Service ships is also necessary. In consequence of the occupation of Kiau-chau and the great enhancement of our oversea interests in the last two years, it has already become necessary, at the cost of the scouting ships of the Battle Fleet, to send abroad two large ships more than were provided for by the plan of the Navy Law (of 1898). Indeed, for an effective representation of our interests it would have been necessary to send out even more ships, if such had only been available.

“ In order to form a judgment of the importance of an increase of the Foreign Service ships, it must be realized that they are the representatives abroad of the German defence forces, and that the task often falls to them of gathering in the fruits which the maritime potency created for the Empire by the Home Battle Fleet has permitted to ripen.

“ Moreover, an adequate representation on the spot, supported by a strong Home Battle Fleet, in many cases averts differences, and so contributes to maintain peace, while fully upholding German honour and German interests.”

<sup>1</sup> Lord Fisher's reforms in naval training and mobilisation and the increased attention devoted to gunnery defeated Germany's aim.

In this passage Grand Admiral von Tirpitz enunciated the principle of "the mailed fist" as an instrument of profit without battle.

The Memorandum of 1900 and the Grand Admiral's speeches contained assurances that if the Reichstag acceded to the demands of the Marineamt there need be no fear for the security of Germany's sea interests and colonies. As has been stated, in only one particular—the foreign service cruisers—were the demands of the Naval Secretary denied, and a few years later the Reichstag relented.

There can be no doubt as to the condition of the German Navy on the outbreak of war. It was strong in ships but weak in men—not only weak numerically but weak in the professional standing of the crews. Grand Admiral von Tirpitz appended a revealing memorandum to his last Navy Act, passed two years before the war. He admitted that the German Fleet suffered from two defects:—

"The one defect consists in the fact that in the autumn of every year the time-expired men, i.e. almost one-third of the crews in all the ships of the Battle Fleet, are discharged and replaced mainly by *recruits from the inland population*. Owing to this the readiness of the Battle Fleet for war is considerably impaired for a prolonged period,

"The second defect consists in the fact that at the present time, with an establishment of fifty-eight capital ships, only twenty-one ships are available at first, if the reserve fleet cannot be made ready in proper time. Since the Fleet Law was drawn up this latter has become more and more unlikely, as the moment at which the reserve fleet can be ready gets more and more deferred. This is a consequence of the steadily growing difficulty in training large organizations. At the present day, therefore, the reserve fleet only comes into consideration as a second fighting line; but in view of our great numerical strength in reserve men, it still maintains its great importance.

“But these defects are to be removed, or at any rate considerably ameliorated, by the gradual formation of a third active squadron.”

It may readily be imagined that when war did occur Admiral Ingenohl,<sup>1</sup> the admiral in supreme command of the High Seas Fleet, found himself confronted with circumstances which were very unfavourable to his taking the offensive. This officer had always been reputed to be an advocate of bold offensive tactics. What chance had he of carrying his theories into effect when he learnt that the British Fleet, in overpowering strength, had been mobilized forty hours before the declaration of war, and he knew that he could not obtain his full command until several days after war had commenced, and would have to be satisfied with an immense proportion of men who had hardly got their sea-legs and were but partially trained? You may make a soldier in a few months, but, in the opinion of British naval officers, a reliable blue-jacket cannot be produced in less than four years. In the light of these facts, surely no surprise need be felt that Admiral Ingenohl, whatever his instinct, did not feel justified in adopting offensive tactics in face of a Navy immensely superior in matériel and possessing crews with an average period of service of not less than seven or eight years. As to the reservists, the German conscript who put in three years afloat was provided with no facilities for keeping himself abreast of naval developments. In the British Navy reservists were embarked periodically for training in the ships in which they would be called upon to fight. If there be anything in sea instinct, long and

<sup>1</sup> This officer was succeeded in the command by Admiral Pohl, whose death made way for Admiral von Scheer.

patient training, and in familiarity with environment and the instruments of war which have to be employed, the Germans entered upon the contest on the sea heavily handicapped.

Not much progress can have been made by the summer of 1914 in ameliorating the conditions to which Grand Admiral von Tirpitz called attention two years before. The German organization during this period had been devoted to the training of an increased number of raw recruits, and it cannot be doubted that the general standard of efficiency of the whole Navy had fallen owing to the increased proportion of untrained hands among the crews. In this connection the following table may be of interest. In order to enable the significance of the figures to be appreciated it must be borne in mind that it was the custom for conscripts to be released to the reserve on October 1st in each year after rather less than three years afloat. In the second place, their places were taken by fresh conscripts, the vast majority of whom looked upon the sea for the first time after being enrolled. They had no instinctive love for life on the sea. Bearing in mind these two factors, this is how the German Fleet was manned when it was mobilized :—

Long-service Volunteers . . . . .	17,000
Conscripts who had served afloat 34 months	16,000
"          "          "    22    "	18,000
"          "          "    10    "	20,000
	<hr/>
	71,000
Reservists called to active service, including men discharged on October 1st, 1913, 1912, 1911 . . . . .	50,000
	<hr/>
Grand total	121,000

Those figures may be accepted as representing the

standard of efficiency in the German Fleet at the moment. It was desperately weak in skilled ratings, as Grand Admiral von Tirpitz admitted in so many words. Moreover, owing to this deficiency, there is reason to believe that the older ships had for some time prior to the outbreak of war received little attention. When the reserves were called up, it must have been necessary to readjust the complements of practically all the ships in the German Fleet except those of the mosquito class, and the effect must have been further to lower the efficiency of the active fleet in order to provide for the needs of the reserve fleet.

Nor does this complete the picture. When war occurred it was generally assumed that the whole German Navy as soon as it had been mobilized, an operation of some difficulty, was concentrated in the North Sea. This was not the fact. From the first Germany had to guard two sea frontiers—the North Sea, where she was confronted by the Grand Fleet of the British peoples in overwhelming strength in matériel and in personnel, and the Baltic, where she was faced by the Russian Navy—small, but then by no means negligible. It was assumed in some quarters that in the pursuit of a bold offensive policy in the North Sea, the Admiralstab at Berlin would decide to ignore the peril in the Baltic and concentrate attention almost exclusively on the North Sea. Such a plan, if it was ever contemplated, must have been immediately abandoned. The command of the sea in the Baltic would have enabled Russia to engage in the transport of troops, and troops can move by sea twenty times as fast as on land, and can, moreover, take up flanking positions threatening the direst consequences to an enemy. Germany, whatever she may have thought of the professional standing of

Russian officers and their crews, could not neglect to mask so formidable a force as Russia possessed at the opening of the war, apart from the ships which were at the moment on the eve of completion.

Consequently, the conditions with which the Admiral-stab had to deal bore little or no resemblance to those on which the naval policy of Germany had been based. It had been assumed in the first place that "the greatest naval Power . . . will not as a rule be in a position to concentrate all its striking force against us." In fact, thanks to the wise policy adopted by the Admiralty in the preceding ten years, this was exactly what "the greatest naval Power" was able to do. In the second place, it had been assumed that Germany would have no other enemy fleet to face. In fact, she found herself confronted, owing to the success of British and the failure of German diplomacy, with the navies of Russia and France, as well as that of Japan in the Far East, while her ally Italy, possessing considerable sea-power, maintained a strict neutrality. In the circumstances the German Government decided wisely when it determined to use its strong arm—its land force—to strike swift and, as it was hoped, decisive blows while its weak arm—its fleet—was held in reserve, since a "fleet in being" is of more value, however weak, than a fleet sunk to the bottom of the sea.<sup>1</sup>

The triumph involved in the rapid mobilization of the

<sup>1</sup> "In the next twelve months the number of great ships that will be completed for this country is more than double the number which will be completed for Germany, and the number of cruisers three or four times as great. Therefore I think I am on solid ground when I come here to-night and say that you may count upon the naval supremacy of this country being effectively maintained as against the German Power for as long as you wish."—*First Lord of the Admiralty, September 11th, 1914.*



British Navy and its dispatch to its war stations was effected, so far as can be judged, without reference to Parliament or Cabinet. In the circumstances which existed in the earliest days of August, as is common knowledge, the politicians hesitated and would have desired to postpone final preparations for war until assured of the possible, if not probable, eventuality. A democracy is always weak in the days which precede action ; war involves quick decisions, and quick decisions are impossible for a mob. They cannot be reached by the House of Commons ; they are delayed by Cabinet discussions. Only those who are familiar with the history of war can realize the supreme importance of initiative. On land, Germany obtained this advantage ; she was first in the field with her armies, completely organized and completely equipped. It is impossible to read the naval literature of Germany without being impressed with the conviction that the Germans confidently anticipated that their experience on land would also be their experience at sea. They anticipated that the British Admiralty would wait on the Cabinet, that the Cabinet would wait on Parliament, and that Parliament would wait for an indication of popular opinion in the country. No doubt was entertained that delay would consequently occur before orders were issued to the Fleet.

Happily for the British people the Admiralty showed no hesitation. Before a decision had been reached that this country had to intervene in the war, in defence of its honour and everything it possessed, the Fleet had been mobilized as a precautionary measure and Germany was thus robbed of the advantage of initiative which she has never regained.

## CHAPTER IV

### WHAT WOULD NELSON HAVE DONE ?

IF Horatio Nelson, instead of being born at Burnham Thorpe on September 9th, 1758, had begun his life a century later and had reached Admiral's rank before the present war began, what would he have done had he been appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Grand Fleet? It is necessary to assume that he would *not* have been blind in one eye, without the use of his right arm, suffering from the results of a wound in his head received years before, and debilitated owing to the enfeebled condition of his general health, due in part to the sea-sickness from which he suffered while in command of the Straits of Dover, with his flag flying in a small and lively frigate.<sup>1</sup> If he had been the physical wreck in 1914 that he was when he embarked at Portsmouth on the eve of Trafalgar, no First Lord of the Admiralty in these days of Parliamentary questions and active newspaper criticism would have dared to entrust him with the chief command of the concentrated naval force on which, as was realized from the first, the destinies of the British Empire depended.

<sup>1</sup> " I am sorry to tell you that my health, or rather constitution, is so much shook that I doubt the possibility of my holding out another winter without asses' milk, and some months' quiet ; then I may get in another campaign or two. But when I run over the undermentioned wounds, eye in Corsica, belly off Cape St. Vincent, arm at Teneriffe-head in Egypt, I ought to be thankful that I am what I am."—*A letter dated August 4th, 1804.*

Therefore, in endeavouring to reconstitute the past three years on the Nelsonian basis, it is essential that we imagine Nelson to be in possession of the usual complement of limbs, two eyes, and such vigorous health as would enable him not only to face a medical board, but to survive the ordeal of Parliamentary and newspaper criticism. On that assumption, what would Nelson have done had he been the dictator of British naval policy?

The great admiral never served at the Admiralty, and he never exercised control over such a vast concentrated machine as was mobilized on August 3rd, 1914, and sent to its war stations. The Admiralty's solution of the strategic problems which war with Germany presented was unique in British annals. Never before had the whole of the best and most modern capital ships been assembled as one command and placed under the orders of one flag officer. Even at the Battle of Trafalgar Nelson had with him only twenty-seven ships of the line, or about one-third of the vessels then in commission. If Nelson had suffered defeat, there would still have remained intact another fleet about twice as powerful as that under his orders. The strategic conditions during the Napoleonic war did not favour concentration. The enemy possessed many bases, and each had to be watched, or blockaded, as the phrase goes. Consequently no British admiral during the late years of the eighteenth century or the early years of the nineteenth century bore the responsibility which in fact rested on the British Commander-in-Chief when the present war opened. The decision to assemble under the flag of one admiral the new fleet, which had been created under the impulse of Lord Fisher's genius when that officer was First Sea Lord, represented

a new departure in strategy. It appeared to ignore, or at least to subordinate, the needs of the oversea Empire. In the early years of the century the British public learnt of distant squadrons being abolished, of cruisers being called home, and of sloops and gunboats being placed out of commission. Why were these things done? The past three or four years have supplied the answer. If the British nation was to engage in war on terms making victory certain, and military co-operation on the Continent, involving sea transport practicable at once, the utmost possible energy and man-power had to be concentrated in the Grand Fleet; and a well co-ordinated and highly trained fleet is the work of years and not of months, like an army. But that is not all. The weak squadrons which were disestablished did not fit into the great strategic conception; the cruisers which were scrapped were of less speed than submarines; the sloops and gunboats belonged to an era which had ended—too weak to fight, they were not sufficiently speedy to run away. It was only—and that is the vital point—by releasing 11,000 or 12,000 trained officers and men from non-fighting ships—vessels that “showed the flag,” to quote the phrase of the moment—that it became possible in the time available to obtain crews for what was to become the Grand Fleet, consisting of new ships of superior equipment, swifter, more powerful, and better protected than any before.

Would Nelson have approved the strategic conception expressed in the idea of the Grand Fleet? It may be suggested that before coming to any decision he would have taken a chart of the North Sea and studied its strategic features. He would have noticed, as Lord Fisher noticed, that Germany possessed only a short

coastline, and that the coastline was pierced by a relatively small number of harbours suitable for naval purposes. Is it not reasonable to suppose that Nelson would have been struck by the fact that the British Isles lie across Germany's path to the outer seas like a great mole, with a very narrow passage to the south and a broader passage to the north ? Nelson would certainly have been led by his unerring judgment to argue that, if the enemy intended to break out, he would steer to the north, where the exit is broad and escape is practicable, instead of attempting to force a passage through the twenty miles of sea-water that separate Dover and Calais, and are easily dominated by destroyers and submarines. Having got thus far in his consideration of the strategic problem, it may be presumed that Nelson would have been seized with the thought that if a great concentration of British ships were formed to the north—superior in matériel as in moral—he could compel the enemy either to abandon the use of the world's seas or to fight against odds. He would have seen that in that solution lay the antidote to all the fears of the population of the British Isles—invasion, starvation, the breaking out of cruisers on the trade routes and attacks on the Oversea Dominions, the exposed coast of India, and the unprotected dependencies and Crown colonies. One can imagine the enthusiasm with which Nelson would have spoken of this idea of “containing” the German Fleet. To his critics he would have said : “ You say I am not showing the flag sufficiently in foreign waters. What is the good of showing the flag if you cannot defend it in any emergency ? What would happen to weak and slow cruisers if war came and the Germans got out fast and powerful ships from the

North Sea? By my method I shall make the flag respected not merely in the ports which might have been visited by a few weak ships under the old régime, but in every harbour in the world. I intend to impose my will on the German Fleet, forcing it either to fight or to surrender the right to show its flag in any single one of the oceans or seas of the world. There has never been such a triumph as I intend to achieve." It needs no great stretch of the imagination to picture the admiral as he discussed the simple strategic conception which the Grand Fleet embodies, in striking contrast to the dispersion of naval force which existed for a century after Trafalgar and on the continuance of which Germany counted.<sup>1</sup>

Nelson was not alive in the years which preceded the war, and all this is mere fancy. But Lord Fisher was working at the Admiralty from 1902 onwards making preparations in the knowledge that time pressed; the Grand Fleet was a reality on August 3rd, 1914; Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, who hoisted his flag as Commander-in-Chief of that superb force on the day that war was declared, was no shadow from the other world. The decisions which were reached in the years preceding the opening of hostilities have been submitted to the supreme test. It is not in man to avoid all error, but, reviewing

<sup>1</sup> Admiral von der Goltz, writing in 1900, declared that the idea that Germany could not hold her own at sea against Great Britain was "puerile," adding: "Admittedly the maritime superiority of Great Britain is overwhelming now, and no doubt will remain considerable. But, after all, she is compelled to distribute her ships throughout the globe. We may suppose she would recall the greater part of them in the event of war. But the operation would take time to accomplish. Nor could she abandon all her oversea positions. On the other hand, though much smaller, the German Fleet is concentrated at home, and with the proposed increase (Navy Act, 1900) will be strong enough to meet the normal British force in European waters."

the three and a half years which were to have been full of peril to the people of the British Islands, has the strategic idea embodied in the Grand Fleet proved to be based on true doctrine or on false?

In the fourth year of the war, it is not without interest to glance back and consider in the light of experience the course of British naval policy. It falls naturally under three heads: (1) the military blockade, which was supplemented by (2) the commercial blockade, pressed with increasing stringency as time passed, and (3) operations for the protection of British communications by sea.

### I. THE MILITARY BLOCKADE

Some confusion exists as to the meaning of the term "military blockade" as it has been employed since the opening of the war. The widespread character of that misunderstanding has been illustrated time and again. One naval officer on the retired list, Admiral Sir Reginald Custance, has complained that "at the outbreak of war the massed fleet was placed in the extreme north, presumably to block the northern exit—i.e. to control communications. Had it been based on a point more to the south<sup>1</sup> it would have been more favourably placed to bring the enemy to battle if he put to sea, and thus to cover not only the detachment holding the Straits of Dover and the northern channel, but the whole east coast. The strategy adopted accorded with the mistaken doctrine that the military aim should be to control communications rather than to destroy the enemy's armed force." On the contrary, the action taken was strictly in

<sup>1</sup> There was no base for a great fleet to the South; it takes many years to create a naval base, as Rosyth illustrates.—A. H.

accord with the highest traditions of the Navy, and was such, as will be shown, as would have commended itself to Nelson and his brother officers trained in the school of war. Technically, no blockade was established, for there was no idea of preventing the enemy coming out ; but the disposition of the Grand Fleet was made so as to ensure two objectives, the one not conflicting with the other. In the first place, it was necessary to ensure that the enemy fleet should not escape into the Channel or Atlantic and cut the lines of communication, not only with France and the United States, but with other parts of the world, or interfere with British food supplies. In the second place, care had to be taken that, if the enemy put to sea, he would be brought to action before he could do serious injury even in the North Sea. The Admiralty, therefore, chose as bases for the Grand Fleet points which were created by nature to serve British interests, and, fortunately, those points were well to the north. It was thought by many students of war that the Germans would succeed in pushing out naval detachments—possibly swift light cruisers—and even bringing them back to their bases in safety, for such incidents occurred during the Napoleonic war. That has not been the experience of the past years of war, although, in a technical sense, the enemy has at no period been subject to a “blockade.” In other words, exit from Germany’s ports has not been closed ; German men-of-war have been at liberty to put to sea at any time at a risk.

The twentieth-century “blockade” of the Grand Fleet resembles the blockades of the Napoleonic war. When Nelson had been cruising off Toulon for many weary months he had occasion to write to the Lord Mayor of



London. In the course of his letter he remarked that "the port of Toulon has never been blockaded by me ; quite the reverse," adding that "every opportunity has been offered the enemy to put to sea, for it is there that we hope to realize the hopes and expectations of our country, and I trust that they will not be disappointed." Again, in another letter, he declared, "my system is the very contrary of blockading." The enemy took full advantage of the measure of freedom which the British arrangements permitted. The French admiral at Toulon made it a practice to exercise his ships outside the harbour. "My friend, M. La Touche," Nelson wrote, "sometimes plays bo-peep out of Toulon like a mouse at the end of a hole." In another communication with reference to these "capers," the British admiral remarked : "Last week at different times two sail of the line put their heads out of Toulon, and on Thursday the fifth (April), in the afternoon, they all came out." Again, he remarked to another correspondent : "Yesterday (April 9th) a rear-admiral and seven sail put their noses outside the harbour. If they go on playing this game, some day we shall lay salt on their tails and so end the campaign." All Nelson's references to these promenades are in a semi-humorous vein, showing that it did not disturb him that the French should put to sea.

In October, 1916, Mr. Winston Churchill contributed an article to a magazine in which he asked the question : "What harm does it do us if the German Fleet takes a promenade at sea ?" The former First Lord suggested that "if Germany wishes to restore her fortunes, her Fleet must not only come out—it must come out to fight, and fight for a final decision ; and it rests with the British

Fleet to determine where and under what conditions the battle shall be fought." Those statements were the subject of a good deal of criticism, and it was suggested that they represented not only a new doctrine, but a false doctrine. Fewer errors would be made in discussing the present war if there was greater familiarity with our past naval history. It was the exponent of what is admitted to be the true naval doctrine who in the early years of the last century admitted that his enemy made "promenades," and remarked, when cruising off Toulon: "I am in hopes to shame La Touche out of his nest." In *Nelson's Letters and Despatches* we come across many statements which are comparable with those for which Mr. Churchill was responsible in his famous article. During 1804 the admiral frequently referred to the fact that "the French ships have been out a few miles, but they see so far the coast is clear that there is but very little prospect of getting at them." On another occasion the French admiral put to sea and issued a boastful statement which attracted a good deal of attention, since he claimed that he chased Nelson's ships and tried to bring them to action without success. At first Nelson treated the incident with amused contempt, but at last he came to the conclusion that as it had gained great prominence and might influence opinion at home he could not ignore it. So he wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Admiralty:—

"Although I most certainly never thought of writing a line upon Monsieur La Touche's having cut a caper a few miles outside of Toulon on June 14th, *where he well knew I could not get at him without placing the ships under the batteries which surround that port, and that had I attacked him in that position, he could retire into his secure nest whenever he pleased, yet as that gentleman has thought proper to write a letter stating*

that the Fleet under my command ran away, and that he pursued it, perhaps it may be thought necessary for me to say something. But I do assure you that I know not what to say, except by a flat contradiction, for if my character is not established by this time for not being apt to run away, it is not worth my time to attempt to put the world right."

Nelson was on his guard against being trapped. His daring was allied to a spirit of caution. He had no intention of exposing his fleet even to the short-range coastal guns of those days. The German guns mounted along the Frisian coast and on the Island of Heligoland have an effective range of fifteen miles or so, and they are supported by elaborate minefields and flotillas of destroyers and submarines, while for purposes of reconnaissance, so as to get early intelligence of any movement at sea by the British Fleet, the Germans can place reliance on airships and aeroplanes. The progress of physical science, as has been before emphasized in these pages, has greatly strengthened the power of the defensive. However irritating that development may be, it is of no use repining or venting dissatisfaction either on the British Admiralty or the officers in command of the Grand Fleet.

But it may be argued that Nelson would have gone into the German ports in spite of all risks and attacked the German Fleet in its "nests." Moreover, would he not have determined, it may be suggested, that if the enemy came out to sea he would in any circumstances impeach him? There is a tendency to forget that, although no submarines, destroyers, or mines existed a century ago, Nelson maintained a watch off Toulon for two and a half years without attempting to attack the

enemy in his security. That is a point to be noted. Nelson also laid down the conditions in which he would meet the enemy. Time and again in his instructions to junior flag officers and captains he warned them against entering into rash adventures. To Captain Donnelly, of the *Narcissus*, he wrote: "I have only again to repeat that you have only to keep sail or anchor as you please, and *I am sure you will always be on your guard from surprise by a superior force.*" The same warning was issued to other senior officers. In the early months of 1804 Rear-Admiral Campbell, in command of a reconnoitring squadron, was off Cape Sepet when a superior number of French ships came out. He was pursued, and did not disdain to make the best possible speed back to the main fleet. On his return Nelson wrote to him a letter of congratulation:—

"I am more obliged to you than I can express, for your not allowing the very superior force of the enemy to bring you to action. Whatever credit would have accrued to your own and gallant companions' exertions, no sound advantages could have arisen to our country; for so close to their own harbour they could always have returned, and left your ships unfit, probably, to keep the sea. I again, my dear admiral, thank you for your conduct. Some day, very soon, I have no doubt but an opportunity will offer of giving them fair battle."<sup>1</sup>

Nelson was determined to have a "fair battle" or none—in short, to wait until his opportunity came, however long the time might be. On July 2nd, 1804, he wrote: "I think the Fleet—the French Fleet—will be ordered out to fight close to Toulon, that they may get their crippled ships in again, and that we must then quit

<sup>1</sup> *Nelson's Letters and Despatches.* (Laughton.)

the coast to repair our damages, and thus leave the coast clear ; but my mind is fixed *not* to fight them, unless with a westerly wind, outside the Hières, and with an easterly wind to the westward of Sicie." On returning from his West Indian chase after Villeneuve—La Touche's successor—he told his captains : " If we meet them we shall find them not less than eighteen, I rather think twenty, sail-of-the-line, and therefore do not be surprised if I should not fall on them immediately ; we won't part without a battle. I will let them alone till we approach the shores of Europe, or they give me an advantage too tempting to be resisted." In other words, not until Nelson was assured that no reinforcements would join his flag did he intend to fight against an enemy in superior strength, and then as a desperate gamble for which he had no liking. In the introduction to *Nelson's Letters and Despatches* it is remarked that " they show how utterly he was opposed to anything that savoured of recklessness or rashness." But it may be argued that Nelson's repeated signal, ' Closer action,' shows another spirit. The range of the most powerful gun was not 16,000 yards or so as in the Battle of Jutland, but about 300 yards, and therefore unless ships got close to one another little damage could be done. The torpedo now has a range more than thirty-three times that of the gun of the Trafalgar period. Nelson was no harum-scarum officer.

On three occasions the French Fleet escaped from Toulon without Nelson's immediate knowledge. One of those escapes took the British admiral on a long and tedious cruise to Egyptian waters ; on the second occasion he had an equally fruitless chase, and on the third Nelson was in some doubt, not merely for days, but for weeks,

as to the course which Villeneuve had taken, and then he dashed off to the West Indies. *What would have been said in our day if on three successive occasions the German High Seas Fleet had got to sea, cruised at large in the Atlantic, and then managed to return to port without being engaged by a single unit of the British Fleet, perhaps having destroyed a dozen or more transports crowded with troops?* In that event the professional reputation of the naval officers on the Board of Admiralty and the other officers in command of the Grand Fleet would not have been worth twenty-four hours' purchase. Nelson was not the only officer engaged in the blockade. By June 1st, 1803—immediately after the resumption of war—sixty-six British ships were on duty off the French coast. Cornwallis was off Brest, Collingwood was in the Bay of Biscay, and Keith was in the Channel. These officers represented the flower of British seamanship; they had learnt in the stern school of war. They had under their orders, as a rule, a superiority of force. Nevertheless, throughout the war, they never succeeded in bringing to action any considerable number of the enemy's fast ships, which passed in and out of the French ports and maintained a ruinous war on British overseas commerce. It cannot be too often repeated that these admirals were freed from the menace of submarine, destroyer, and mine, and that there were no long-range coast guns to constrain their desire to get at the enemy.

Contrast such an experience with that with which the British people have fortunately become familiar, in spite of "the false doctrine," which, it is said by some critics, has dominated British policy. In the course of three and a half years not a German battleship, battle-cruiser, or light

cruiser has escaped through the meshes of the Grand Fleet, though the passage between the Scottish coast and Norway has a width of 300 or 400 miles, Norway on the eastern side protecting her neutral rights. That is a notable record. It is particularly notable in view of the fact that when the war opened the enemy possessed forty light cruisers with speeds ranging from 21 to 27½ knots, in addition to nearly 150 destroyers. *Every one of the 1100 or 1200 days of war has been succeeded by a night, and yet not a single raider of the regular Navy has eluded the British forces and got out on the Atlantic trade route.* Three or four disguised merchant ships, it is true, managed by artful design to get out on to the trade routes, but their careers were short and the damage done slight.

The enemy has, it is quite true, occasionally ventured to "cut capers" in the North Sea, and he has been badly punished. The records of the actions in the Bight of Heligoland and off the Dogger Bank and the despatches describing the Battle of Jutland need not be recalled here and now. The High Seas Fleet has exhibited no anxiety to come outside its heavily protected waters. In the early days of the war the Germans confided their hopes to detached forces of fast ships. They were sent out into the North Sea in the darkness of the night to prosecute raids on undefended parts of the north and north-east coast of England. That policy was abandoned, not because the Germans came to the conclusion that their ships could not put to sea, but because the punishment inflicted upon them on successive occasions suggested that the risk was too great. In other words, the British Fleet convinced the Germans that it was still faithful to the highest offensive traditions. It is true that

German destroyers have shown some activity from time to time, but the Germans will not soon forget two British shipnames—*Broke* and *Swift*. The marvel is that the activity of the German small craft has not been greater in view of the opportunities which the long dark winter nights offer in a war area as large as the North Sea—one-third greater than the whole of the United Kingdom, including Ireland as well as the Channel and Scilly Isles and the Isle of Man. From time to time the Germans have pursued a raiding policy varying in character, but, in spite of the many claims on the British sea services, they have eventually been severely punished, however ingenious their schemes.

The German Navy was thrown back on the defensive at the opening of the war. Ought the enemy's fleet to have been annihilated in the succeeding months? These are the days of the electric cable, the water-tube boiler, marine turbine, wireless telegraphy—and the picture palace. Events must move rapidly or impatience is exhibited. There appears to have been a widespread impression that, owing to scientific and engineering developments, the task of a supreme naval power had been greatly simplified. A naval war, it was contended, would be a matter of a few weeks or at worst a few months. Since steam gave the ships of war complete freedom of movement, irrespective of wind or weather, and since, moreover, such immense powers of destruction resided in the modern gun and the automobile torpedo, and we had a margin of strength, what was to hinder the drawing to a rapid close of war at sea?

What is the fact? Almost every development of physical science in its application to naval warfare has



favoured the defensive and not the offensive, and has tended to prolong and not to shorten the duration of war. The triumphs of physical science have conferred upon a weak enemy the power to remain in his ports, protected by guns mounted ashore with an effective range of fifteen miles or so ; it has provided him with deadly mines, to be laid in secrecy so as to endanger the approach of enemy ships, while leaving a cleverly devised pathway to facilitate the movements of his own ships outwards. Nor is this all. It has placed at his disposal wonderfully contrived ships which can travel either on or under the water. The submarine, though it has great possibilities as an offensive arm, in its present stage of evolution is essentially the weapon of the weaker Power standing at bay. It can make itself invisible. It is provided with the latest type of torpedo, which passes almost unseen towards its target at a speed of 30 or 40 knots, is kept on its course by the gyroscope, and eventually delivers a charge of upwards of 300 lbs. of explosive, with results with which the war has made us familiar. Science in all its various developments has conferred immense benefits on the weaker Power acting on the defensive and anxious to ward off the day of final defeat. Hence the success of the Germans in keeping their High Sea Fleet practically intact, so far as battleships are concerned !

At the same time science has served in some measure to buttress and give extended influence to a supreme fleet. Wireless telegraphy in combination with high speed and great gun power, embodied in the cruiser *Sydney*, led to the destruction of the *Emden*. The 12-inch guns of the *Inflexible* and *Invincible*, in association with a speed of approximately 30 knots, led to Admiral von Spee's

squadron being destroyed in the course of a few hours. The same qualities—gun power and speed—gave success to Admiral Sir David Beatty on the occasions of the memorable actions in the North Sea, and have since, by their menace residing in the Grand Fleet, assured command of the North Sea.

Whatever incidental errors may have been committed, the broad fact remains that from the opening of the war we have drawn from the sea the naval, military and economic power which will eventually assure to us the essential victory. It is no exaggeration to claim that but for the influence exerted by British sea-power the cause of the Allies must long ago have gone down in the dust.

## 2. THE COMMERCIAL BLOCKADE

The commercial blockade of Germany began, at least nominally, at the same time as the military blockade. It was not very effective. It has been argued that if only the stringent measures which have been in operation since the early months of 1917 had been put in force from the opening of hostilities, and the neutral nations contiguous to Germany had been severely "rationed," the war would have been over by now. That is very possible; but would the Allies have won? The commercial blockade could not be made fully effective without limiting, almost to vanishing point, the trade which the United States and other American nations were doing not only with the Central Powers, but with Sweden, Norway, Denmark, and Holland. It is a further matter of complaint that cotton was not immediately declared to be contraband. Was the caution exhibited by the British Government in that respect wise or unwise?

For a century the supreme Fleet had not exercised its powers to the full. On the last occasion when it did so it became involved in war with a great neutral Power—the United States, in 1812. In the meantime the world's oversea commerce had developed to an extraordinary extent. It was at once apparent that, under the conditions of military blockade adopted by the Admiralty, it was possible to shut down practically all German trade, whether conducted directly or through neighbouring ports. Was the failure to take that course due to “the hidden hand,” political timidity, or political wisdom? It must have been apparent to the British Government that any measures which they took to interfere with German trade would severely strain British relations with powerful neutrals, not excluding the United States and the other American republics.<sup>1</sup> The British people were dependent in varying measure on all those countries for sundry essential supplies, and it was known that German agents in each State were actively engaged in misrepresenting whatever step was taken and endeavouring to stir up trouble.

This matter of the commercial blockade was submitted to an American officer who had exceptional facilities of judging the movement of opinion on the American con-

<sup>1</sup> “The circumstances of naval war have changed so much within the last hundred years that it may be doubted whether such disastrous effects on the one hand, or such brilliant prosperity on the other, as were seen in the wars between England and France, could now recur. *In her secure and haughty sway of the seas England imposed a yoke on neutrals which will never again be borne; and the principle that the flag covers the goods is for ever secured. The commerce of a belligerent can therefore now be safely carried on in neutral ships, except when contraband of war or to blockaded ports; and as regards the latter, it is also certain that there will be no more paper blockades.*”—*Influence of Sea Power on History.* (Mahan.)

continent. He was asked his opinion, as the officer of a nation which had recently declared war on Germany, of the effects which would have followed the ruthless application of British sea-power against Germany, and therefore also against neutrals, in the early days of the war:—

“ You ask me whether a rigid commercial blockade might not have brought the war to an earlier conclusion? I think it might. On the other hand, I am convinced that the Allies would not have won. When the war began the American people generally regarded it as a nuisance. It threatened to interfere with their trade, and they were determined at any price to protect themselves. The States were passing through a period of commercial depression; a slump was developing. The average American believed that a state of war in Europe meant commercial ruin to American commerce.

“ There was no pro-Ally sentiment worth mentioning in those days. Those of us who realized the real character of the war represented a small minority. We were fearful of the course which events might take before the Presidential election. A little incident might have been sufficient to turn the scale. There was a large vote of enemy origin to be cast either on the one side or the other. When the election came German barbarity and the consideration shown by the British Government—not weakness, but firmness allied with political wisdom—had brought over the majority of Americans to the Allied side; but American citizens generally were still anxious, in spite of the *Lusitania* and other incidents, not to be drawn into war. Most of them were rather pleased that the United States should be supplying the Allies with munitions and money, but they wished to go no further, and some were even opposed to those measures, as the records of Congress show.

“ Then came the election. Unless I am mistaken, Mr. Hughes, if returned to office, intended to ‘twist the British lion’s tail.’ That may seem surprising to you, but our politics are very mixed. President Wilson, on the other hand, had already made his policy clear. He was in sympathy with the

Allies, but anxious to keep out of war. The pacifists, frightened by the speeches of Mr. Hughes and his supporter, ex-President Roosevelt, rallied to Mr. Wilson. Hardly had the new President taken office before Germany broke the *Sussex* pledge, and forthwith Mr. Wilson determined on war. But for the pacifist vote and the care with which he educated American opinion over a period of two years and more, the United States would not be fighting by your side.

“ I come from one of the cotton States. When the war in Europe opened cotton, if I remember rightly, was selling at 5 cents a lb. ; the growers were making their profit on the quantity sold and not on the price obtained. They were in a nervous, suspicious and irritable mood, as any men might well be whose industry is threatened by a war 3000 or 4000 miles away, the bearing of which on their country they do not realize. Gradually the war exercised its influence on the cotton market. The price rose, and by the time the British Government declared cotton to be contraband, the American growers were doing so well that the decision was a matter of comparative indifference to them. If cotton had been declared contraband in August, 1914, I hardly dare think what the course of American policy would have been in view of the influence of the pro-Germans, supported by the cotton growers and reinforced by the Irish saloon keepers, whose political activities are by no means to be ignored. The British people, I think, may congratulate themselves on the outcome of a situation which was not without peril to them and the Allies.”

By the spring of 1915 Germany gave the British Government an excuse for resorting to more severe measures when she adopted practically unrestricted submarine warfare on Allied merchantmen, including passenger ships. The Germans, as Viscount Grey, then Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, recalled in the American Note of March 15th, 1915, had already committed acts of frightfulness in Belgium and France ; they had barbarously ill-treated British prisoners ; they had

sown mines on the high seas ; they had made the sinking of merchant ships a general practice ; they had bombarded unfortified, open, and defenceless towns ; their aircraft had dropped bombs on the east coast of England, where there were no military or strategic points to be attacked ; and they had followed up these acts by declaring a submarine blockade of British ports. After giving quotations from Bismarck and Caprivi in justification of a siege policy, Viscount Grey announced, in so many words, that it was intended to prevent all goods either entering or leaving Germany. The United States Government protested, but the protest was diplomatic and dictated apparently by American conditions rather than the sentiments of the American Government. It was not until August 22nd, 1915, that the British and French Governments declared cotton contraband of war. By that time the American people were beginning to change their attitude towards the war, and this turn of the screw, occurring when it did, caused little irritation in the United States.

In that way the British Foreign Office made the difficult and stormy passage from the conditions of peace to the conditions of war without alienating neutral opinion. During succeeding months the blockade became more stringent by stages, and when at last Germany determined on intensified U-boat warfare the United States threw in her lot with the Allies, and her example was followed by practically all the leading neutral nations of the world, except those of northern Europe, which were too close to Germany to take action. Henceforth the United States pressed the blockade, instead of opposing it.

Critics may claim that if severer measures had been

adopted at an earlier date neutrals might have protested, but they would have done nothing more. That was the suggestion put forward in the early years of the nineteenth century, when one of the greatest tragedies in British-American history was enacted. The British Government, cut off from quick communication across the Atlantic, believed that America would never fight. In the meantime the United States Government, actuated by various motives, had determined that it would fight. Both sides were suffering from genuine grievances ; both determined not to give way. In 1812 war was declared by the United States. A few days before that deplorable event, the British Orders in Council, which had produced that declaration, had been revoked, unknown to the Americans. The cause of war had thus been removed before war was declared. Historians, who in due course will review the events from 1914 onward to America's decision to break off diplomatic relations with Germany, will realise better than we can do the danger which threatened the Allies and the success with which, owing to British diplomacy, it was averted. Those who are familiar with Nelson's despatches, letters, and recorded conversations will be in no doubt as to the opinion that he would have formed of the course adopted, for he was a diplomatist as well as an admiral.

### 3. THE ATTACK ON BRITISH COMMERCE

What would Nelson and his companion in arms have said if they could contemplate the small losses which the Allies have sustained as the result of the action of the above-water vessels of the German Fleet? This is a matter apart from submarine piracy—quite another issue.

It is a matter of importance to a comprehension of the problem of the defence of maritime commerce that the two subjects should not be confused, since they are separate and distinct. It may be admitted at once that the provision made in the one case did not suffice in the other ; the diseases, to employ a medical analogy, are not alike—submarineitis being new and unexplored—and, as experience has shown, they call for different remedies. It is proposed here to deal with the defence of British seaborne commerce against above-water attack—that is, by cruisers, either regular or converted.

Complaint was made in many quarters before the war opened of the withdrawal from the outer seas of a number of slow, poorly armed cruisers, sloops, and gunboats, without vertical armour, owing to the policy of concentration of British naval force in the principal strategic area. It was prophesied that German cruisers would break out from the North Sea, and that the people of the British Isles would be reduced to a state of starvation owing to their depredations on the trade routes. It was also asserted that the German cruisers already on foreign stations would make sorry havoc with British merchantmen. Laments were, in particular, raised over the scrapping of non-fighting ships which “ showed the flag,” it being suggested that the new policy involved loss of prestige.

The matter will repay careful examination in the light of experience. In the early years of the century, long before the British Government or the nation was conscious of the significance of German naval expansion, the Admiralty had studied everything bearing upon the new problem which was suddenly presented. The German



menace, in the first place, consisted of the strong battle fleet in the North Sea contemplated under the Navy Act of 1900, and, in the second place, of the very large cruiser force which the Germans proposed to create, one section being associated with the main battle fleet and the other distributed so as to act from selected bases in foreign waters. At the time this legislation received the signature of the Kaiser—on June 14th, 1900—the British Fleet was distributed in accordance with the principles inherited from the Napoleonic era—that is, before the advent of steam and wireless telegraphy and the evolution of the modern man-of-war :

#### EUROPEAN WATERS

The main battle force of the British Empire was concentrated in the Mediterranean, and consisted of ten battleships, two large cruisers, eight small cruisers or gunboats, six torpedo gunboats, and eight destroyers. There also existed in home waters what was known as the Reserve Squadron, comprising ten of the oldest battleships, which were only partially manned and were distributed, except during manœuvres, at the principal ports of the United Kingdom ; they were styled coast and port guard ships, and associated with them were two big cruisers and two smaller ones. These vessels cruised together only for about a month in the summer, and not always then, and for the rest of the year were dotted round the coast, having little or no war value. Linking the so-called Reserve Squadron to the Mediterranean was the Channel Fleet. It contained eight battleships and four cruisers. Its mission was to act as a reinforcement in time of war either in home waters or, as then seemed

more probable, in the Mediterranean. But it was not ready for instant action owing to the composition of its crews, which included a large number of boys undergoing the final stage of their training. It was recognized that the crews would have to be readjusted to war conditions before the Channel Fleet engaged an enemy, and that would have involved return to a home port and considerable delay. The Channel Fleet spent most of its time outside home waters, the ships calling at Vigo and other Spanish ports, Lisbon, Lagos, Gibraltar, and Madeira, with one annual trip to Port Mahon. There was consequently no fully commissioned and trained naval force in home waters, and the squadron in the Mediterranean was very small when compared with the Grand Fleet of to-day.

#### FOREIGN SQUADRONS

In contrast with the weakness in British waters, the squadrons abroad were large, though mainly composed of old and weak ships. The number of vessels on each station was as follows:—

CHINA STATION.—Battleships, 3 ; 1st class cruisers, 5 ; 2nd class cruisers, 3 ; 3rd class cruisers, 2 ; sloops, etc, 14 ; destroyers, 5.

EAST INDIES STATION.—2nd class cruiser, 1 ; 3rd class cruisers, 3 ; sloops, etc, 3 ; torpedo gunboats, 2 (one in reserve at Bombay) ; obsolete coast defence ships, 2 (one in reserve at Bombay).

CAPE STATION.—Obsolete battleship, 1 (in reserve at Cape Town) ; 1st class cruiser, 1 ; 2nd class cruisers, 3 ; 3rd class cruisers, 8 ; sloops, etc, 5. (One 1st class, one

2nd class, two 3rd class cruisers of these ships had been temporarily detached from the Channel and Mediterranean Squadrons on account of the South African War.)

NORTH AMERICA AND WEST INDIES STATION.—Obsolete coast defence ship, 1 (in reserve at Bermuda); 1st class cruiser, 1; 2nd class cruisers, 4; 3rd class cruisers, 3; sloops, etc, 6; destroyer, 1.

PACIFIC STATION.—1st class cruiser, 1; 2nd class cruisers, 3; sloops, etc, 2; destroyer, 1.

AUSTRALIAN STATION.—1st class cruiser, 1; 3rd class cruisers, 8 (obsolete or obsolescent, one being in reserve at Sydney); sloops, 3; torpedo gunboat, 1.

#### THE FLEET IN RESERVE

A large proportion of the naval forces of the country was kept in the home ports *unmanned*. Roughly, the proportion maintained between officers and men at sea and officers and men in home waters either in the naval depots, in the coast and port guard ships, or undergoing training was half and half.

So much for the British organization and distribution. In the spring of each year preparations were commenced for mobilizing a portion of the reserve ships, the actual mobilization taking place two or three months later, and manœuvres following. The process involved an immense amount of labour over a long period, and then the reserve ships, with scratch crews unfamiliar with engines and fighting equipment, went to sea to reinforce either the Channel or the Reserve Squadrons, the latter having also been brought up to war strength with fresh officers and men. Mr. J. R. Thursfield, one of the most experienced

writers on naval affairs, who was the principal *Times* correspondent in the naval manœuvres of 1900, criticized this theory of mobilization.<sup>1</sup>

“ The more homogeneous a squadron is, the more perfectly it is trained in the qualities and aptitudes which belong to its homogeneous character, the more inexpedient is it to dilute it with a sudden and improvised reinforcement of inferior and heterogeneous ships. Such a policy reduces the whole theory and practice of tactical training to an absurdity. It assumes, in the first place, that the fighting fleets we keep at sea are not strong enough to fight until they are reinforced ; in the second place, that such reinforcements may consist of quite inferior ships, newly commissioned, untrained in fleet evolutions, and manned by crews unaccustomed to work together ; in the third place, that such reinforcements, so organized, afford an access of numerical strength which more than compensates for the loss of tactical mobility and the change of tactical method imposed on the fleet so reinforced. . . .

“ To train a homogeneous fleet in tactics which it can never pursue in war, because it will be rendered heterogeneous by reinforcement the moment when war is imminent, is practically to declare either that tactical training is worthless, or that newly organized fleets can learn all that is worth knowing about it in the very short interval which in future wars is likely to precede the actual outbreak of hostilities. The only sound and logical policy is permanently to maintain our fighting fleet in all respects on the footing of instant readiness for war.”

At that time the war efficiency of the Navy as a fighting force was sacrificed in order to continue the policy of “showing the flag.” The Fleet in the main strategic areas was in consequence always short of officers and men, and the manning system was defective, as successive manœuvres illustrated. In the circumstances, the Admiralty,

<sup>1</sup> *Naval Annual*, 1901.

with Lord Fisher as its inspiring force, reached the only sound conclusion in view of the development of naval policy in Germany. If the trade routes were to be protected, it was necessary to concentrate overwhelming force in the North Sea in order to prevent German cruisers breaking out from their home ports ; secondly, on every foreign station a superiority of force should be maintained over the ships stationed there by the Germans, regard being had also to the general international situation and the demands of our commerce.

In 1904 a beginning was made in changing the British battle front from the Mediterranean to the North Sea and in readjusting foreign squadrons to the fresh conditions which were then coming into view. The whole naval situation was re-surveyed, and in consequence it was determined to call home a large number of ships of old types—too weak to fight and too slow to run away. The officers and men, numbering about 11,000, who were thus set free were utilized, in part to create the instantly ready fleet in the North Sea, the Grand Fleet of to-day, and in part to found the nucleus crew system for vessels in reserve. In the Admiralty memorandum explaining the new policy it was remarked :—

“ It will have been noticed that, whenever a portion of the Fleet has been specially commissioned for manœuvres, the only difficulties which have occurred during these manœuvres have been in connection with the ships so specially commissioned. The arrangements in connection with the personnel have worked smoothly and quickly, and the ships have been commissioned and have proceeded to sea within the specified number of hours,<sup>1</sup> but during the manœuvres the number of

<sup>1</sup> The actual mobilization was always preceded by a long period of preparation at the Dockyards, a matter of months, during which such vessels as were to be commissioned were repaired.

small mishaps in connection with the machinery of the specially commissioned ships has always been much in excess of that of the ships in commission.

“ There has, however, never been any mystery as to the cause of this distinction. During the great expansion of the Fleet which has been taking place for the last fifteen years, the Board of Admiralty have never been able to retain at home a proportion of the personnel of the Navy sufficient to keep the ships of the Fleet Reserve in such perfect condition that on mobilization for war they could feel confident that there would be no mishaps to the machinery on first commissioning, nor have the newly commissioned crews had sufficient opportunity to acquaint themselves with the innumerable details which go to make up what may be called the individuality of the ship. Year after year the Board have endeavoured to remedy this evil by proposing to Parliament large additions to the personnel (additions which Parliament has freely granted), but the increase in the number, size, and horsepower of the ships in commission has more than swallowed up the increase in the personnel, and consequently an adequate provision for the ships in the Fleet Reserve has not yet been made.”

In face of those conditions the Admiralty began to carry out a scheme of redistribution of the naval forces. The apparent effect of those measures was to leave a greatly reduced number of men-of-war on foreign stations, and it seemed to many persons that British oversea commerce was being exposed to great danger. The fears which were entertained were well grounded if the central force, the Grand Fleet, concentrated in the main strategic area for the purpose of “ containing ” the main fleet of Germany, with its complement of swift cruisers, was inadequate for that object. It became the preoccupation of the Admiralty in succeeding years to strengthen the Grand Fleet so as to remove that possibility. That engine

of war was designed to achieve most of the purposes for which naval force exists, including the protection of the trade routes. It was intended to serve as a blockading force, as an anti-invasion force, and as a commerce protection force. In that way, the problem of defending British commerce in time of war against the potential enemy was reduced to modest proportions, and the Admiralty in its disposition of ships on foreign stations was able to proceed on the assumption that provision need be made only for dealing with such German vessels as might happen to be at sea in the various distant sea areas at the outbreak of war, and with such merchant liners as might be converted on the high seas. In short, the nation obtained an instantly ready fleet in the North Sea, as a screen for every sea, and, at the same time, provision was made for such a margin of force in distant waters as the strength of the German squadrons necessitated from time to time.

There has been a tendency to regard as a commonplace the Admiralty's solution of the commerce defence problem now that it can be viewed in retrospect. It is forgotten that in the years preceding the war the policy was bitterly attacked in many quarters by professed students of naval affairs. The critics failed to realize the efficiency and simplicity of the strategic scheme, and, in view of the political circumstances and the desire not to embitter Anglo-German relations so long as there was a possibility of escaping from under the shadow of war, no adequate defence could be made in public of the naval measures adopted in the earlier years of the century. In Parliament it looked as though the Admiralty case had gone by default. The critics made much of the failure to show

the British flag ; the nucleus crew system was held up to scorn.

War has since supplied the supreme test to the various steps taken between 1904 and 1914 to adapt the Fleet to the new strategical situation and to fit it to perform its mission. It would be a mistake to ignore the complementary action to train the new fleets as they were never trained before ; to devote increased attention to gunnery ; to improve torpedo tactics and signalling ; and to raise generally the efficiency of the Navy to war pitch after a period of a hundred years of peace with all its dangers. All those measures were part of a co-ordinated scheme which was carried out gradually in the ten years which preceded the outbreak of war.

The success of the Admiralty's reforms depended, first and last, upon the maintenance of the military blockade with a measure of perfection never attained in any former war. Until the Grand Fleet took up its war stations on the outbreak of hostilities, the British Fleet had never maintained a watertight military blockade, with the result that the merchant navy suffered heavy losses. The blockades of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars were leaky as sieves. Enemy ships passed out of port to attack British commerce and returned, in the majority of cases, unscathed. There were no submarines or destroyers in those days, but, nevertheless, the blockading squadrons, owing to unfavourable winds and other circumstances, often fell far short of success and suffered seriously under the ordeal, as the correspondence between the admirals at sea and the naval authorities ashore reveals. A memorandum drawn up by Captain Sir Henry Popham in the summer of the year which was to witness the Battle of



Trafalgar forms an interesting commentary upon the blockades of that period. He reminded the Admiralty that the peril of invasion of these islands had been greatly reduced owing to the success of the volunteer movement; "not only every city, but even every parish and hamlet is now in a state of military array; and the different corps of volunteers are so perfect in all the evolutions as to become the admiration of the first officers in this country." This officer then continued:—

"Under such military preparation, therefore, little is to be apprehended from invasion, but much is to be dreaded by a continuance of that system of blockade that has already been proved to be practically imperfect, and likely to be attended with the most serious consequences to this country. The greatest evil to be apprehended is that of disaffection from a continued state of watching, harassing, and almost a total privation of those comforts and relaxations which, in the most material degree, constitute the happiness and fix the content of a British seaman; but, independent of this, the wear and tear of our ships, the expense of stores, of watering and victualling by transports, of losses in the different transportations, and the total destruction of all our boats, are calamities that increase in so great a ratio as to threaten the annihilation of the fleet in a few years, because we have scarce the means of providing for all these casualties if the ships were even at anchor in our own ports, instead of obstinately braving the elements on the enemy's coasts.

"It has been clearly demonstrated that opportunities arise which enable the enemy to elude our most enterprising vigilance; and, therefore, I do think that to raise the blockade of the principal ports will be a measure of the soundest policy and expediency; and to such a one we ought to resort to put us in a state of efficiency to meet the various resources of France while she is so unembarrassed by continental difficulties as to be enabled to direct all her energies to the destruction of our Navy."

Lord Barham, the experienced sailor who was then First Lord of the Admiralty, accepted Popham's conclusions and drew up a memorandum, of which a draft exists in his own handwriting. "The blockade during the winter months to be given up, but renewed again the ensuing summer. The whole to be kept in readiness for sea. The ships most in want of refitting to be taken in hand immediately on their coming in, and added to the effective ships as they are got ready." Provision was made for protecting the terminals of trade routes and for "a string of cruisers" to form a system of communication from Falmouth to Gibraltar. "By these means I think we shall be perfectly safe at home; our ships and seamen will have rest and refreshments; the trade will be protected, the enemy annoyed, and by the measures we are taking our number of ships will be increased." The Battle of Trafalgar changed the naval situation, and in the following spring Barham left the Admiralty. This document constitutes an admission of the difficulty which was experienced in blockading the enemy during the winter months, and it constitutes also a confession of the imperfection of the blockading system, the results not justifying the strain on the personnel and the damage sustained by the ships. From 1793 to 1815, with a short interval of peace, the British mercantile marine, in spite of all the efforts of the seamen of the Royal Navy, suffered heavy depredations, though between 1805 and 1815 the strength of the Navy, in ships and men, was increased year by year down to the conclusion of peace. The experiences of our forefathers may be contrasted with advantage with our own. The British strategic scheme which came into operation at the beginning of

August, 1914, was based on the intention of "containing" the High Seas Fleet of Germany, with its complement of small swift cruisers, and preventing armed merchantmen in the enemy's North Sea ports escaping on to the trade routes. For the rest, there remained the men-of-war which the Germans had already in foreign waters. The following statement reveals the strength of the German forces on foreign stations when war was declared:—

Far East	. . .	<i>Scharnhorst</i>	Armoured cruiser (22·5 knots)
"	. . .	<i>Gneisenau</i>	Armoured cruiser (22·5 knots)
"	. . .	<i>Emden</i>	Light cruiser (24 knots)
"	. . .	<i>Nürnberg</i>	Light cruiser (23 knots)
"	. . .	<i>Illis</i>	Gunboat (old)
"	. . .	<i>Jaguar</i>	Gunboat (old)
"	. . .	<i>Tiger</i>	Gunboat (old)
"	. . .	<i>Luchs</i>	Gunboat (old)
"	. . .	<i>S. 90</i>	Torpedo-boat destroyer
"	. . .	<i>Taku</i>	Torpedo-boat destroyer
Australasia	. . .	<i>Geir</i>	Gunboat (old)
"	. . .	<i>Cormoran</i>	Gunboat (old)
West African Coast	. . .	<i>Eber</i>	Gunboat (old)
East African Coast	. . .	<i>Königsberg</i>	Light cruiser (23·5 knots)
West Coast of America	. . .	<i>Leipzig</i>	Light cruiser (23 knots) attached to China Squadron
East Coast of America.	. . .	<i>Karlsruhe</i>	Light cruiser (28 knots)
"	"	<i>Dresden</i>	Light cruiser (24·5 knots)

For a time some of these German ships, as well as a group of converted liners, offered a menace to British commerce, but if all the slow "scrapped cruisers" under the British ensign formerly on duty in the Atlantic and Pacific—possessing neither adequate speed nor gun power—had been in commission they could not have stopped the careers of these swift enemy ships. Let it be confessed that some time elapsed, as might have been expected, before these German cruisers, at large in vast wastes of ocean, were destroyed, but destroyed they were, as the enemy frigates in the early years of the last century were not destroyed during a period of twenty years.

The conditions which existed at sea at this early period of the war may be recalled. The British men-of-war in the outer seas were engaged in the supreme task of guarding the Empire's soldiers during the period of mobilization. It was an enormous and difficult task; it has no parallel in naval history. Only one of the German ships met with any considerable measure of success—the *Emden*—and after her destruction Admiral von Spee, the Commander-in-Chief in the Far East, gathered under his flag all the available ships of real war value. The Battle of Coronel followed. It was not an incident on which it is pleasant to dwell; it was creditable only to Admiral Sir Christopher Cradock and the officers and men who were with him. In the circumstances which existed, would Nelson have fought, or would he, as in the case of Rear-admiral Campbell to which reference has already been made, have declared that it was right and proper not to allow "the very superior force of the enemy to bring you to action"? But then arises the inquiry whether Admiral Cradock could, if he would, have avoided action against a swifter

and overwhelming force ? That is a matter which cannot be discussed with profit until all the evidence is available. What followed on the destruction of the British ships ? In the first week of November, 1914—immediately after Coronel—Lord Fisher became First Sea Lord of the Admiralty. The victorious German ships were still at sea. The first act of that officer, exhibiting a stroke of strategic genius without parallel in British history, was to dispatch in all haste and in all secrecy the battle-cruisers *Invincible* and *Inflexible* from England with instructions to engage and sink the enemy. Admiral von Spee, unaware of the approach of these vessels, steamed for the Falkland Islands, which Lord Fisher had made the rendezvous for a naval concentration, other cruisers having been ordered to join the battle cruisers there. The story of the battle is familiar. It will rank as the most decisive engagement in naval history ; it excels any action in which Nelson took part, not excluding the Battle of the Nile, for only one German ship escaped—the cruiser *Dresden*—and that vessel was scuttled off the Chilian coast in the following spring after having been harried here and there by British ships. The Battle of the Falkland Islands most closely approached the Nelsonian ideal —“ not victory but annihilation.”

In that manner the seas were cleared of Germany's foreign service cruisers. The triumphant success with which the Grand Fleet held the High Seas Fleet in check and the annihilation of the enemy's oversea forces caused despair among the Germans ; they could not get a single cruiser on to the trade routes. They had not anticipated such a vindication of British sea-power. Readers of Admiral Mahan's works—translated into German by the

Kaiser's orders—were aware that after the Battle of Trafalgar Napoleon concentrated all the energy of the French Fleet on warfare on commerce, which was conducted with remarkable success. Week by week, in spite of all the efforts of the British Fleet under its war-trained officers and men, British merchant ships were captured. The people of the British Isles were reduced, if not to the verge of starvation, at least to a condition of privation. Nothing that the British Navy could do checked effectively the enemy's activities. The experience of war in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries became the basis of a naval doctrine which Admiral Mahan expressed in the following words :—

“ The control of the sea, however real, does not imply that an enemy's single ships or small squadrons cannot steal out of port, cannot cross more or less frequented tracts of ocean, make harassing descents upon unprotected points of a long coastline, enter blockaded harbours. On the contrary, history has shown that such evasions are always possible, to some extent, to the weaker party, however great the inequality of naval strength.”<sup>1</sup>

Owing to the measures adopted by the British Admiralty, and the sea instinct and resource of British naval officers, that doctrine has not been exemplified in the course of the present war. Generally, it may be said that since the early period of hostilities Germany has been unable to float, outside her own protected waters, the keel of a single man-of-war—that is, apart from three or four armed and disguised merchant ships—“ raiders.” The extent of her defeat may be judged from the character of the expedients to which she has since resorted. Defeated on

<sup>1</sup> *Influence of Sea Power upon History.*

the sea, she determined to fight under it. Her submarine campaign represents the negation of all the principles of civilized war ; she has thrown to the wind the laws of nations and the dictates of humanity. In so doing she has confessed the success of British naval policy and the failure of her own policy. The submarine campaign is doomed to failure. The British Navy in the early days of the last century failed in its effort to put down enemy frigates, but recent experience suggests that, in spite of the aid which physical science has given to the enemy—enabling him to operate with submersible craft in deep waters over extended periods—the day is not far off when the campaign will be defeated.

Some critics have asserted that had the true doctrine been accepted and acted upon, the High Seas Fleet would have been destroyed, and the submarine peril, as a result, removed—a decisive battle would have rendered piracy impracticable. On the question whether it has been possible to destroy a fleet sheltering behind long-range land guns, minefields, and mosquito craft something has already been said. If the student of the present war asks : “ What would Nelson have done ? ” an answer can be given him. In his *Life* of the great admiral, Sir John Knox Laughton quotes instances “ to show how, with all his resolution to fight, he was no hot-brained bully to run needless or useless risks, still less to have his ships beaten to pieces against stone walls and solid fortifications.”

“ When in 1854 the country howled against Sir Charles Napier because in the course of a few summer months he did not take or destroy the massive fortifications of Cronstadt

and the enemy's fleet behind them, it would have been well had it been reminded that neither Hawke nor Nelson, St. Vincent nor Cornwallis, had cared to lay their ships against the far inferior defences of Toulon, of Brest, or even of Cadiz ; that so long as the enemy's fleet remained within those defences it was practically safe."

In those days there were no long-range coastal guns and no mines ; there were no submarines to prey upon commerce, ignoring the law of nations and the dictates of humanity. There were, however, plenty of fast ships, which managed to get to sea both before and after Trafalgar—particularly after. Let it be said that the French conducted their war on British commerce with consideration for life and property. They captured the ships and destruction was the exception ; we do not read of inhumanities practised on crews or passengers. But the campaign, though it was conducted under the restraints imposed by civilization, was effective. In the twenty-one years over which hostilities stretched, with only a short interval of peace, the British merchant navy, consisting of about 20,000 vessels, lost no fewer than 11,000, equivalent to 55 per cent. If the admirals of the period by destroying the enemy's main fleet could have stopped those depredations, why did they not do so ? It is true that the guns carried by their ships were of short range, but if there has been progress in naval ordnance, there has also been progress in coastal ordnance, and, in addition, the torpedo and mine and submarine have strengthened the defensive.

It has been argued that our command of the sea has been subject to limitations. That, however, is no new experience. In his able study of *Some Principles of*



*Maritime Strategy*, Sir Julian Corbett has remarked that "it has to be noted that even permanent general command can never in practice be absolute." When the war opened naval officers were well aware that the command of the sea does not exist in time of peace, but must be won before it can be used either for military or economic purposes. As Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, literally interpreting Mahanism, remarked :—

"The rule is that the command of the sea has to be won after hostilities begin. To win it the enemy's naval force must be neutralized. It must be driven into his ports and there blockaded or 'masked,' and thus rendered virtually innocuous, or it must be defeated and destroyed. The latter is the preferable because the more effectual plan. As was perceptible in the Spanish-American War of 1898, as long as one belligerent fleet is intact or at large, the other is reluctant to carry out any considerable expedition oversea. In fact, the command of the sea has not been secured, whilst the enemy continues to have a 'fleet in being.'"

What was the policy adopted by the British Government on the day that war was declared—defensive or offensive? Their naval advisers must have been familiar with the historical doctrine enunciated by Admiral Mahan and other historians that an enemy "fleet in being" is a bar to military oversea expeditions. The Government ignored the teaching of history, and determined forthwith to carry out operations which had never been attempted before in such conditions. In face of the second greatest naval Power in the world, still undefeated and his policy still undisclosed, it was decided (a) to land a large army in France, and (b) to mobilize, necessarily by sea, the military resources of the British Empire. We have heard a good deal of the Expeditionary Force of 160,000 men

or so, as though that constituted the entire British military strength. *In point of fact, on the fateful Monday morning when Lord Haldane, at the request of Mr. Asquith, then Secretary of State for War, went to the War Office and pressed the button mobilizing the British Army, about 700,000 men sprang to arms—Regulars, Reservists, and Territorials,<sup>1</sup> and India placed nearly 300,000 men on a war footing, thus completing the round million.* The next task was to make that strength effective against the enemy; and let it not be forgotten that at that stage it was impossible to ignore the dangers threatening the overseas Empire—including India. With hardly a thought of the teaching of history and with a bold conception of the necessities of the moment, the Government called upon the Fleet to perform a task which in character and extent was without precedent. Within five days the movement of the Expeditionary Force began across the Channel, only three or four hundred miles from a fleet inferior to the British Fleet alone amongst the fleets of the world. Only those who are familiar with naval history can appreciate the risk which was courageously faced in full confidence in the strategic conception which had brought the Grand Fleet into being. Almost simultaneously a “general post” of the military strength of the Empire began, so as to secure the best-trained troops on French battlefields, their places overseas being taken by Territorials. Thenceforward, from month to month, the responsibilities of the British Navy were continually increased. In a short time there was no sea in which it was not called upon to protect

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *The Territorial Sham and the Army, an exposure by a Staff Officer* (Everett & Co.) for the views then held in some quarters as to the uselessness of the Territorial Force.

well-filled transports, although in the meantime the enemy remained undefeated. In succeeding months the Navy has fulfilled a double task. The decision of the Government made it essential that at any cost the maritime lines of communication of the armies overseas should be preserved, and the Merchant Navy, carrying food and raw materials, had to be protected, while the traditional instinct of the sailors urged them to spare no effort to inflict a decisive defeat on an enemy hiding in his defended ports, offering from day to day a challenge to the enemy's main fleet.

It has been complained that the one objective—the protection of communications—has overshadowed the other—the defeat of the enemy. What would Nelson have done? It is well to visualize the influence which an error at sea—some such miscalculation as the German General Staff made on land—might have had, not on British fortunes only, but on the fortunes of all the Allies. Nelson would have acted as the British admirals of our day acted, imposing his will on the enemy, but refusing to fall into any one of the traps which the Germans have laid.

We have never possessed too great a margin in modern and effective ships over Germany.<sup>1</sup> A year or two before the opening of the war a First Lord of the Admiralty remarked that when a battle was fought it would take place at "the enemy's selected moment," and at the

<sup>1</sup> At the outbreak of war, the Germans "possessed many more oversea submarines than we did; they were about equivalent to us in oversea destroyers; the Germans were within measurable distance of equality with us in regard to the provision of light cruisers; in armoured vessels we possessed a considerable superiority, so far as numbers go, in vessels of the Dreadnought type."—First Sea Lord, Sheffield, October 24th, 1917.

British Fleet's "average moment," and therefore it was necessary to maintain a great material superiority in the main strategic area. War is in progress, and it is well not to forget that when the enemy comes out, if he decides upon that course, he will do so at his full strength, and that that moment may correspond with the absence from the flag of several British units undergoing repair. As Mr. Balfour reminded the British nation when he was at the Admiralty, the Grand Fleet, unlike the German Fleet, is not acting from a well-developed base, provided with all the facilities for docking, repairing, and replenishing ships. The Grand Fleet possesses a considerable margin of strength, but when the varying conditions on the two sides of the North Sea are taken into account, that margin is none too great. Unless the whole fabric of British war activities is to be imperilled and the Allied cause endangered, the Admiralty can never lose sight of the essential duty which is laid upon them, as it has never been laid upon the naval authorities of any other country, to safeguard the maritime lines of communication of the armies serving in France, in Salonica, in Egypt, in Palestine, in Mesopotamia, in East Africa, and in India. In addition, the British Navy, in association with the forces of the Allies, is responsible for protecting Allied merchantmen which bring to Europe no mean proportion of the necessary supplies of food, fuel, and the raw materials for the making of munitions and the construction of ships. It is also the anti-invasion force. On the power of the sea depends the military strength, credit, trade, and security of an island State, the centre of a maritime Empire. In the light of those considerations has the naval doctrine of the British Admiralty, as of the French and Italian

Admiralties, proved true or false? Is there a naval officer—Nelson or any of his companions—of the last Great War who would have confidently assumed the world-wide responsibilities which were thrust upon the British Navy in the summer of 1914? The world is confronted with a triumphant success which has no precedent in history, and the British people certainly have no cause for anything but heartfelt satisfaction and gratitude. The German Fleet has been “contained,” and, if the enemy has not accepted the challenge to a fight to a finish, the fruits of a naval victory, as the state of their armies attests, have not been denied to the Allies.

## CHAPTER V

### GUN POLICY OF THE RIVAL NAVIES

IN the light of experience the British Admiralty may congratulate itself on the policy with reference to guns adopted in the years preceding the War. Credit is also due to the great armament firms of the United Kingdom for the spirited manner in which, amid not a few discouraging, and even alarming, circumstances they co-operated with the naval authorities. They sank large sums of money in plant for the manufacture of guns, as well as armour, during a period when there was a growing agitation against naval progress in and out of the House of Commons, and it seemed possible that the pacifist section of the community might succeed in putting sufficient pressure on the Government of the day to cut off all orders.

All this on the one hand. On the other, in Germany and Austria-Hungary the technical authorities were embarrassed by no such difficulties. They worked in a militarist atmosphere, with the support of the most influential sections of the nations. They could obtain practically any money they desired. Yet in spite of those favourable circumstances, their gun policy has been shown by events to have been a failure. The war came, fortunately for the British Navy, before they had had time to repair past errors, and to this fact, in some measure,

must be attributed the inactivity of the main fleets of Germany and Austria-Hungary.

This point may be made clear by reference to the gun policy adopted by the Germans after they had, in the spring of 1898, passed the first of the succession of Navy Acts. At that time the most powerful battleships of the German Fleet were the four vessels of the Wörth class, which, on a displacement of 9874 tons, mounted six 11-inch guns of a weak type, in pairs in turrets on the centre line. This armament was associated with a complete armoured belt, 15·8 inches thick at the top and 7·9 inches at the bottom, amidships, and with a width of 6·6 feet; even at the ends the thickness was 11·8 inches and 7·1 inches, top and bottom, respectively. They were powerfully armed and well-protected ships of slow speed—about 17 knots—with an exceedingly modest provision of coal, 620 to 1033 tons; about 100 tons of oil being also stored, for even at that date the Germans used oil as an auxiliary agent. The secondary armament was weak, consisting of eight 4·1-inch quickfirers, with a similar number of 16-pounders.

When the first Navy Act was passed, the Marineamt was already committed to a new design—known as the Kaiser type, the first of which, the *Kaiser Friedrich III*, was laid down in April, 1895, and was followed in later years by four other units, the last being the *Kaiser Barbarossa*, begun in August, 1898. These battleships were over 1000 tons heavier than the Wörths, carried little more coal (with twice as much oil), were provided with approximately the same armour, but had an entirely different armament. In place of the 11-inch gun of 30 calibres, each was provided with four 9·4-inch guns of

40 calibres in association with fourteen 5·9-inch quick-firers (eight in casemates and six singly in turrets) and a dozen 16-pounders. Whereas the earlier battleships had only two 18-inch torpedo tubes on the broadside, the later ones were given five tubes. Some of the additional weight of the ships was represented by the heavier secondary armament and the remainder went in the engines and boilers, the design providing for an additional knot in speed. At their trials the legend speed was considerably exceeded.

Then Grand Admiral von Tirpitz came on the scene, and the task of rebuilding the German Navy was begun. What type of ship should be built? What battle gun should be selected at a moment when other Powers, with the exception of Austria-Hungary—of which more later on—were mounting 12-inch weapons? The new Naval Secretary had been identified during his active career at sea with the torpedo service. He decided on the retention of the 9·4-inch gun with its 474-lb. shell, although at that date Krupps claimed to be prepared to make 11- and 12-inch naval guns. For the latter weapons a perforation through iron was claimed, according to Tresidder's formula, in the case of the 50-calibre types, of 49·1- and 45·1-inch respectively; while for the 9·4-inch only 38·4 inches was claimed. However, the Marineamt selected the 40-calibre 9·4-inch gun with a perforation as low as 30 inches. It was stated at that time that the Naval Secretary and his Staff attached primary importance to quantity of fire, and deliberately rejected a heavier weapon, with a bigger shell, in order to secure the high rate of fire of the 9·4-inch gun. They assumed that battles would be fought at a range at which this gun



would perform all that would be required of it, and that they would secure the benefit arising from pouring a storm of shell on the enemy. They argued that the Krupp gun was superior to other guns and that their end must be to develop in action an overwhelming fire of shells of medium weight, since in their opinion they could, by pursuing that policy, gain the mastery over the slower firing, though heavier, guns of an enemy.

In line with this policy as to the primary gun, they devoted great weight to the secondary armament. At a time when in British ships designers were content with a dozen 6-inch quickfirers, the Germans decided to mount from fourteen to eighteen 5·9-inch guns—50 per cent more in the latter case. Of these eighteen quickfirers, ten were placed in the main deck battery, four singly in turrets on the upper deck, and the remaining four in a casemate round the forward barbette. Each vessel was also given a dozen 16-pounders, and had, as in the preceding class, five tubes for torpedoes.

The idea was to produce a class of battleships which could in action discharge a storm of shells on an enemy. The design adhered to a speed of 18 knots, but the maximum coal capacity was increased to 1770 tons. An improvement in armour manufacture suggested the possibility of a reduction in the thickness of the belt, but the depth was increased by nearly a foot. Thus the thickness amidships was placed at 8·9 inches, but for the rest the vessels were provided with excellent protection.

Of these battleships of the new type—the Wittelsbachs—the bigger coal capacity of which indicated a departure from the coast defence idea—five were laid down under the estimates of 1899 and 1900, the class comprising the

*Wittelsbach, Wettin, Zähringen, Schwaben, and Mecklenburg.* They cost roughly £1,000,000 each, and in view of their armament, protection, speed and radius of action they represented good value, judged from the point of view of the German authorities.

Germany by this policy obtained ten battleships of about 11,000 tons displacement, each carrying four 9.4-inch guns in association with a very heavy secondary battery and good armour protection.

Then there came a dramatic change in gun policy. In the two ships authorized in 1901 the 9.4-inch gun was abandoned. As in the meantime there had been no change on the part of foreign admiralities, the presumption was that the German technical authorities had come to realize that hitherto they had been committing an error. The arguments by which the 9.4-inch weapon had been supported were all thrown overboard, and the German Admiralty announced that in the new battleships the 11-inch gun of 40 calibres would be mounted.

In the meantime, it should not be forgotten that the Reichstag, as a result of a vigorous campaign in the country, had been prevailed upon—in 1900—to pass a new Navy Act, practically doubling the establishment of ships and making provision for a great increase of the personnel. This new measure was accompanied by a Memorandum in which Germany's naval needs were measured in relation to the strength of "the greatest sea Power." It was consistent, therefore, with the new policy that, as war with the "greatest sea Power" was contemplated, ships should be built which would bear comparison with the finest ships that were then under construction for the British Navy. When the German battleships hitherto

built came to be studied in the light of the new ambitions, they were found to be wanting, and hence the decision to introduce an improved class.

In the new vessels—of the Braunschweig class—four 11-inch guns were mounted in place of a similar number of 9.4-inch weapons. Why the Germans did not determine at once to jump to the 12-inch, thus bringing the new battleships in line with those under construction for other Powers, has never been explained officially. On the other hand, Krupp—whose advice may have decided the issue—repeatedly professed that they regarded their 11-inch gun—with its 521-lb. projectile and an advertised muzzle velocity of 2625 foot tons—as superior to the wire-wound British gun with its 850-lb. shell and a muzzle velocity of about 2900 foot tons. They predicted that the British guns would fire erratically and that, owing to erosion, their life would be short. Their arguments prevailed with the Marineamt, with the result that under the estimate of 1901–5 ten battleships of the new type were laid down. The main armament of four 11-inch guns was associated with fourteen 6.7-inch guns, the same idea, as in the earlier vessels, of the value of quantity rather than quality of fire being represented.

These twenty battleships, with their forty 9.4-inch and forty 11-inch guns, in association with heavy secondary armaments, constituted the pre-Dreadnought fleet of Germany on the outbreak of war when the British Fleet included forty pre-Dreadnought battleships each mounting four 12-inch guns, and ten of them, of the *Lord Nelson* and *King Edward* classes, carrying also 9.4-inch guns.

Even when the all-big-gun policy was adopted in Great Britain, and the Dreadnoughts were built, the Marineamt

remained faithful to the 11-inch gun in their first four Dreadnoughts of the *Posen* type, which were given a dozen of these weapons. The ships were badly designed and the guns faultily disposed, and in consequence this quartette represented no great accession of strength to the German Fleet. It is known that the designs were prepared before the Germans had full knowledge of the principles incorporated in the original British Dreadnoughts. If they did not in their haste commit every error they could commit, at any rate they built in great haste four ships of which few of the Kaiser's naval officers have since had a good word to say.

Mark what followed. It constitutes the German official opinion on German gun policy during the last years of the nineteenth and the earlier years of the twentieth century. Under the estimates of 1908 two battleships were laid down and at last the 12-inch gun was adopted. It proved to be the primary weapon of the *Oldenburg* class—four ships—and of the new *Kaiser* class—five ships. Germany at last came into line with other Powers. And then came another change. Under the estimates of 1913—too late for the ships to be completed before the opening of the war in 1914—provision was, it was rumoured, made for building ships with a 15-inch gun. The result of Germany's policy with reference to guns was that when war was declared, the defence of German maritime interests depended, in the main, on 9·4-inch and 11-inch guns, with a small number of 12-inch weapons.

In the meantime what had British gun policy been? The record is of peculiar interest in the light of the war, which has revealed the value of the big gun, and so far as any experience has been obtained, has shown that

quantity of fire is of far less importance than quality of fire—in other words, that the big gun is the better gun at all ranges. When the Germans were protesting that the 9·4-inch gun was as good a gun as any navy could require, the British authorities continued to mount the 12-inch gun, remaining faithful to the wire-wound system. Soon after the Germans had decided on the 11-inch guns, experiments with a new 13·5-inch weapon were begun in the United Kingdom. Just as the Germans were hovering on the brink, wondering whether they ought not to adopt the 12-inch gun the British Admiralty determined to go a step further, and in all secrecy a 15-inch weapon was manufactured. On the very eve of the war the then First Lord of the Admiralty (Mr. Winston Churchill) made a reference to British gun policy which bears recalling in view of later events :—

“ Two years ago we knew that other countries <sup>1</sup> had already decided, and had actually begun in some cases, to adopt a number of more powerful weapons than we possessed in the 13·5-inch gun. In the *Queen Elizabeth* type we wished also to have exceptional speed without any loss of gun-power or protection or undue increase in displacement. We had thus to give up one of the five turrets to find room for the extra boiler-power, and in order to maintain our gun-power we had to increase the calibre of the guns. Thus we had eight 15-inch guns instead of ten 13·5-inch guns. There is no great difference in cost involved in this.

“ But what is remarkable is that while other countries were debating and experimenting, we acted. We ordered the whole of the 15-inch guns for the ships of the 1912-13 programme without ever making a trial gun. We trusted entirely to British naval science in marine artillery, to the excellence of our gun-making system, and to the quality of British workmanship. When the first of these 15-inch guns was tried, a

<sup>1</sup> This remark did not apply to Germany or Austria-Hungary.

year ago, it yielded ballistic results which vindicated, with what is to the lay mind marvellous exactitude, the minutest calculations of the designer. It is the best gun we have ever had; it reproduces all the virtues of the 13.5-inch gun on a larger scale, and it is the most accurate gun at all ranges that we have ever had, and, as it is never pressed to its full compass by explosive discharge, it will be an exceptionally long-lived gun.

"Its power may be measured by the fact that whereas the 13.5-inch gun hurls a 1400 lb. projectile, a 15-inch gun discharges a projectile of nearly a ton in weight, and can hurl this immense mass of metal ten or twelve miles. That is to say, there has been an increase of rather more than 30 per cent—I am purposely vague on this point—in the weight of this projectile for an addition of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch to the calibre. This increase in the capacity of the shell produces results in far greater proportion in its explosive power, and the high explosive charge which the 15-inch gun can carry through and get inside the thickest armour afloat is very nearly half as large again in the 15-inch gun as was the charge in the 13.5-inch."

There is a tendency to forget how much the British people owe to the great armament firms throughout the country, not only for skill exhibited in arming the Fleet and the Expeditionary Force, but for the resources they provided without which we could not have carried on the wonderful co-ordinated expansion of naval and military power and achieved the munition movement. The country was able to face the crisis of 1914 with confidence because these firms possessed experience and knowledge of the needs of war. They placed all their establishments unreservedly at the service of the State, and, furthermore, they undertook the creation of new factories for making shells, etc. If the Navy and Army of this democratic country were able, as they were, to confront with success an enemy who for thirty or forty years had been preparing for war, the credit for the fine

TABLE SHOWING GUNS OF THE BRITISH AND GERMAN NAVIES.

BRITISH NAVY.

Class.	15-in.	13.5-in.	12-in.	9.2-in.	7.5-in.	6-in.	4-in.
<i>Erin</i> (1) ..	—	10	—	—	—	16	—
<i>Canada</i> (1) ..	—	10*	—	—	—	16	—
<i>Queen Elizabeth</i> (5) ..	40	—	—	—	—	60	—
<i>Iron Duke</i> (4) ..	—	40	—	—	—	48	—
<i>King George V</i> (4) ..	—	40	—	—	—	—	64
<i>Orion</i> (4) ..	—	40	—	—	—	—	64
<i>Colossus</i> (3) ..	—	—	30	—	—	—	48
<i>St. Vincent</i> (3) ..	—	—	30	—	—	—	54
<i>Bellerophon</i> (3) ..	—	—	30	—	—	—	48
<i>Dreadnought</i> (1) ..	—	—	10	—	—	—	—
<i>Agincourt</i> (1) ..	—	—	14	—	—	20	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>30</b>						
<i>Lord Nelson</i> (2) ..	—	—	8	20	—	—	—
<i>King Edward VII</i> (8) ..	—	—	32	32	—	80 <sup>1</sup>	—
<i>Swiftsure</i> (1) ..	—	—	—	4†	14	—	—
<i>Queen</i> (4) ..	—	—	16	—	—	48	—
<i>Implacable</i> (1) ..	—	—	4	—	—	12	—
<i>Duncan</i> (5) ..	—	—	20	—	—	60	—
<i>Canopus</i> (4) ..	—	—	16	—	—	48	—
<i>Magnificent</i> (8) ..	—	—	32	—	—	96	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>						
<i>Tiger</i> (1) ..	—	8	—	—	—	12	—
<i>Queen Mary</i> (3) ..	—	24	—	—	—	—	48
<i>New Zealand</i> (3) ..	—	—	24	—	—	—	48
<i>Invincible</i> (3) ..	—	—	24	—	—	—	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>10</b>						
<i>Minotaur</i> (3) ..	—	—	—	12	30	—	—
<i>Achilles</i> (4) ..	—	—	—	24	16	—	—
<i>Duke of Edinburgh</i> (2) ..	—	—	—	12	—	20	—
<i>Devonshire</i> (6) ..	—	—	—	—	24	36	—
<i>Drake</i> (3) ..	—	—	—	6	—	48	—
<i>Cornwall</i> (8) ..	—	—	—	—	—	112	—
<i>Euryalus</i> (3) ..	—	—	—	6	—	36	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>172</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>788</b>	<b>412</b>

\* 14-inch and not 13.5-inch. † Four 10-inch and not 9.2 inch.

GERMAN NAVY.

Class.	15-in.	12-in.	11-in.	9.4-in.	8.2-in.	6.7-in.	5.9-in.
<i>König</i> (4) ..	—	40*	—	—	—	—	56
<i>Kaiser</i> (5) ..	—	50	—	—	—	—	70
<i>Oldenburg</i> (4) ..	—	48	—	—	—	—	56
<i>Posen</i> (4) ..	—	—	48	—	—	—	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>						
<i>Deutschland</i> (4) ..	—	—	16	—	—	56	—
<i>Braunschweig</i> (5) ..	—	—	20	—	—	70	—
<i>Wittelsbach</i> (5) ..	—	—	—	20	—	—	90
<i>Kaiser (old)</i> (5) ..	—	—	—	20	—	—	90
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>						
<i>Von der Tann</i> (1) ..	—	—	8	—	—	—	10
<i>Moltke</i> (1) ..	—	—	10	—	—	—	12
<i>Lutzow</i> (3) ..	—	24	—	—	—	—	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>						
<i>Roon</i> (1) ..	—	—	—	—	4	—	10
<i>Friedrich Karl</i> (2) ..	—	—	—	—	8	—	20
<i>Prince Heinrich</i> (1) ..	—	50	—	2	—	—	10
<i>Furst Bismarck</i> (1) ..	—	48	—	4	—	—	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>162</b>	<b>102</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>126</b>	<b>520</b>

\* It is possible, though not probable, that these guns have been replaced by 15-inch weapons while under construction.

equipment of both services is due to the foresight, enterprise, and generous expenditure on plant by these firms, who built up a vast industry, in times of peace, earning a return on the capital employed far lower than could be obtained in other trades. The equipment and armament of the British Fleet, in particular, bear testimony to the debt which is due to the British armament concerns. In gunnery, as experience has shown, we led the way, and when hostilities opened we possessed no mean advantage over the Germans, due to the influence of instructed naval opinion on the activities of these private firms. The character which the war by sea assumed from the first was due not merely to the margin of strength which we possessed, but also to the opinion which the Germans had formed of the quality of our naval weapons.

So far as gun policy is concerned, the war opened at a most inconvenient moment for the Germans. They had been forced to realize the series of mistakes which had been made, but they had not had time to remedy the errors by the only possible means—namely, by building new ships. They realized that in the contest of wits plus science they had been defeated and, in the knowledge of that defeat, they had to face the contest for the command of the sea. Writing in the spring of 1914 in the *Naval Annual*, Commander Charles Robinson, R.N., put the matter in an effective light :—

“ The prolonged adherence of the Germans to the 12-inch gun came rather as a surprise, but it was not a new thing for them to keep a small gun which had proved satisfactory instead of adopting promptly a heavier calibre, after the example of Great Britain. They continued to put 11-inch guns into battleships many years after 12-inch guns were being mounted by other countries. The first British ships to be equipped with



13·5-inch guns were the *Orion* and *Lion*, of the 1909-10 programme. Four years were to elapse, however, before Germany relinquished the 12-inch gun.

“For purposes of comparison, it may be pointed out that of the Dreadnought battleships of the two Powers, Great Britain has ten with 12-inch batteries, all complete; twelve with 13·5-inch batteries, ten being complete; and ten with 15-inch batteries, of which two are launched. Germany has four with 11-inch batteries, all complete; thirteen with 12-inch batteries, nine being complete; and two with 15-inch batteries, building on the stocks.

“Turning to battle-cruisers, the first to mount 12-inch guns in the German Navy was the *Derfflinger*, of the 1911-12 programme, launched on July 1st, 1913. The four earlier battle-cruisers, *Von der Tann*, *Moltke*, *Goeben*, and *Seydlitz*, have 11-inch guns. The *Lutzow*, *Ersatz Hertha*, and *Ersatz Victoria Luise*, of the 1912-13, 1913-14 and 1914-15 programmes respectively, are reported to have a similar armament to the *Derfflinger*. Germany will thus have four battle-cruisers mounting 11-inch guns and four mounting 12-inch guns completed in 1917.”

How did the navies stand in big guns after this war opened? The table on page 99 gives the guns of 4-inch and over, mounted by the battleships, battle-cruisers and armoured cruisers of the British and German fleets, which had been completed by the summer of 1915—allowances being made for vessels lost in the course of the war. The contrast is of interest as an indication of failure of German gun policy.

COMPARATIVE TABLES

	British Navy.	German Navy.
15-inch . . . . .	40	—
13·5-inch . . . . .	172	—
12-inch . . . . .	290	162
11-inch . . . . .	—	102
10-inch . . . . .	4	—
9·4 or 9·2-inch . . . . .	116	46
	—	—
Totals . . . . .	622	310

	British Navy.	German Navy.
8·2-inch. . . . .	—	12
7·5-inch. . . . .	84	—
6·7-inch. . . . .	—	126
6 or 5·9-inch . . . .	788	520
Totals . . . . .	872	658

This contrast, which must be studied in the knowledge that the British Fleet had been deprived since the opening of the war of a number of battleships and armoured cruisers, gives a very effective picture of the relative gun power of the two navies. Of guns over the 12-inch calibre the Germans, so far as is known, possessed none, whereas the British Navy had 212; of 12-inch or 11-inch guns the enemy had 264 and the British Fleet 290. Germany was strong only in the guns of the calibres which this war has shown to be comparatively ineffective at the ranges at which a modern engagement is fought. It must be no small matter for congratulation to the British people that the war came before the Germans had had an opportunity to repair the past errors in their gun policy.

The same mistakes were also committed by Austria-Hungary. The naval authorities of the Dual Monarchy appear to have followed more or less blindly the example set by the Marineamt in Berlin. They also remained faithful to the 9·4-inch gun, when in neighbouring fleets far more powerful artillery was being mounted. The result is that the ships of the Austro-Hungarian Fleet are weakly armed in contrast with the vessels under the flags of France and Italy.

This is the day of the big gun, capable of being fought at a great range, and even at a moderate range it has been

shown to be a more deadly weapon than guns using lighter shells.

It is reported that the Germans—and probably also the Austrians—thought to compensate for the character of their naval artillery by increasing the elevation of their guns. Whereas in the British and American navies 15 degrees elevation has always been given, the Germans determined on 30 degrees, and claimed that they had thereby made the 8·2-inch gun—such as the *Blücher* carried—equal in range to the British 13·5-inch weapon and superior to the latest British type of 12-inch gun. Had their theory proved accurate, Admiral von Spee's squadron should not have been sunk and the *Blücher* destroyed.

In the development of modern naval artillery British firms, as has been suggested, have taken a notable part. Progress has been rapid. It is apt to be forgotten that there are many men associated with the manufacture of the wonderful guns which are being mounted in the British Fleet to-day who have not only watched, but assisted in the evolution from a type of artillery differing little in character from that employed at the Battle of Trafalgar. Some years ago the late Sir Andrew Noble, Chairman of Sir W. G. Armstrong, Whitworth & Co., in a lecture before the Institution of Naval Architects—at Newcastle-on-Tyne in 1899—indulged in some reminiscences. He pointed out that the guns with which he was familiar in the early days of his career—about 1850—“were nearly as primitive, differing in little except size and power, from those with which the fleet which met the Armada were armed.”

“In the year I have mentioned, and it will be remembered that within a short period the long peace which succeeded the Napoleonic wars was broken, the principal guns with which

our ships were armed were 32-pounders. They were, we must admit, of very rude construction, mere blocks of cast iron, the sole machinery spent upon them being the formation of the bore and the drilling of the vent. The velocity of the shot was about 1600 feet per second, and the energy developed in it by the charge was about 570 foot-tons.

“The carriage upon which this rude gun was mounted was even more rude. It was made, as described by Lord Armstrong and Mr. Vavasseur, entirely of wood; generally, in later years, of teak or mahogany. It was carried on wooden trucks, or sometimes the rear trucks were replaced by a chock. The recoil was controlled by the friction of abnormally large wooden axles, and sometimes by wedges acting on the trucks, and was finally brought up by the breeching by which the gun was attached to the vessel's side. The elevation was fixed by quoins resting on a quoin-bed, and handspikes were used either for training or for elevating. For the running-out, at the date I have mentioned, blocks and tackle were generally employed.

“To work, with any degree of smartness, such rude weapons, a very strong gun's crew was necessary, and, indeed, the gun and its carriage were absolutely surrounded by its crew.

“In the year 1858 the first great step in artillery progress was made. In that year the Committee on Rifled Cannon recommended the introduction of the rifled Armstrong guns into the service, and the experiments which were made with these and other rifled guns opened the eyes of all who gave attention to the subject to the great advantages possessed by the new artillery.”

This quotation is of interest because there is a tendency to forget how rapid has been the progress in naval artillery in the lifetime of men still associated with the manufacture of armaments. From the 32-pounders of 1850 an advance has already been made to the 15-inch of the British Service and the splendid 16-inch experimental gun of the American Navy. The latter weapon throws a projectile not of 32 lbs. but of 2400 lbs., with an energy sufficient to penetrate 67·3 inches of wrought iron at the muzzle.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND

THE first anniversary of the Battle of Jutland, fought on May 31st, 1916, coincided with an outburst of criticism of the naval administration in and out of Parliament. An effort was made to suggest that a sharp distinction can be drawn between the views of the officers responsible for operations at sea and those directing policy ashore. The nation was led to assume that there exist entirely separate and almost unconnected organizations,—the Admiralty at Whitehall, constrained by “false doctrine” to adopt what is described as a “defensive policy,” and the Grand Fleet and the auxiliary services, the officers of which are inspired by a fierce, offensive spirit, continuously held in check.

No such division exists. It is impossible to condemn the one without also condemning the other. So far as the Admiralty is concerned with naval policy,<sup>1</sup> that policy is settled and elaborated by officers of the Navy with sea experience not inferior to that possessed by the officers at sea. The personnel of the Admiralty is fed from the Fleet, and concurrently officers periodically leave the Admiralty for service afloat. At a rough estimate there must be between four hundred and five hundred officers of all ranks employed in various sections of the Admiralty,

<sup>1</sup> Reference is not made to the purely civil work of the Admiralty.

and hardly a week passes but some exchange is made between Whitehall, on the one hand, and the Grand Fleet or the patrol, submarine, or destroyer services on the other.

It might be imagined from much that is written and spoken that a strong, fearless naval doctrine could be held at sea, and that, over a long period, there might be a feeble and ineffective administration ashore. On the contrary, whatever the Fleet thinks or does is a reflection of the policy of the Admiralty, which controls the education and training of officers and men, the building and equipment of ships, the choice of weapons, the disposition of force, the appointment of senior as well as junior officers. In short, the Admiralty, recruited from the Fleet, is the creator and moulder of the Fleet, fountain-head of the initiative, progress, and energy which finds expression at sea. It draws its inspiration from the Fleet, as the Fleet draws its inspiration from the Admiralty. Consequently, praise of the officers and men at sea and a realization on the part of the nation of the blessings flowing from sea command, which it has enjoyed for over three years, implies praise also of the naval administration ashore—a recognition of its prevision and wisdom.

That conclusion can be tested by reference to the Battle of Jutland. On that occasion the Grand Fleet did not annihilate the enemy, but it drove him back to port after inflicting heavy loss. Admiral Sir Reginald Custance,<sup>1</sup> who constituted himself the exponent of what is described as an "offensive policy," declared in pre-war days that "the main object in battle is to make the enemy believe

<sup>1</sup> Sir Reginald Custance retired from the active list in 1912, never having been in chief command of either of the Fleets, a member of the Board of Admiralty, or employed at sea since 1908.

that he is beaten," and he suggested to brother officers : " Is it not more important to disarm the enemy than to sink him ? " Those words do not, and did not, express the views of what is essentially a fighting service. The Battle of Jutland did not fulfil the highest expectations of the Fleet, since the majority of the enemy ships, disabled it is true, managed to get home. But the victory was undoubted, as all the world has since realized. In the light of that verdict, which will be the verdict of history, it may be recalled that the admiral who was in supreme command of the Grand Fleet on May 31st afterwards became First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, and, therefore, by immemorial custom, gained control of naval policy, exercising his influence over the War Staff, under his sole direction, and over other sections of the administration.

In the circumstances, it is impossible to acclaim the success achieved at sea from August, 1914, onwards to the victory off Jutland Bank, and at the same time to suggest that the naval policy thereafter pursued by the Admiralty was ineffective and weak in offensive quality.

When the first news of the Battle of Jutland was published, incomplete though it was, very definite views were expressed as to its lessons, particularly in the United States, where German agents were exceedingly active. Time has tested those opinions, and with fuller knowledge it may now be asserted that they were all—or almost all—wrong. It was assumed that the dispositions of the British Grand Fleet were defective and that Vice-Admiral Sir David Beatty, acting rashly, had exposed his scouting force and narrowly escaped annihilation ; that the action had revealed the failure of the battle-cruiser owing to the

thinness of its armoured belt ; that it had proved the big gun was not as effective a weapon as had been anticipated ; that the torpedo had taken a great and decisive part in the action ; and that Zeppelins had proved of high value to the Germans, enabling them to obtain very complete information as to the dispositions of the British naval forces as the action proceeded. There is not a single one of those conclusions which has stood the test of a fuller revelation of the course of events on May 31st. The dispositions of the British Grand Fleet were such that it nearly brought about the complete defeat of the Germans, mist saving the enemy from probable annihilation. The three British battle-cruisers which were sunk were not destroyed owing to the penetration of their armoured belts. The heavier British artillery placed the Germans at a disadvantage, with the result that, absolutely and relatively, their losses were the heavier. No British battleship or battle-cruiser was sunk by the torpedo, on which the Germans placed great reliance. The Germans were unable to employ airships for reconnaissance. Those conclusions must prove consolatory, as they suggest that British naval policy, in the years before the war, proceeded, in the main, on sound lines.

After the battle the Germans at once claimed, not that they had escaped annihilation, but that they had won an undoubted victory. The German Emperor made the highest demand on the credulity of the world, as might have been expected. He visited Wilhelmshaven and addressed representatives of the German crews. He told them that "the gigantic Fleet of Albion, ruler of the seas, which since Trafalgar for a hundred years had imposed on the whole world a ban of sea tyranny and had



surrounded itself with a nimbus of invincibility and insuperability, had come out into the field." According to the official German statements both Navies were practically at full strength, and that meant, in the light of Count Reventlow's calculations, that the British superiority was two to one in big ships. In the opinion of the Kaiser "the British Fleet was beaten," in spite of its overwhelming strength; "a great hammer-blow was struck and the nimbus of British world supremacy had disappeared." That was the declaration made in the early part of June, 1916, soon after the Battle of Jutland. Days have passed; the weeks have lengthened into many months. Battles are fought in order to secure command of the sea and for no other purpose. If British world supremacy disappeared with the Battle of Jutland, how does it happen that the Germans have continued to suffer from its iron domination? Why is it, to paraphrase the words of Vice-Admiral Baron von Maltzahn, of the German Navy, written some ten years ago in anticipation of such a war as is now being waged, that British ships have continued to "knock at the inland office of the merchant," to "hammer at the gates of the factories in the great industrial centres," and to "rap at the doors of the houses of our working men"? But it may be said, in the perspective of the time which has since elapsed, that the German Emperor, anxious to cheer his own people and desirous of impressing neutrals, indulged in exaggerated language, and that the Germans did achieve a tactical, if not a strategical, success. If we dismiss the claim to a military victory, what shall be said of the newer suggestion that the superior British Fleet was outmanœuvred and out-fought, and that the Germans

achieved a moral victory, attesting better leadership and a higher state of fighting efficiency ?

Some doubt still exists as to the purpose which the Germans had in view when the whole of the High Seas Fleet emerged from its ports. Only one thing is certain : the enemy had no intention of engaging the whole of the superior British Fleet and fighting to a finish. The German Higher Command had made no secret of their decision not to engage in battle unless they could do so in favourable circumstances—with the odds in their favour. On the contrary, there is strong evidence in support of the presumption that when the German High Seas Fleet put to sea, as stated, on “ an enterprise directed towards the north,” it was hoped to fall in with the Battle Cruiser Fleet under Vice-Admiral—now Admiral—Sir David Beatty and defeat it before Admiral Sir John Jellicoe’s battleships could reach the scene of action. In pursuance of that plan, the enemy relied evidently on knowledge of Admiral Beatty’s faith in the advantages flowing from bold offensive action. In a semi-official statement issued from Berlin it was admitted that “ the German High Seas Fleet pushed forward in order to engage a portion of the British Fleet which was repeatedly reported recently to be off the south coast of Norway ”—a statement which forms an enlightening commentary on the frequently repeated assertions that “ the British Fleet is in hiding.”

The Battle of Jutland was the sequel to changes in the German Higher Command. A few months before Admiral von Holtzendorff had become Chief of the Naval Staff in Berlin in succession to Admiral Bachmann, and Vice-Admiral von Scheer had succeeded Admiral von Pohl in command of the High Seas Fleet. In other words,

the supreme direction of German naval policy had passed into fresh hands, and a scheme was worked out which, it was believed, contained the germ of success. It was known that during the periodic sweeps in the North Sea carried out by the British forces, the battleships were preceded by the battle-cruiser force, supported by light craft. The Germans conceived that this disposition was intended to tempt them into an engagement which might eventually bring them into conflict with the whole of the British Grand Fleet. They apparently concluded that they could accept the bait, without running the greater risk.

There is no reason to doubt that the German scheme was of a more ingenious character than is generally understood. The Germans adopted much the same formation as the British. They also threw out their battle-cruisers under Rear-Admiral Hipper well in advance of the battleship squadrons, but a large number of submarines were directed to co-operate with that fast division. The idea was that Rear-Admiral von Hipper should draw the British battle-cruisers on to the submarines, and that during the confusion which the operations of these underwater craft would occasion, the main German force would come up and annihilate Admiral Beatty before assistance could arrive. The German mind is simple, and in that lies the failure of German strategy on land as well as by sea. On this occasion it was thought that the British would exhibit stupidity in alliance with pertinacity and courage, and that disaster would overwhelm them. The Germans at once denied that submarines had any part in the action, but Admiral Beatty's report, the observations of many British officers, the experience of the battleship

*Marlborough*, which fought a group of these vessels on the evening of May 31st, and the fact that one German submarine was sunk in the early stage of the battle—all suggest that the German denial was prompted by a hope that the stratagem might be employed on a subsequent occasion with success. It was, in fact, tried again in August of the same year, when the British light cruisers *Falmouth* and *Nottingham* were sunk. The Germans must now realize that the submarine is comparatively ineffective in a fleet action fought at a speed of from eighteen to twenty-five knots. The German plan of action failed conspicuously on May 31st. Admiral Beatty was not tricked; the German submarines did not fulfil their mission.

Some misconception exists as to the disposition of the British force when the battle opened. It has been assumed that Admirals Jellicoe and Beatty were separated by a great distance and formed practically two distinct forces. That is an error. When Admiral Beatty fell in with the enemy battle-cruisers, early in the afternoon, Admiral Jellicoe was not further away from the British Vice-Admiral than the German senior officer was from Rear-Admiral Hipper. Indeed, Admiral Jellicoe was almost certainly closer to Sir David Beatty, but it happened that the British Battle Fleet was to the *northward* and the German Battle Fleet to the *southward*, and that the action took a *southward course* owing to Admiral Beatty's decision not to let the enemy escape him. Admiral Jellicoe has, indeed, explained that "the junction of the Battle Fleet with the scouting force after the enemy had been sighted was delayed owing to the southerly course steered by

our advance force during the first hour after commencing action with the enemy battle-cruisers. This was, of course, unavoidable, as, had our battle-cruisers not allowed the enemy to the southward, the main fleet could never have been in conflict."

When Rear-Admiral Hipper with five swift battle-cruisers found himself in contact with Sir David Beatty's force, comprising six battle-cruisers, he immediately proceeded to fall back upon the main German force, which was advancing from the direction of Heligoland. It has been suggested that Admiral Beatty showed great rashness in engaging the German battle-cruisers in those conditions, since, owing to the superior speed of his fast ships over Admiral Jellicoe's Battle Fleet, away to the north, he increased the interval separating the two forces as the fight developed. That criticism is effectually met by the statement by Admiral Jellicoe which has already been quoted. Moreover, the battle-cruiser, which was a British conception, was evolved to meet just such a situation as developed on May 31st. The battle-cruiser was designed to act either as a protector of commerce, following and sinking enemy light cruisers and improvised raiders on the trade routes, or to push home a reconnaissance in the early stage of a fleet action, obtain exact information of the enemy's strength and disposition, and, if possible, create conditions favourable for the intervention of the Battle Fleet. Its first use was dramatically illustrated at the Battle of the Falkland Islands, when the *Invincible* and *Inflexible* suddenly appeared, surprised Admiral von Spee's squadron, and all but one of the German ships were sunk. The value of the battle-cruiser for reconnaissance purposes was exhibited by Admiral

Beatty with conspicuous success at the Battle of Jutland.<sup>1</sup>

On the afternoon on which the Battle of Jutland opened "the First and Second Battle-cruiser Squadrons, First, Second, and Third Light Cruiser Squadrons, and destroyers from the First, Ninth, Tenth, and Thirteenth Flotillas, supported by the Fifth Battle Squadron (four battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class), were, in accordance with my directions, scouting to the southward of the Battle Fleet"; that is Admiral Jellicoe's statement. Those who are not familiar with the characteristics of the *Queen Elizabeth* class have expressed surprise that these vessels, usually described as battleships, should have been associated with the fast battle-cruisers. The *Queen Elizabeths* might more accurately be described as battle-cruisers than battleships. They represent, in fact, the apotheosis of the battle-cruiser design. Whereas the original battle-cruisers of the *Invincible* type have eight 12-inch guns in association with a speed of 28 knots, the maximum thickness of their belts being 7 inches, the *Queen Elizabeths* mount eight 15-inch guns (throwing a shell of about a ton), have belts 13½ inches thick, and a speed on trial of about 26 knots, or four or five knots more than the average of the newest battleships, though somewhat less than battle-cruisers.

With this force at his command, Admiral Beatty encountered the enemy. "At 3.48 p.m.," he has recorded, "the action commenced at a range of 18,500 yards (about 10½ miles), both forces opening fire practically simul-

<sup>1</sup> Writing in his book, *Naval Policy*, in 1907, Admiral Sir Reginald Custance observed of the battle-cruiser, that "by argument the class have been killed, and it only remains to inter them decently away from the public gaze."

taneously. The course was altered to the southward and subsequently was S.S.E., the enemy steering a parallel course distant about 18,000 to 14,500 yards. At 4.8 p.m.—that is, twenty minutes after the action of the battle-cruisers opened—the Fifth Battle Squadron (consisting of the somewhat slower *Queen Elizabeths*) came into action and opened fire at a range of 20,000 yards (11½ miles).” In line of bearing, the British Admiral attacked the enemy, steaming at a speed of 25 knots, the four *Queen Elizabeths* being distant 10,000 yards N.N.W., and therefore unable to render effective aid owing to the speed at which Admirals Beatty and von Hipper were steaming. It was shortly after this that German submarines were sighted. Destroyers immediately proceeded to engage them, and “undoubtedly preserved the battle-cruisers from closer submarine attack.” (Beatty.) While the two main battle-cruiser forces were continuing their course southward British destroyers made a series of daring attacks on the Germans.

In the meantime the main action was pressed home :—

“ From 4.15 to 4.43 p.m. the conflict between the opposing battle-cruisers was of a very fierce and resolute character. The Fifth Battle Squadron was engaging the enemy’s rear ships, unfortunately at a very long range. Our fire began to tell, the accuracy and rapidity of that of the enemy depreciating considerably. At 4.18 p.m. the third enemy ship was seen to be on fire. The visibility to the north-eastward had become considerably reduced, and the outline of the ships very indistinct.

“ At 4.38 p.m. *Southampton* (Commodore William F. Goodenough, M.V.O., A.D.C.) reported the enemy’s Battle Fleet ahead. The destroyers were recalled, and at 4.42 p.m. the enemy’s Battle Fleet was sighted S.E. Course was altered 16 points in succession to starboard, and *I proceeded on a*

*northerly course to lead them towards the Battle Fleet. The enemy battle-cruisers altered course shortly afterwards, and the action continued."*

At a quarter to five, therefore, the enemy's battleships were approaching from the south-east. Admiral Beatty records that "course was altered 16 points in succession to starboard—that is, outward—and I proceeded on a northerly course to lead them towards the Battle Fleet." The enemy battle-cruisers also altered course and the action continued (the range being about 14,000 yards). "The Fifth Battle Squadron were now closing on an opposite course and engaging the enemy battle-cruisers with all guns. . . . At 4.57 the Fifth Battle Squadron turned up astern of me and came under the fire of the leading ships of the enemy Battle Fleet." This movement to the north marked the end of the first phase of the action which has been the subject of most criticism. It has been suggested that Admiral Beatty fell into the trap which the enemy had set, and that he opposed his lightly armoured battle-cruisers to the enemy's heavily armoured battleships, with the result that the *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary* were sunk. There is an impression that the armoured protection of the battle-cruisers proved inadequate, and that, *ipso facto*, the battle-cruiser design stands condemned, and Admiral Beatty convicted of employing such vessels improperly. The facts are no longer in doubt. During the first phase of the action Admiral Beatty was engaged with German battle-cruisers and not battleships, and neither the *Queen Mary* nor the *Indefatigable* was lost owing to the thinness of their armour protection. On the contrary, the battle-cruisers stood the test of action admirably. The destruction of



the two British ships was due to an unfortunate coincidence which may never happen again in a sea engagement. The enemy, who fired very effectively in the opening phase of the battle, before he had begun to receive punishment, straddled the *Indefatigable*, which was at the end of the line, hitting the turret. That ship immediately sank.<sup>1</sup> The disaster, as has been stated, occurred almost immediately after the action opened. Twenty minutes later a similar catastrophe, again due to a chance shot, occurred to the *Queen Mary*. If either ship had been a battleship, the result would have been the same, for the turret of the one resembles that of the other. British officers who were present throughout the action are convinced that if the armoured belts had been struck, instead of the turrets, both ships would have survived.

Throughout this phase of the action nothing certainly occurred to cause the officers of the British ships engaged to lose faith in the adequacy of the armoured belts, although at times, owing to low visibility, the range was drawn in much below that at which the British vessels with the heavier guns—13.5-inch and 12-inch as opposed to 11-inch and 12-inch—could engage with the maximum advantage. It is important to emphasize the fact that during this first phase of the action battle-cruisers opposed battle-cruisers, for Admiral Beatty records that “the Fifth Battle Squadron was engaging the enemy’s rear ships . . . at very long range,” and the fire was probably ineffective. But, in any event, it was German battle-cruisers which became the target of battleships and not

<sup>1</sup> Commenting on the Battle of Tsu Shima, Admiral Custance remarked: “These facts confirm previous war experience that the danger to the flotation and stability is not great.”—*The Ship of the Line in Battle*,

British battle-cruisers, as this statement reveals. But when the turn was made on the appearance of the German Battle Fleet the conditions were changed. The *Queen Elizabeths*, instead of being almost out of range of the enemy, came up astern of Admiral Beatty and formed a screen between him and the enemy Battle Fleet as he proceeded on a northerly course. During this second phase of the battle the *Queen Elizabeths* with their 15-inch guns fulfilled the highest anticipations. In the early period of the action the German gunners had fired well. Apparently, however, their method of control was such as became unworkable under punishment, and during the northerly run they received severe punishment, the character of which may be judged from the fact that the four *Queen Elizabeths* were firing thirty-two 15-inch guns, whereas the Germans possessed nothing more powerful than 12-inch weapons. From approximately a quarter to five the battle continued between the opposing battle-cruisers—four British vessels opposed to five German; Rear-Admiral Evan Thomas's *Queen Elizabeths* in the meantime acting as a screen between the fast forces steering to the north and the enemy's main Battle Fleet advancing from the south. During this period the Germans probably suffered losses at least as serious as those which the British had received.

Then the third phase of the action opened. Admiral Beatty records that "at 5.35 p.m. our course was N.N.W. and the estimated position of the Battle Fleet—[British Battle Fleet]—was N. 16 W., so we gradually hauled to the north-eastward, keeping the range of the enemy at 14,000 yards. "He was gradually hauling to the eastward, receiving punishment at the head of the line, and

probably acting on information received from his light cruisers which had sighted and were engaged with the Third Battle-cruiser Squadron" (Rear-Admiral the Hon. H. Hood). This force formed the advance scouting force of Admiral Jellicoe's Battle Fleet, which that officer had sent on as a reinforcement. Admiral Beatty had drawn ahead of Rear-Admiral Hipper, and, as he explains, he was able to cross the head of the enemy's line, for he afterwards "altered course to east." In other words, he crossed the German "T"—with the inevitable result, "the head of their line was crumpled up, leaving battle-ships as targets for the majority of our battle-cruisers."

"At 6.20 p.m. the Third Battle Cruiser Squadron appeared ahead, steaming south towards the enemy's van. I ordered them to take station ahead, which was carried out magnificently, Rear-Admiral Hood bringing his squadron into action ahead in a most inspiring manner, worthy of his great naval ancestors. At 6.25 p.m. I altered course to the E.S.E. in support of the Third Battle Cruiser Squadron, who were at this time only 8000 yards from the enemy's leading ship. They were pouring a hot fire into her, and caused her to turn to the westward of south. . . .

"By 6.50 p.m. the battle-cruisers were clear of our leading battle squadron, then bearing about N.N.W., three miles from *Lion* (Admiral Beatty's flagship), and I ordered the Third Battle Cruiser Squadron to prolong the line astern, and reduced to 18 knots. The visibility at this time was very indifferent, not more than four miles, and the enemy ships were temporarily lost sight of."

Admiral Hood threw himself into the fight with characteristic courage. A spectator has described how the three British battle-cruisers under his command came, in the mist, within about 8000 yards of the German line. "The *Invincible*, which had sunk a German light cruiser

at 5.45 after an action lasting five minutes, tackled a vessel of the *Derfflinger* class—one of the latest battle-cruisers. The German ship was hit by the first salvo and was getting several knocks for every one she got home on the *Invincible*, when the salvo came which sank the *Invincible*. There were only six survivors, and when they came up they witnessed the extraordinary spectacle of both the bow and stern of their ship standing vertically out of the water." Here again a misconception has arisen. The *Invincible* was fulfilling her mission in engaging enemy battle-cruisers, not battleships, and she was destroyed, not through failure of her armoured belt to resist shell attack, but owing to a shot hitting one of her turrets, as in the case of the *Indefatigable* and *Queen Mary*.

With the appearance from the north-west of Admiral Jellicoe, with his superior force of battleships, the action assumed its final form. It was just before the junction took place that Rear-Admiral Sir Robert Arbuthnot with his armoured—not battle—cruiser squadron intervened in the battle. The weather was misty, as has been explained. Admiral Jellicoe has reported that "it is probable that Sir Robert Arbuthnot, during his engagement with the enemy's light cruisers and in his desire to complete their destruction, was not aware of the approach of the enemy's heavy ships owing to the mist until he found himself in close proximity to the main fleet, and before he could withdraw his ships they were caught under a heavy fire and were disabled." It is now known that the *Defence* was sunk and the *Warrior* was so seriously damaged that she had later to be abandoned. The *Black Prince* was destroyed during the subsequent night action.

About six o'clock Admiral Sir John Jellicoe had to face perhaps the greatest test in seamanship which ever confronted a naval officer in battle. According to Admiral Beatty, "at 5.50 p.m. British cruisers were sighted on the port bow, and at 5.56 the leading battleships of the British Fleet bearing north five miles." Admiral Beatty at once altered course, as has been already stated, to the east, and proceeded with the utmost speed in order to give Admiral Jellicoe sea room. The senior officer then, with great tactical skill, extended his divisions into line of battle in order to come into action astern of Admiral Beatty's battle-cruisers. Admiral Jellicoe reports that "at this period when the Battle Fleet was meeting the battle-cruisers and the Fifth Battle Squadron *great care was necessary to ensure that our own ships were not mistaken for enemy vessels.*" When it is borne in mind that visibility extended only to about four miles and the German Fleet had been thrown into confusion, the difficulties with which the British officers had to contend in manœuvring so large a force of ships will be appreciated. Admiral Jellicoe was still deploying his great force when the Battle Fleet became engaged, the Vice-Admiral Commanding the First Battle Squadron (Sir Cecil Burney) reporting that "at 6.17 he had opened on a battleship of the *Kaiser* class." The British Commander-in-Chief has thus recorded the subsequent phase of the battle :—

"Owing principally to the mist, but partly to the smoke, it was possible to see only a few ships at a time in the enemy's battle line. Towards the van only some four or five ships were ever visible at once. More could be seen from the rear squadron, but never more than eight to twenty. The action between the battleships lasted intermittently from 6.17 p.m. to 8.20 p.m., at ranges between 9000 to 12,000 yards, during

which the British Fleet made alterations of course from S.E. by E. to W. in the endeavour to close. . . . The alterations of course had the effect of bringing the British Fleet (which continued the action in a position of advantage on the bow of the enemy) to a quarterly bearing from the enemy battle line, but at the same time placed us between the enemy and his bases. . . .

“ During the somewhat brief periods that the ships of the High Seas Fleet were visible through the mist, the heavy and effective fire kept up by the battleships and battle-cruisers of the Grand Fleet caused me much satisfaction, and the enemy vessels were seen to be constantly hit, some being observed to haul out of the line, and at least one to sink. *The enemy's return fire at this period was not effective, and the damage caused to our ships was insignificant.*”

The British officers thought to force the enemy to fight to a finish. They were disappointed; that was not the Germans' intention. There is little doubt that Admiral von Scheer advanced northward considerably farther than had been intended. The German plan was not to be enticed into a general action; if the scheme of overwhelming the British battle-cruisers failed of realization, they apparently intended to return to port. Presumably, however, the German Admiral was out-manceuvred by Vice-Admiral Beatty and Rear-Admiral Evan Thomas during the run northward. He must have been aware that he might at any moment find himself face to face with Admiral Jellicoe's battle fleet. On the other hand, owing to the *Queen Elizabeths* acting as a screen astern of Admiral Beatty, the German senior officer possibly decided that he could not abandon his course without leaving Rear-Admiral Hipper to be overwhelmed by the superior forces which would at once be concentrated on the attack. In those circumstances he continued the

engagement, hoping, from moment to moment, that some chance happening would enable him to extricate himself from a position of increasing danger, his battle-cruisers being in peril of being cut off from him. His faith was not misplaced. At the critical moment the mist came to his assistance. Its effect was intensified by a barrage of smoke thrown up by the German light craft, quite an ordinary device. Admiral von Scheer then threw his destroyers against the British in the hope of gaining time. Admiral Jellicoe has reported that "as was anticipated, the German Fleet appeared to rely very much upon torpedo attacks, which were favoured by the low visibility and by the fact that we had arrived in the position of a 'following' or 'chasing' fleet.<sup>1</sup> A large number of torpedoes were apparently fired, but only one took effect (on *Marlborough*), and even in this case the ship was able to remain in the line and continue the action. The enemy's efforts to keep out of effective gun range were aided by the weather conditions, which were ideal for the purpose."

The conditions for the British Fleet were unfavourable; they were in chase of the Germans, who had large numbers of destroyers<sup>2</sup>, and, as experience had shown, were in the habit of throwing mines overboard in the track of following ships. The light was bad. Nevertheless, as opportunity offered, the First, Second, and Fourth British

<sup>1</sup> On several occasions the Germans, who pride themselves on their slimness, when pursued by superior British forces have thrown mines overboard in the track of the British ships.

<sup>2</sup> "At the commencement of the war . . . the German Navy possessed a great many more oversea submarines than we did. They were about equivalent to our strength in regard to destroyers: They were very near equality in regard to light cruisers, and we possessed a very considerable superiority in heavy ships."—*Sir John Jellicoe, Sheffield, Oct. 24, 1917.*

Battle Squadrons were intermittently in action. Though "the mist rendered range-finding a difficult matter," the firing was rapid and accurate. Observers, whose statements have been the subject of close investigation, agree that severe punishment was inflicted on the Germans, battleships, battle-cruisers, and light cruisers being hit repeatedly. The *Marlborough* fired fourteen rapid salvos, for instance, at a ship of the *Kœnig* class, hitting her frequently until she turned out of the line. What her fate was is uncertain. The *Iron Duke*, Admiral Jellicoe's flagship, engaged another of these German Dreadnoughts, the ship being "very quickly straddled" and at last turning away, to be lost in the mist. In the meantime British light cruisers attacked the German battleships with torpedoes, and "an explosion on board a ship of the *Kaiser* class was seen at 8.40 p.m." At last night began to fall. Admiral Jellicoe states:—

'At 9 p.m. the enemy was entirely out of sight, and *the threat of torpedo-boat-destroyer attack during the rapidly approaching darkness* made it necessary for me to dispose the Fleet for the night, with a view to its safety from such attacks, whilst providing for a renewal of action at daylight. I accordingly manœuvred to remain between the enemy and his bases, placing our flotillas in a position in which they would afford protection to the Fleet from destroyer attack, and at the same time be favourably situated for attacking the enemy's heavy ships.'

The precautionary measures proved unnecessary, for "during the night the British heavy ships were not attacked," though by this time the fight had brought them less than a hundred miles from Wilhelmshaven and even closer to Heligoland. The British Admiral, realizing the risk to which he was exposed owing to his fleet being so near the enemy bases, accepted it, hoping to be able to



resume the battle in the morning. In the meantime, however, the German Admiral had determined that the mist and darkness gave him the chance of escape. His fleet, robbed of many units, had been thrown into the greatest disorder. Its organization had been broken up; ships were in isolated groups. The vigorous offensive maintained by the British destroyer flotillas added to the discomfiture of the Germans—several units evidently being hit, though in the rapid fights and the darkness the results achieved could not be tabulated. Apparently, when the German admiral realized that he was in danger of annihilation, he gave the order "*Sauve qui peut*," and in detached sections the squadrons steered an easterly course and then crept down the Danish and heavily mined Schleswig-Holstein coast back to security. At the moment when Admiral von Scheer steamed into Wilhelmshaven, Admiral Jellicoe was still over 400 miles from the Firth of Forth, the nearest British port, and was awaiting a reply to his challenging presence. It did not come; and at 11 a.m. on June 1st the Grand Fleet started to return to its bases.

In order to appreciate the result of this action, it is necessary to recall the conditions existing at sea before and after the encounter between the two fleets. On the morning of May 31st the British Fleet held command of the sea, Germany having been thrown on the defensive and obliged to abandon all effort to float a keel in any ocean or sea. Allied shipping, whether employed for naval, military, or economic purposes, continued to make voyages, subject only to the menace of the submarine. Then occurred the Battle of Jutland. The Germans at once claimed that they had won a victory.

*A battle at sea is fought for one purpose and one purpose only—namely, the right to use the sea and obtain all the naval and military and economic advantages flowing from its command. That may involve the destruction of the enemy fleet or it may not ; almost invariably the latter has been the case. By the Battle of Jutland the British command of the sea was reaffirmed.*

A fight to a finish if the Germans had any hope of success was necessary for their salvation, but it was not necessary for our salvation. Before the Fleets met in the North Sea we had little cause for discontent. All the world's oceans were open to us for use for naval, military, and commercial purposes, subject only to the restricted menace of submarines. If the Battle of Jutland had resulted in the annihilation of the High Seas Fleet our position would not have been greatly altered ; Germany would still have possessed in her destroyers, submarines, and minelayers the only active element of her naval power ; her coast defences—which she believes to be impregnable—would have remained. The great ships would have gone, and to that extent our great ships would have been set free. For what purpose could they have been used after the German High Seas Fleet had been destroyed ? Battleships could not have been employed for submarine hunting, but additional destroyers would have been available for that purpose. It must be apparent that the naval situation would not have been greatly changed if the victory which Admirals Jellicoe and Beatty achieved had been so overwhelming as to wipe out every battleship and battle-cruiser under the German ensign. We should have heaved a sigh of satisfaction and should have congratulated ourselves on a

result of psychological importance. But the Germans would still have had their submarines, destroyers, and mines; the Baltic, with its minefields and swarms of German mosquito craft, would have continued closed<sup>1</sup>; the powerful guns and minefields off the German and Belgian coasts would still have remained.

The suggestion that it was *not* absolutely necessary for the British to fight the Battle of Jutland, in conditions which exposed the British forces to considerable risk, has been denounced as sea heresy, representing a denial of the offensive traditions of the British Navy. What is the fact? Battles are not fought for the sake of fighting, and, in these days and under the present conditions, it is doubtful whether the stronger Power does gain much from victoriously engaging the enemy's weaker forces off his coast-line. They may be sunk, but even then offensive-defensive elements remain—submarines, de-

<sup>1</sup> "It must be remembered that the operation of passing through would occupy a considerable period of time, as, putting aside for the moment the question of neutrality of the Danish Islands, there are extensive minefields to be cleared; and the leading vessels of a fleet debouching from the Great Belt—the only possible passage—in a necessarily deep formation on a very narrow front, would find the whole German fleet deployed, and concentrating its fire upon them. I have found no responsible naval officer of any school who would support such an enterprise to-day.

"I do not touch at length upon such questions as the length of the line of communications to be maintained with the fleet when in the Baltic, and the fact that, as every supply ship passing through would do so within thirty miles of Kiel, it is certain that only a small proportion would succeed, unless heavy forces were detached to protect them. These are obviously matters which bear largely on the subject. But I think I have said enough to show why responsible naval opinion is unanimous that the operation is one which should certainly not be undertaken in existing circumstances. Our fleet in the Baltic, if it got through, would soon wither to impotence with its vital communications cut. Our Russian ally could not supply it with fuel, ammunition, or stores."—*First Lord of the Admiralty (Sir Eric Geddes), House of Commons, Nov. 1, 1917.*

stroyers, mines, and coastal guns—and it is those elements which the weaker Power, having abandoned already the use of the oceans of the world, hopes to employ. A battle is fought for a specific purpose. That consists of the right to use the seas. We have been using the seas for military and economic purposes with a freedom which has never been known before during the progress of any war. If the High Seas Fleet were to disappear, what greater use could we make of the oceans of the world? That is the crucial test. No battle is unaccompanied by risk, and in present circumstances the risks are not all on one side. The whole future of the Allies depends upon the efficiency and sufficiency of the Grand Fleet. If that Fleet were defeated, although by no means annihilated—tricked into defeat by the Germans—the aspect of affairs throughout Europe and throughout the world would be changed. Everything depends on one factor, and therefore it must surely be evident that the officers commanding at sea must be ever on their guard against being drawn into action under conditions favourable to the enemy and deliberately planned by him. We have little to gain from a victory at sea, but everything to lose by a reverse. On the other hand, the Germans, full of devilish resource, as the war has revealed, have everything to gain and little to lose, beyond a number of ships which, except for a few costly excursions, have remained inactive in their ports. The strategy of the Grand Fleet must be defensive, but its tactics offensive. It must stand ready to refuse the Germans the right to use the seas—in other words, it must pursue the policy deliberately adopted in the early days of the war; it must control, and, under reasonable conditions, fight and defeat the enemy. The Grand Fleet,

acting from its carefully chosen bases, challenges Germany to action, but it insists that the action shall be fought, if at all, on its conditions, imposed on the enemy in virtue both of its strength and its efficiency. In short, the position at sea may be summed up in a sentence—a battle to us would be a luxury, if a desirable luxury, for the mental relief which it would give, but to the Germans it is a necessity, if the iron dominion imposed upon Central Europe is to be broken before Germany and her partners fall crushed and ruined.

Month has succeeded month, and the silence of the Grand Fleet has remained unbroken.<sup>1</sup> The very silence speaks of victory—continuing victory. The tentacles of British sea-power, our light forces, must search out the enemy, even in his lairs, keeping him always in a state of nervous suspense, but the Grand Fleet's rôle necessarily makes little appeal to the eye. The important point to remember is that the Grand Fleet is not, as is mistakenly supposed, a separate and distinct fighting service. It is the complement to the Army, its support and the sentinel over its lines of communication. It supports the Army not merely by guarding its transportation, but by blockading the enemy armies, thus robbing them of the material they require for maintaining the struggle.

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Jellicoe relinquished the command of the Grand Fleet in November, 1916, becoming First Sea Lord. On vacating the latter position in December, 1917, it was announced that the King had conferred a peerage on him "in recognition of his very distinguished services during the war."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE TESTING OF THE NEW NAVY

IN the Battle of Jutland the new British Navy was tested. It achieved a victory which, in its material and moral aspects, will rank as one of the most splendid and dramatic, if not decisive, events in naval annals. Victory was won by ships' crews of the twentieth century, men who were once scholars in British Board Schools; they served under the orders of officers versed in the elements of scientific warfare, and yet supreme in the ancient lore of the sea. Those officers and men fought ships the design and material of which had never before been submitted to the stern ordeal of a general naval action.

The majority of British admirals of the 'fifties and 'sixties believed that the advent of steam and steel, the abolition of the "cat," the advance of education, and the spread of democratic ideas would be fatal to our naval primacy.<sup>1</sup> Their fears have proved baseless. The new British Navy confronted the enemy on May 31st, 1916, and proved to the world that, though the ships have changed since British seamen won the supremacy of the seas in the opening years of the nineteenth century, the

<sup>1</sup> "The introduction of steam is calculated to strike a fatal blow to the naval supremacy of the Empire."—*Admiralty Minute*. Cf. *Naval Administrations, 1827-92*.

officers and men, in spite of later social, economic, and naval developments, remain the same in spirit, still possessing the "fighting edge" and the "will to win." The success with which the personnel emerged from the trial constitutes a very important result of the Battle of Jutland. Though the ships stood the test well, officers and men—not forgetting the engineers and their staffs, working out of sight down below—stood it better, and the prestige of the British Fleet stands to-day where it stood in 1805 when Nelson left a great heritage in our guardianship.

In that fact resides the greatest disappointment which the German Emperor and his advisers have experienced in the course of the war. They believed the British Fleet to be an institution with its roots deep in the past; they assumed that it had failed to adjust itself to the new conditions which came into existence with the long-range gun, the swift-travelling and deadly torpedo, and the water-tube boiler and marine turbine, which, in combination, have conferred upon ships of war a speed far exceeding anything which was thought to be possible twenty or thirty years ago. The Germans, proud of their scientific achievements, regarding themselves as super-men, have learnt that, though the British Fleet remains faithful to its traditions of a thousand years, it is more efficient in using the weapons of the twentieth century in the stress of battle than the brand new German fleet.

When Germany determined, nearly twenty years ago, to become one of the great sea Powers of the world, it was in the conviction that British supremacy was a legend. It was remarked in the Memorandum appended to the Navy Bill of 1900 that "as the ship establishment of the

German Navy, even after the carrying out of the projected increases, will still be more or less inferior to the ship establishments of some other great Powers, compensation must be sought in the training of the personnel and in tactical training in the larger combinations." In other words, the German Fleet, though smaller than ours, was to attain a standard of greater technical efficiency, and thus achieve victory over superior numbers. That anticipation has not been realized. On the contrary, owing to circumstances which will be referred to in greater detail elsewhere, a section of the British Fleet—the battle-cruisers under Admiral Sir David Beatty—confronted German forces many times as strong. They sought conflict and maintained an unequal action for three hours, succeeding, in virtue of brilliant tactics, superior speed, better gunnery and higher moral, in preventing the enemy from overwhelming them, as was no doubt the German anticipation. Sir David Beatty and his officers and men, apart from all else, convinced the Germans of the superiority of the British personnel. When the action opened the Germans, not lacking in courage, fought well, and their marksmanship was good; but when the British gunners settled down to work and shells began to hit the German ships, the enemy's fire fell off. All observers agree that the Germans failed to maintain the accuracy which they exhibited in the early stage of the battle, when they were apparently confident of an easy victory over a comparatively weak section of the British Fleet.<sup>1</sup> Their guns and gun equipment, as

<sup>1</sup> "The men of the *Lion* say that in the first few minutes of the battle, when the big German ships converged fire on our leading cruisers, their marksmanship was admirable. . . . Admiral Beatty manœuvred



well as their sighting instruments, were good, but the men failed, when the test of nerve and *moral* came, to make the best use of them.

That is the significant revelation which the Battle of Jutland supplied. British *moral* was the decisive influence in the furious hours of conflict against heavy odds. The long-service men of a great maritime nation met the short-service and intensively trained seamen of a great military nation, and the former triumphed. Tradition, environment, breed, and long training told in the hours when the action raged fiercest, as, a few years before the war, Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, in his heart of hearts, realized that it would tell. It need not be doubted that this consideration influenced the German naval authorities in avoiding action with the British Fleet until reasonable grounds existed for thinking that all the crews had "shaken down" and become expert in the discharge of their naval duties, even though the facilities for sea work were very limited owing to the predominance of the British Fleet in the North Sea. To the original disappointment which the German Government experienced in the summer of 1914 was added this further and overwhelming disappointment—the failure of intensive training for duty at sea of short-service men drawn mainly from inland districts.

The British victory of May 31st, 1916, will rank as one of the great battles of history, though the British battle squadrons were denied anything in the nature of a general engagement. Its high place will be due not merely to the

in such fashion as to prevent any further systematic converging of fire by the Germans. They fired as industriously as ever, but their gunlayers seemed to become demoralized."—*Times*, June 12, 1916.

destruction of a large number of enemy ships, but to the revelation that British naval power is still a reality—is not a mere matter of “paper strength.” The British Navy was exhibited to the world on that day as the highest expression of British character. In the years preceding the war the Germans industriously circulated throughout the world the view that, though this country possessed many men-of-war, all of them could not be provided with crews, and that such crews as were available represented a nation which had lost the fighting edge; the triumph of the Trafalgar campaign would not, and could not, be repeated; the trident was destined to pass eventually into Germany’s hands. The nation was debauched by politics and wealth; it had lost its warlike qualities, and was already so decadent that it need not be feared by sea or land; the nation had the Fleet it deserved. That was an asset on which, to use an Americanism, the Germans “banked.” On the evidence available, can it be doubted that the enemy, entering upon the Jutland battle in superior strength, expected to be confronted with sailors who had lost their sea-sense, if not sea-courage? It is not difficult to imagine their amazement when they found themselves opposed, in the person of Admiral Sir David Beatty, by a sailor with something of the spirit of the great Elizabethan sailors, allied with the attainments of a twentieth-century seaman. “There must be a beginning of any great matter,” Drake wrote to Walsingham, “but the continuing unto the end until it be thoroughly finished yields the true glory. . . . If we can thoroughly believe that this which we do is in the defence of our religion and country, no doubt but our merciful God, for His Christ’s our Saviour’s sake, is able

and will give us the victory although our sins be red." The British Admiral, threatened by far superior forces, and in face of serious losses, appears never to have had a moment's hesitation as to his duty of "continuing to the end," or any doubt of victory. He made the enemy fight, and held him until the battleships of the Grand Fleet, commanded by Admiral Jellicoe, could reach the scene, in the meantime preventing the Germans from enveloping his ships. It was a brilliant achievement.

In the annals of the sea there is probably nothing more stirring than the story of the courage and tenacity of purpose, allied with seamanlike skill, which the Admiral commanding the Battle Cruiser Fleet, in association with his captains, officers and men, exhibited when they found themselves confronted with a strong force of German battle-cruisers; "the whole of the High Seas Fleet," as is officially admitted from Berlin, was near at hand and in a position to come up—as it did—with the idea of overwhelming the small British force. Sir David Beatty acted in accordance with the principles of the old Elizabethan sailors; though the odds were heavily against him, he took the offensive and hung on to the enemy with surpassing courage in spite of the heavy losses which he sustained.

In this way was the new British Navy tested—the Navy manned by men of our own generation. After a hundred years of almost unbroken peace routine—for the Crimean War and the bombardment of Alexandria left little impress on the Fleet—this vast machine, differing in every detail from the Navy of the past, was submitted to its trial against a force of superior strength which prided itself on having no traditions. It has been the German

boast that their Navy is a freshly created organization, fashioned and trained without regard to preconceived ideas, and representing the *ultima ratio* of naval efficiency in this twentieth century, when science, in the application of which the Germans pride themselves, has considerably changed the conditions of warfare at sea. It has no sentiment—no care for what has been. The test has left it still without the basis on which tradition can be created. The Battle of Jutland raised the prestige of the British Navy to the high level which it attained during the Napoleonic War, and gave Germany cause only for retirement into secrecy. The triumph of the personnel of the British Fleet was more conspicuous than the success in ship design, construction, and organization. The time has not come when any opinion can be expressed on many controversial points affecting matériel. These and other matters may be examined later with fuller knowledge. It would also be inappropriate until the amplest information is available to refer to matters of strategy and tactics; but nothing to be subsequently revealed of the course of this battle off the Danish coast can detract from the skill, courage, and resource exhibited by officers and men on this occasion. "The men were splendid," as one officer has recorded. "The officers were magnificent," has been the response of the men.

Only those who are familiar with naval developments during the past hundred years can fully appreciate the character of the test through which this Navy of a great democracy has passed. The Battle of Jutland was the first great fleet action in which the British Navy had been engaged since October 21st, 1805, a period of one

hundred and eleven years. Think what has happened since the Battle of Trafalgar! The ships which Nelson commanded were of wood and did not readily sink—and to that extent the test of courage was less than to-day; they were manned by seamen with little or no education or imagination. The seaman of the Trafalgar period was a natural man on whom civilization had had little influence. He could neither read, write, nor do the simplest sum; his mind was like some dark forest. Mr. John Masefield<sup>1</sup> has supplied a picture of the men of the British Fleet of the Trafalgar period:—

“We live at convenient distance from those times, and regard them as glorious—‘The iniquity of oblivion blindly scattereth her poppy.’ . . . Our naval glory was built up by the blood and agony of thousands of barbarously maltreated men. It cannot be too strongly insisted on that sea-life in the late eighteenth century in our Navy was brutalizing, cruel, and horrible—a kind of life now happily gone for ever; a kind of life which no man to-day would think good enough for a criminal. There was barbarous discipline, bad pay, bad food, bad hours of work, bad company,<sup>2</sup> bad prospects. There was no going ashore till the ship was paid off or till a peace was declared. The pay was small at the best of times, but by the time it reached the sailor it had often shrunk to a half or third of the original sum. The sailor was bled by the purser for slops and tobacco; by the surgeon for ointment and pills; and by the Jew who cashed his pay-ticket. The service might have been made more popular by the granting of a little leave, so that the sailors could go ashore to spend their money. It was the long, monotonous imprisonment aboard which

<sup>1</sup> *Sea Life in Nelson's Time.* (Methuen.)

<sup>2</sup> “In a man-of-war,” says Edward Thompson, “you have the collected filth of jails; condemned criminals have the alternative of hanging to entering on board. . . . There's not a vice committed on shore that is not practised here; the scenes of horror and infamy on board a man-of-war are too many and so gross that I think they must rather disgust a good mind than allure it.”

made the hateful life so intolerable. When the long-suffering sailors rose in revolt at Spithead they asked, not that the 'cat' might be abolished, but that they might go ashore after a cruise at sea, and that they might receive a little more consideration from those whose existence they guaranteed."

The old Navy had no long-service crews; ships were manned with difficulty. When volunteers proved insufficient, then a captain fitting out a vessel for sea sent out into the highways and byways and men were dragged by force into the King's service.

"Having secured a number of reliable sailors from the merchant ships and sailors' taverns, the captains of men-of-war commissioning filled up their complements by taking any men they could get. The press-gangs brought in a number of wretches found in the streets after dusk. It did not matter whether they were married men with families, tradesmen with businesses, or young men studying for professions; all was fish that came into the press-gang's net. The men were roughly seized—often, indeed, they were torn from their wives by main force, and knocked on the head for resisting—and so conveyed on board, whether subject to impressment or not. They could count themselves lucky if their neighbours came to the rescue before the press-gang carried them off. When once they were aboard they were little likely to get away again; for though they had permission to 'state the case' if they thought themselves illegally seized, the letters of appeal were seldom successful. The press-gangs were sometimes rewarded with head-money to make them zealous in their duty."

Those were rough days, and the Navy was manned by men cast in a rude mould, who were often ill-fed and frequently ill-treated. "The punishment most used in the Fleet was flogging on the bare back with the cat-o'-nine-tails"—a short wooden stick covered with red baize,

the tails being of knotted cord about two feet long. Flogging was the one means for maintaining discipline. Many captains flogged for all manner of offences without distinction. "The thief was flogged; the drunkard was flogged; the laggard was flogged. The poor, wretched topman who got a rope-yarn into a buntline-block was flogged. The very slightest transgression was visited with flogging." Lord Beresford once remarked that "in the old days we had the cat and no discipline; now we have discipline and no cat."

Only very slowly did the character of the men on the lower deck change, and with the change came a revision of the scale of punishment. It was not until 1852 that a system of continuous service in the Navy was introduced, to work wonders at sea, and flogging was not abolished until over a quarter of a century later, although in the meantime the application of this punishment had been severely restricted. There are many officers still alive who are familiar with the old naval conditions. Lord Beresford, who entered the Navy in March, 1861, records that even in his early days the chief punishment was the cat. "The first time I saw the cat applied I fainted. But men were constantly being flogged. I have seen six men flogged in one morning." There was very little leave for the men, who often were kept on board for months together, with the result that when they got ashore they remained until their last penny was gone, coming back either drunk or shamming drunk, for drunkenness was then the fashion. The rations were so meagre that hunger induced the men constantly to chew tobacco. It was only very gradually that the conditions on board ship were brought into line with the conditions to be found

among the working-classes ashore. It is one of the most creditable features of the careers of Lord Fisher—the master mind of the new Navy—and Lord Beresford that each, as opportunity offered, assisted in this movement. The latter throughout his naval career was a strict disciplinarian, but he knew how to win the respect of his men, and on the ships he commanded severe punishment was rarely inflicted, because seldom merited. When Lord Fisher, also a determined reformer, became First Sea Lord, in 1904, he resolved to improve the lot of the men. A score of changes were introduced, those of first importance being the avenues for promotion from the lower deck which were created, the revised dietary which was introduced, and the better care given to the preparation of the men's food.

The British Fleet which won the Battle of Jutland was "a happy Fleet," representing a great democracy, naval discipline being better than it was even under peace conditions; and who can judge the monotony of the months of waiting which preceded that naval action? The officers rule by methods almost unknown to their predecessors of a century ago. The men are ordinary men, the former scholars of Board Schools and National Schools, or, as they are known to the politician, "provided" and "unprovided" schools. They are the product of compulsory free education; their fathers and brothers are members of Trade Unions; many of them are effective political speakers. The modern bluejacket is a man of ideas, who reads his paper and takes an intelligent interest in public affairs. In whatever line he may serve, whether as seaman, stoker, or mechanic, there lies before him an avenue of promotion to com-



missioned rank. The Battle of Jutland was won by men who, when the hour of the supreme test struck, showed that, in spite of all the ameliorative influences which have moulded their lives, they still retain the vigorous and virile characteristics of the race which, in face of many foes, won for us the command of the sea.

Perhaps one of the "boys" drafted from the training ship *Impregnable* to the battleship *Warspite* shortly before the Battle of Jutland indicated, as well as anyone can, the spirit in which the men of the British Navy fought:—

"I did not see much of what took place during the fighting," he said. "None of the men could, for, with the exception of some of the officers, the signal ratings, and a few men, there was no one in the battleship exposed. We were all in the barbettes or below decks. But news travels quickly from the upper-decks, and it was in this manner that we knew what was taking place.

"Did I feel nervous? No. Of course, after 'general quarters' was sounded in the *Warspite*, we were some time before getting into action, and there was a 'tight feeling' when we were standing by waiting for the first gun to be fired. We all knew our stations when the bugle sounded. Mine was to draw a fire. I did so, and then nipped for the magazine, where I was to work, and I stuck it there. Even in that space you could tell the *Warspite* was steaming at her best, and inquiries up the hoist were pretty frequent. The men about me did their work and made jokes. It was not as if we were going into battle. It seemed to me as if we were going to do something at last that we had been waiting a long time for—like playing in a football cup-tie when you are waiting to enter the field."

The new Navy entered on action on May 31st, 1916, with the same zest as the old Navy. Fighting to the modern seaman, in spite of its added risks, is the greatest

of all "sports." As it is in the British Armies, so it is in the British Navy ; it is the sporting instinct, cultivated and developed in the schools and playing fields, which keeps sharp the fighting edge—that, and a splendid patriotism.

## CHAPTER VIII

### “ A DECISIVE BATTLE AT SEA ”

**H**AS the British Fleet ever won a decisive battle at sea in the Nelsonian sense—not victory, but annihilation? That was the ideal of the great Admiral who lost and won at Trafalgar, as it has always been, and is now, the ideal of our Navy. But has it ever been realized? Was there a decisive battle, bringing a war to a triumphant end, in the golden age of British seamanship?

Effingham, Grenville, Raleigh, Drake,  
Here's to the bold and free!

What of the later annals of the Navy? Can we trace the record of any victory corresponding to the Nelsonian ideal?

Benbow, Collingwood, Byron, Blake,  
Hail to the Kings of the Sea!

In short, is there any foundation for the popular belief that at any time the British Fleet has gained a success which was not merely a victory, but involved the annihilation of the whole or even the larger part of the enemy's fleet and an enforced peace? There is a widespread impression to that effect which popular writers and poets have done nothing to discourage. Are we driven to the conclusion that, if no such action has ever been fought, we must score out, or at any rate amend, the tributes which have been paid to the great seamen of the past?

Admirals all, for England's sake,  
 Honour be yours and fame !  
 And honour, as long as waves shall break,  
 To Nelson's peerless name !

Must those words be re-written if we are forced to admit that neither Nelson nor any of his compeers won a victory which annihilated the enemy's forces at sea and brought immediate peace ?

This matter of decisive and conclusive victory has become of more than historical importance since the Battle of Jutland. Within a few weeks of that action Admiral Sir Reginald Custance contributed a letter to the *Times*, taking as his text an article written by Mr. Winston Churchill. He contended that the former First Lord "strangely failed to realize that nothing would exercise a more profound influence on the situation present and future than *a decisive and final Fleet action.*" This officer added, in commenting on what Mr. Churchill had written :—

" His implied doctrine is that the present naval situation is perfectly satisfactory, and that we should not fight unless ' the most conservative calculations ' lead to the ' consciousness of overwhelming superiority,' failing which we should ' fall back upon the safe and far stronger position of forcing the enemy to come right over to our coasts.' If ever Boards of Admiralty and naval commanders afloat become imbued with ideas of this kind—which is surely inconceivable—we may bid farewell to the dominion of the sea."

Lord Sydenham and a small group of retired officers afterwards joined in the discussion which proceeded under the heading of " Sea Heresy." The controversy broke out again in the spring of 1917, Sir Reginald Custance once more acting as critic. He affirmed that the controlling professional minds during recent years had

accepted the doctrine that success in war at sea can be won without a battle, and he declared that “ the strongest proof of official acceptance is to be found in the conduct of the war in the North Sea,” proceeding to criticize a statement by the First Sea Lord (Mr. Churchill) with reference to the influence of the torpedo, with a range up to 10,000 yards, on naval tactics. Finally, Admiral Sir Reginald Custance, declared that his “ strictures ” were “ directed not against individuals, but against a whole school of thought—against the doctrine which I believe to be the root cause of the failure of the Navy to destroy the enemy’s armed ships and our present submarine difficulties.”<sup>1</sup> It should be added that Sir Reginald Custance, in the years before the war, showed small appreciation of the menace of the submarine ; was convinced the torpedo was decreasing in value ; condemned the all-big-gun ship—the *Dreadnought* and her sisters ; urged that the battle-cruisers should be put on the scrap-heap, and criticized the Admiralty policy of concentrating in the North Sea, holding that it left British trade at the mercy, not of submarines, in which he had little belief, but of enemy cruisers, which he contended would be able to get on to the trade routes.

The subject of a “ decisive battle at sea ”—a naval action ending a war—is of great interest, because in the history of the British Navy there has *never* been such a battle. A misreading of history has been responsible for a misapprehension of the influence exercised by sea-power even before the advent of the submarine and the

<sup>1</sup> In other words, destroy the High Seas Fleet, and the enemy’s submarines, in spite of their bases being protected by long-range coast artillery, minefields, and destroyers, will be defeated and piracy ended—an entirely fallacious argument, as the history of frigate warfare proves.

mine. It is admitted, on all hands, that those two agencies have powerfully affected naval strategy and tactics. But the tendency is to regard their influence as far more predominant than, in fact, it has been. There is an impression that the officers commanding British squadrons in former days brooked no denial by the enemy of their demand for action ; if he would not come out to fight, then they went in and annihilated him. Those who hold that view are sufficiently good-natured, in most cases, to admit the plea that in these later days long-range guns, such as the Germans have mounted on their coastline, in association with elaborate minefields and large flotillas of submarines and destroyers, supported by vigilant aircraft, have not only rendered a close blockade impossible, but have robbed British officers of the opportunities of " searching out the enemy " which they have been led to believe their predecessors enjoyed and took advantage of with fearless determination. There is, in fact, no call for such efforts to excuse the policy which the British Fleet has adopted since the outbreak of the present struggle, for the simple reason that the admirals of the past did not act in the hot-headed and rash manner suggested, and did not achieve the result—" not victory, but annihilation "—which is so generally attributed to them. The matter is worthy of examination, and we may take three leading episodes for guidance, our struggles with the Spanish, Dutch, and French, with a view to ascertaining when the British Fleet did " destroy the enemy's armed ships." and thus bring a naval war to a close.

Sir Edward Creasy treats " the defeat of the Spanish Armada A.D. 1588 " as one of " the fifteen decisive battles of the world." Does it merit that description ? We are

all familiar with the schoolboy's belief that the Spaniards appeared off the Lizard ; that Drake refused to abandon his game of bowls ; that the enemy was eventually chased up the Channel ; that the Battle of Gravelines was fought ; and that a storm completed the ruin of the remnant of the Spanish Fleet and finally settled the doom of the sea-power of the Dons. What are the facts ?

In the first place, it is well to remember that but for Drake and his companions there would probably not have been an organized Spanish Fleet in the sixteenth century. Sir William Monson has left us, in a contemporary record, the statement that “ the King of Spain of those days was altogether unfurnished with ships and mariners ; for till we awaked him by the daily spoils we committed upon his subjects and coasts, he never sought to increase his forces by sea. . . . To speak the truth, until the King of Spain had war with us he never knew what war by sea meant, unless it were in galleys against the Turks in the Straits or in the islands of Terceras against the French, which fleet belonged to him by his new-gotten kingdom of Portugal. . . . The first time the king showed himself strong at sea was in the year 1591, when the *Revenge* was taken.” Sir Julian Corbett has reminded us that we have the best possible evidence, in a statement by the Venetian Ambassador, of how the English power was regarded even in Mary's time by the most capable foreign critics. In making his official report to the Doge about the year 1557, he wrote : ‘ England is the most powerful of all nations in the north in its number of warlike men and the strength of its fleet, in which respect this kingdom is superior to all its neighbours.’ ” <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Drake and the Tudor Navy*, by Sir Julian Corbett.

In a further discussion of the naval position of England and Spain, Mr. M. Oppenheim has remarked: "The difference was that Philip had no real navy, and would have had to construct from the foundation both in shipping and in organization; that his subjects were not naturally seamen, were accustomed to summer navigations, and, used to precise galley actions, were more or less ignorant of ship fighting; and that strategically his position was radically weak. On the other side, Elizabeth's position was strong, and in matériel and personnel she possessed, only requiring enlargement, all that Philip lacked."<sup>1</sup> There is no more ridiculous error, as Sir Julian Corbett, our most authoritative naval historian, has shown, than the popular belief that Spain was as powerful by sea as she was unquestionably powerful by land at the end of the sixteenth century. She was a land Power and not a sea Power.

In his study of *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*,<sup>2</sup> Sir John Knox Laughton deals with what he describes as "myths" which have been incorporated into the history of the campaign. Of these, the one which is of present interest is the suggestion that this fight was decisive in the sense that it resulted in the complete destruction of the Spanish Fleet and gave to the British the undisputed command of the sea. He admits that "the Spaniards were terribly beaten," and then proceeds to examine the result in more detail. He points out that "the English story ends when the Spanish Fleet passed the Firth of Forth; and for the rest it is sufficient to say that, according to the official Spanish report, which in such an over-

<sup>1</sup> *Naval Tracts of Sir William Monson*, edited by M. Oppenheim, vol. i.

<sup>2</sup> Navy Records Society.



whelming disaster is rather mixed, *about half of the original hundred and thirty Spanish ships got home again* ; some apparently by the simple process of not going any farther than Corunna, some by turning back before they crossed the Bay of Biscay.” The Spanish Armada was defeated, but certainly it was not annihilated. In other words, it did not receive what would be described in modern terms as a “ knock-out blow.” Spain, though humiliated after having for the greater part of a century imposed her will upon the world, was not broken, nor did Philip II by any means abandon the idea of crushing England. The trouble in Ireland and the unrest among English Catholics, which vexed the peace of Queen Elizabeth, seemed repeatedly to offer to Spain an opportunity of subjugating England, and Philip II towards the end of the sixteenth century fitted out another armada consisting of ninety-eight ships and 16,000 men. Disaster at sea overtook this force, but the ambitious king, undaunted by misfortune, assembled yet another armada of forty-four royal galleons, sixteen chartered ships, and a large number of hulks and small craft. This enterprise also proved unfruitful, the weather forcing the ships back into port. “ Early in 1598 England was again thrown into a paroxysm of alarm at the news of the coming of a great Spanish Fleet. In fact, a strong Spanish force of thirty-eight transports had sailed up the Channel unmolested, and had landed 5000 men at Calais (February, 1598), though half of the ships were wrecked at the entrance to the ports and the rest dared not return down Channel. Lacking this squadron, the new armada which was fitting out in the Spanish ports was never even able to sail ; and by the time when it should have been ready, France and

Spain were at peace.”<sup>1</sup> In spite of these experiences, the rebellion in Ireland later suggested to Spain that a further attempt might be made to plant the Catholic religion and an alien king in England, and in the autumn of September, 1601, a Spanish fleet of thirty-three ships and 4500 soldiers—part of a much larger expedition—sailed from Lisbon to support Tyrone and the O’Donnell. This adventure also ended in disaster, but it did not involve the annihilation of Spanish sea-power. During the seventeenth century Spain continued to vex British sailors, acting either in isolation or in combination with the Dutch or French. When Nelson met his death Admiral Villeneuve was associated with Admiral Gravina, who commanded a considerable Spanish force.

We must conclude on the evidence that the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 was not a decisive victory for the British. The survival of Spain’s hopes of sea mastery is all the more remarkable because, whatever virtues as soldiers the Spaniards revealed during the period when they dominated the New World, they exhibited on each and every occasion when brought to battle at sea poor qualities as sailors. The Spaniards, indeed, were never seamen of the same calibre as their British opponents ; but, nevertheless, Spanish sea-power survived till the Napoleonic war, and towards the close of the nineteenth century her Navy confronted that of the United States.

Did the Three Dutch Wars provide us with “ a decisive victory at sea ” ? Some years ago the Navy Record Society published a series of five volumes entitled *Letters and Papers Relating to the First Dutch War, 1652-1654*.

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*, vol. iii.

The last volume opens with an account of “ the northward cruise and the Battle of the Gabbard.” It is remarked :—

“ One may fairly say that it was not so much in the actual damage inflicted on the Dutch ships and crews, but in the depression of their morale that the importance of Monck’s victory lay. But the most conclusive proof of its character was the decision of the victorious commanders to remain upon the Dutch coast and ‘ range along ’ it, ‘ the better to improve the present victory God has given us.’ The ships which had suffered most in the battle, some ten or eleven in number, were sent home with the prizes, wounded, and prisoners, and a few vessels which were specially foul were sent in to clean at Harwich, but Monck and Blake had the bulk of the fleet available to establish a fairly close blockade of the Dutch ports, the effects of which were not slow to make themselves felt in a country as dependent upon maritime commerce as were the United Netherlands.”

After this experience in battle, which had thrown the Dutch on the defensive, Van Tromp immediately set to work to make preparations for breaking the British dominion. The narrative adds :—

“ The despatch of envoys from Holland to try to arrange terms of peace—Beverning, the first of them to arrive, reached London on June 17th—may possibly have deterred Cromwell from attempting an attack on Dutch territory. Be that as it may, it is clear that whatever the motive for abstaining from anything of the sort, without landing troops the English fleet could do nothing vital to interfere with the refitting of the Dutch squadrons ; it could, of course, hamper the arrival of such stores and supplies as might have to be imported by sea, but apart from that, it could only wait until its enemies had completed their preparations and should choose to come out.”

Then came “ Tromp’s last battle.” The Dutch “ received a crushing blow, not the least part of which was

the loss of Tromp." The weakness of the Dutch in ships and crews, and, above all, in discipline and fighting spirit, was too pronounced and constant a factor to be balanced even by Tromp's skill :—

" Monck's shattered vessels had hardly dropped anchor in Sole Bay than their indefatigable commander was hard at work endeavouring to equip as strong a squadron as possible for sea, that the Dutch coast might once again be held in a grip of iron and the resisting power of the United Provinces throttled by the suspension of their trade. . . . On the other side of the North Sea there was scarcely less vigour and energy being expended in refitting the vessels shattered in the encounter. . . . Tromp had driven Monck off the Dutch coast, but only for a time ; the victory had lain with the English, their command of the sea had been assured by the result of the battle, and if perhaps they made less use of the victory than might have been the case, this was in part due to the fact that the main purpose of obtaining command of the sea, namely, to assist and facilitate operations on land, seems to have been overlooked or deliberately disregarded by those responsible for the policy of England." <sup>1</sup>

Peace ensued before the fleets met again. The war produced no decisive battle, but in view of Holland's many embarrassments, political and military, the Dutch were well pleased to make peace. Though they conceded the obligation to salute the English flag, their sea-power had not been annihilated, and they had by no means abandoned their hope of obtaining the mastery of the seas. Within ten years the war was resumed. The British were in greatly superior strength at sea and the Dutch seamen were unwilling to risk an engagement, but, nevertheless, were at last forced to sea. An indecisive action was fought on June 3rd, 1665, off the Norfolk coast, when the Dutch, after suffering heavy losses, re-

<sup>1</sup> *First Dutch War, 1652-1654* (Navy Records Society).

treated. The victory was so questionable that the Duke of York, who had been in command of the British forces, resigned, and was succeeded by the Earl of Sandwich ; that officer's failures made way for Monck, now Duke of Albemarle whose command was also inglorious. Negotiations for peace were begun and the British Fleet was laid up. It was when peace was in the air that during the summer of 1666 the Dutch sailed from the Texel to the mouth of the Thames, and “ simply remained on the coast, blockading the river.” The Dutchmen were at length driven off with heavy loss. Later they returned stealthily and seized the opportunity of sailing up the Thames, attacked Sheerness, and even landed troops. They proceeded as far as Upnor Castle, burnt some of the finest English ships, and carried off the *Royal Charles* of ninety guns. This constituted the final and inglorious incident in the war, and was followed by the Peace of Breda of 1667, which recognized the English occupation of New Netherlands, but gave compensation to the Dutch in the East Indies.

The machinations of Louis XIV resulted in the Third Dutch War, which broke out in 1672. England and France joined in attacking Holland. The French King was prompted by a desire for territorial aggrandisement ; in so far as the war was popular in England, that was due to commercial competition. The Anglo-French alliance was not a happy one. De Ruyter, the Dutch admiral, showed considerable initiative, evidently realizing the weakness which almost invariably marks a combination between two national forces representing various political conditions, different ideals of service, and distinct systems of training and command. The two Fleets met at Sole

Bay, and an action ensued which De Ruyter described as the hardest fought battle he had ever witnessed. The French Squadron was the first to suffer from the Dutch attack, and was soon content to withdraw, leaving the inferior British Fleet to deal with the Dutch ships. At the close of the day honours were easy, and the Dutch sailed away without any attempt on the part of the British to pursue them, both sides having suffered about equally. A year later another battle took place in May, but was also indecisive. The squadrons had been refitted by July, and the combined British and French Fleets proceeded once more to the Dutch coast, both sides anxious to reach a decisive issue. The seamen fought with great fierceness, and the battle would have undoubtedly resulted in a British victory had Prince Rupert been adequately supported by the French. Unfortunately, the ally's ships gave little assistance :—

“Nightfall at last parted the exhausted combatants, Rupert standing to sea under easy sail so as to carry off the disabled ships, and the Dutch making for their own coast. Desperate as the fighting had been, the only vessels lost were fire-ships and other small craft ; and, in spite of his losses in officers and men, and the injuries his ships had received, Rupert had no intention of acknowledging defeat by quitting the coast. He was furious at the conduct of the French, and some of his own captains had behaved in a manner with which he was strongly dissatisfied. But the bad weather which followed almost immediately after the action, and before damages could be repaired, forced him home (August 10, O.S.). The season was now so far advanced that all thoughts of a descent upon Holland had to be laid aside ; the camp at Yarmouth was broken up (September 1), and a little later the French departed for their own ports.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Cambridge Modern History*, vol. v.

We gain some conception of the conditions which confronted Holland in this war in Jacob du Liefde's<sup>1</sup> comment on the Battle of Sole Bay. He declares that “ both parties, of course, claimed the victory, although a victory was not obtained by either. By their own confession, however, the English lost more ships, more captains, and more men ; and although the combined fleet had the advantage of the wind next day, and the Dutch remained in sight ready to renew the engagement, the Duke of York prudently abstained, and De Ruyter resolved to go home. We are told that when the tidings arrived in Holland that the English and French had not only not landed, as was at one time feared, but that they had retired, and one of the most gallant admirals was burned on one of the noblest ships, they accepted the news with joy. And surely,” this Dutch writer adds, “ some little joy was needed at a moment when the little country was being overwhelmed by a victorious and exultant enemy. All the fortresses that lay on the French and German sides of the Republic had been mastered by the French Army. Utrecht, which lies within forty miles of Amsterdam, was in their hands, and it was only by the desperate measure of cutting their dykes and opening their sluices to allow the sea to flow in and inundate the rest of the country that the French soldiers were prevented from marching with murder, rape, and bloodshed from one unhappy town to another. This, of course, was in itself the cause of frightful loss to the farmers and townspeople, for it requires but little imagination to picture the scene of whole provinces covered with rich pastures, ample cornfields, heavily laden orchards, and flourishing towns converted into one

<sup>1</sup> *The Great Dutch Admirals.*

vast lake, the waters of which swept away and drowned the hope and livelihood of thousands of struggling poor."

The war had become very unpopular in England ; fears were entertained of the growing power of France, which under Louis had become the champion of Roman Catholicism. The Dutch were also anxious to conclude peace in view of the drain on their resources involved in the simultaneous conduct of warlike operations by land and by sea. On February 9th the Treaty of London "ended a war in which the honours certainly rested with the Dutch, and more especially with De Ruyter." <sup>1</sup> Admiral Mahan has pointed out that "the strife which the Dutch maintained against the aims of Louis XIV sacrificed the sea-power of Holland through exhaustion, and not because the Dutch Fleet ever suffered an overwhelming defeat." He adds :—

"Situated between France and England, says an historian of Holland, by one or other of them were the United Provinces, after they had achieved their independence of Spain, constantly engaged in wars, which exhausted their finances, annihilated their navy, and caused the rapid decline of their trade, manufactures, and commerce ; and thus a peace-loving nation found herself crushed by the weight of unbroken and long-continued hostilities. Often, too, the friendship of England was scarcely less harmful to Holland than her enmity. As one increased and the other lessened, it became the alliance of the giant and the dwarf. (Davies : *History of Holland*.) Hitherto we have seen Holland the open enemy or hearty rival of England ; henceforward she appears as an ally—in both cases a sufferer from her smaller size, weaker numbers, and less favoured situation." <sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Cambridge Modern History*.

<sup>2</sup> *The Influence of Sea Power upon History*.



The Three Dutch Wars were marked by no decisive battle at sea. The sea-power of Holland failed, not because her seamen were lacking in skill or courage, but because, in the first place, the naval administration ashore was unsound ; and, in the second place, because the country had to maintain great armaments ashore in order to resist repeated attempts at invasion. Henceforward Holland, threatened by land as by sea, instead of being the enemy of England and her fierce competitor in the sea-carrying trade, slipped into the position of a weak ally of the one country in Europe which showed a fixed determination to resist the growing power of France. Holland shrank under the burden, not of defeat by sea, but of exhaustion due to continual attempts to resist invasion by land. The British Fleet never achieved a “ decisive victory ” over the Dutch in the course of the three wars.

We may pass on to another episode. The British Fleet became engaged in war in 1793, shortly after the execution of Louis XVI ; the struggle ended with the downfall of Napoleon in 1815. The only interval during these years when England and France were not at war occurred in the very middle of the period, when this country was tricked into the Peace of Amiens, only to realize a few months later that the treaty was merely a device in order to enable Napoleon to make further preparations for war. Was the course of operations at sea during those twenty and more years of hostilities between the two countries marked by a single decisive victory at sea, involving the annihilation of the enemy forces ? Can that definition be applied to Howe’s victory of June 1st, 1794, to the Battle of Cape St. Vincent of 1797, to the Battle of the

Nile in 1798,<sup>1</sup> or even to the Battle of Trafalgar of 1805? It must be admitted that in none of the earlier actions was a final decision reached at sea, otherwise it would have been unnecessary to fight the Battle of Trafalgar. But, on the other hand, it may be argued that Trafalgar was decisive. In one sense that statement is true, but it is still the fact that the Battle of Trafalgar did not by any means fulfil the Nelsonian dictum—"not victory, but annihilation."

Popular histories, from which every schoolboy gains his impression of the course of naval events—which he sometimes fails to revise in later years—have fostered the belief that at the Battle of Trafalgar the French Fleet was destroyed. What are the facts? In 1805 Napoleon determined upon carrying out a vast scheme. Villeneuve was to break away from Europe and form a great concentration of force at a secret rendezvous outside European waters. The French Fleet was then to return with all speed to European waters, and, making its way up Channel, cover the passage to England of the invasion flotilla which had been prepared at Boulogne.

It is unnecessary to recall the incidents which preceded the opening of what was to prove the last great naval action of the war, though not the last action by any means. Villeneuve sailed for the West Indies, breaking Nelson's blockade of Toulon for the third time; then, returning to Europe with Nelson in chase, fought an indecisive action with Calder off Cape Finisterre, and put into Vigo, finally reaching Cadiz on July 20th. Nelson,

<sup>1</sup> At the Battle of the Nile only two French battleships and two frigates escaped, but that action was not "a decisive and final fleet action."

having failed to bring the Allied Fleet to action, proceeded to England. What would our modern and censorious naval critics have said of such an act by anyone but Nelson? He reached Spithead on August 18th, and on September 14th again hoisted his flag in the *Victory*, sailing from England on the following day for the last time. In the meantime Napoleon was venting his rage on Villeneuve, and at last the threat that another officer, Vice-Admiral Rosily, had been nominated to supersede him, and was already on his way from Paris, forced Villeneuve to put to sea on what was to prove his last cruise. At the end of the preceding month Nelson had joined Collingwood off Cadiz, and on October 21st the two Fleets met. Nelson had under his orders twenty-seven ships of the line, only about one-third of the number of vessels then in commission, and the combined French and Spanish squadrons included only thirty-three ships of the line, also about one-third of the enemy ships of the line then in commission.

It would be tedious and beside the present purpose to recall the familiar story of the battle. What was its result? Was the Allied Fleet swept out of existence? On the contrary. Sir Julian Corbett has summed up the material results of the action:—

“ The enemy’s commander-in-chief and two of his flag officers were prisoners in the British Fleet. Of the thirty-three of the line which had left Cadiz the day before only nine got back to safety; four were flying for the Straits, leaving no less than twenty on the field of battle, of which seventeen were totally dismantled, thirteen actually in possession of prize crews, and one in flames, while every British flag was still flying.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Campaign of Trafalgar.*

A great victory was achieved, but the combined Fleet was not annihilated, still less was the sea-power of France finally destroyed or that country robbed of the power of making war upon British commerce. That conclusion is all the more noteworthy, since the four enemy ships which flew for the Straits were defeated by Sir Richard Strachan off Ortelgel on November 4th and the other vessels which ran for Cadiz did not dare again to put to sea. There is nothing in contemporary history to suggest that our forefathers regarded the Battle of Trafalgar as the last great act in the naval war, or that they had any conception of the influence which it would exercise on the course of events on land during succeeding years. Before the battle Napoleon had abandoned his scheme for the invasion of England, and had carried the Grand Army across Europe to force the Austrian Army "to a shameful capitulation at Ulm three days before his naval defeat." How did Pitt regard the naval victory? The news of Trafalgar offered him little consolation for Ulm, and the subsequent intelligence of the crushing of the armies of Austria and Russia in the Battle of Austerlitz "killed him." He was at Bath at the time, and immediately decided to set out for home. "He arrived at his villa on Nov. 12th. As he entered it, his eye rested on the map of Europe. 'Roll up that map,' he said; 'it will not be wanted these ten years'." That was Pitt's comment on the Battle of Trafalgar.

What must be our conclusion, viewing the battle in the perspective of history? It was the last great battle at sea of the war. It was not, on the other hand, the last action to be fought at sea. Nor did contemporary Englishmen believe that it marked the final and decisive effort on the

part of France to win command of the sea. On the contrary, they were convinced that, though a victory had been won, stern times lay ahead, and this anticipation was confirmed. The story of the naval events separating the Battle of Trafalgar from the day when Napoleon set out for St. Helena fills nearly four hundred of the thousand pages which Captain Brenton in his *Naval History* devotes to the story of these twenty-two years of almost uninterrupted warfare by sea.

The Battle of Trafalgar did not end the struggle for command ; it merely changed its character. From October 21st, 1805, the pressure on the British Fleet was increased rather than decreased. The conditions were such that efforts were redoubled to increase British naval power, and in 1809 113 ships of the line and 684 cruisers were in commission.<sup>1</sup> When the Battle of Trafalgar was over Collingwood did not return home to receive the congratulations of his fellow-countrymen ; he could not be spared from the Mediterranean. The Admiralty realized, as he realized, that the naval war was not at an end. The blockade of Cadiz was resumed. In fact, this officer, to whose fine qualities the British people have never paid due homage, “ stepped into his boat from Plymouth Dock on the last day of April, 1805, weighed at four the next morning, and returned a peer and a corpse ” nearly five years after the Battle of Trafalgar had been fought and won. Those who are familiar with Collingwood’s correspondence do not need to be reminded that during that period he appealed again and again to the Admiralty to permit him to hand over his duties to some other officer, if the change in command could be effected without detri-

<sup>1</sup> *James’s Naval History.*

ment to national interests. He invariably received the same reply, though couched in varying language. The cenotaph in his native town of Newcastle refers to the part that he took in the victory off Cape St. Vincent and in the Battle of Trafalgar, which left him in supreme command of the British Fleet in those waters, and then in pathetic terms mentions his later services after "the decisive victory" :—

" In the Command of the Mediterranean to which he succeeded,  
 he displayed unrivalled skill as a Seaman,  
 and great talents and address in the conduct of many  
 Negotiations.  
 After five Years, during which he never quitted his Ship for a  
 single night,  
 He became anxious to re-visit his Native Land ;  
 but being informed that his services could ill be spared in those  
 critical times he replied that  
 HIS LIFE WAS HIS COUNTRY'S,  
 and persevered in the discharge of his arduous Duties, till,  
 exhausted with fatigue,  
 he expired, on board His Majesty's Ship the *Ville de Paris*,  
 on the 7th March, 1810, in the 60th year of his age."

Unless those five years were full of anxiety and called for the exhibition of fine seamanship, Collingwood and the other British sailors who flew their flags in various parts of the world were treated with extreme harshness, and there was no excuse for the great naval establishment which was maintained. The expenditure on the Fleet rose from £15,035,630 in 1805 to £18,975,120 in the year of Collingwood's death ; whereas in the former year 120,000 seamen were voted, in the latter the number was 145,000.

We are forced to the conclusion that, in the sense in

which the term "command of the sea" is frequently employed, the Battle of Trafalgar achieved much less than is popularly supposed. Napoleon, appreciating what the blow meant, set to work heroically to repair it, like Philip II after the Armada. Only a portion of his fleet had been defeated; he had at his command a large seafaring population, larger probably than that of England, and he determined to strengthen his fleet.

"France, in possession of the Texel, the Scheldt, Cherbourg, Brest, L'Orient, Rochefort, Toulon, Port Espezia, Genoa, Venice, and Corsica, with the extensive forests of ship timber either contiguous to or within water-carriage of these places, still possessed the means of building ships. Her forest laws were all subservient to the public good, without much reference to individual right. Where the 'marteau national' (national hammer) had imprinted on a tree the mark of its appropriation to the service of the dockyards, it became from that moment sacred, the owner was indemnified by an arbitrary valuation, and was answerable for its safety. By these means the register of the Minister of Marine contained an account of all timber necessary for his purpose; and, though the expedient was incompatible with a free Government, it answered the purpose of a despot, and gave him that immediate power which a British monarch and a British parliament could not attain. Another navy, as if by magic, sprang forth from the forests to the sea-shore, manned by the authority of a maritime conscription, exactly similar in principle to that by which the trees were appropriated to the building of the ships. Such a navy, however, wanted the life, the vigour, and animation of a British spirit; a combination only to be found and formed in the land of real rational liberty."<sup>1</sup>

The French Fleet, under Napoleon's impulse, was soon stronger in matériel than it had been since the opening of the war.

<sup>1</sup> *Naval History*, Brenton.

During the years that followed Trafalgar there was no further great fleet action, but, in spite of all the efforts of the British naval forces, this country's command of the sea was subject to severe limitations. Napoleon henceforward was content to adopt a policy of evasion by sea, developing corsair warfare to the utmost extent. He had no use for a battle fleet except to cover the passage of an army to England, and once that scheme had to be abandoned, though he went on building ships of the line which he perhaps expected to use in their legitimate rôle later on, he was well content to devote his energies to war upon British maritime communications.

Professor W. R. Scott has controverted the belief that the British losses of merchant men were balanced by the prizes gained from the French, and has given a reminder which may well be emphasized to-day, that "the nation which keeps the sea risks its ships, while the one confined to its ports may save its vessels," adding that "from 1803 to 1814 our losses in prizes as far as recorded were twelve times as great as those of the French, the figures being: British ships captured by the French, 5314; French captured by the British, 440." <sup>1</sup> The years following, and not the years preceding, the Battle of Trafalgar submitted British sea-power to the severest strain, and imposed upon the nation privations which it had not known during the earlier period of the war. In short, when Nelson fell in the hour of his glory, the naval war did not come to an end, but entered on a new phase.

What the German submarines attempted to do after the Battle of Jutland, the ships <sup>2</sup> which Napoleon man-

<sup>1</sup> *Scottish Historical Review*, April, 1917.

<sup>2</sup> Napoleon used battleships and privateers in his war on British commerce, and of course frigates also took part in the operations.



aged to send to sea in large numbers during the years succeeding the Battle of Trafalgar attempted to achieve. The passage of time has dimmed the memory of the sufferings which brought the British people low in the final ten years of the great war of last century. It was only very gradually, as the bitter memories were overlaid by the prosperity which marked the Early Victorian period, that the Battle of Trafalgar acquired the popular character which it has since assumed. It did not save the life of Pitt ; it did not check the career of victorious conquest which eventually brought almost the whole Continent under Napoleon's heel ; it did not spare these islands from dire privations, the very poor being confronted with starvation. It proved the last great battle of the war by sea, but it was not the end of war, any more than the Battle of Jutland has proved to be the last act of German sea-power in the present struggle.

We must conclude that in its long, glorious history the British Navy has never achieved a victory corresponding to Nelson's ambition—"not victory, but annihilation." On the other hand, the British Fleet has won a succession of victories which have not only moulded the history of the British Empire, but powerfully affected the development of the world. The error which is committed in these days is to regard the result of a naval action purely from the material point of view—how many ships were sunk ; how many men were killed ; how do the losses on the one hand and on the other compare ? Those are not unimportant questions, but they do not constitute the decisive factor. The most important effect produced by a general action at sea is psychological—which of the belligerents is convinced that he is beaten and fears to

risk another encounter? That is the real issue. There is, indeed, ample warrant in the narratives of the Spanish Armada, the Dutch wars, and the Napoleonic campaign for that conclusion, for in none of the contests was the enemy annihilated. The moral effect produced by the British Fleet in its many encounters with enemies has been far greater than the material effect. The idea that at any period its capital ships have been concentrated, and that an action has been fought which has resulted in the annihilation of the enemy, is one of those myths which it is well should be dispelled if we of this generation are to reach a correct appreciation of the services which British seamen have rendered in the present struggle against the second sea Power of the world, with forces superior to those of all our European Allies combined.

## CHAPTER IX

### INVASION AND SEA HERESY

THE possible, if not probable, invasion of the British Isles was the one defence problem which was continually under discussion during the ten years preceding the outbreak of war. The Navy claimed that, if its strength were adequately maintained, it could protect this country against an enemy's coming in force, and employing therefore many transports, each transport a target, but it could give no guarantee against raids—that is, against comparatively small bodies of enemy troops landing at one or more points on our coast. Since hostilities began we have heard practically nothing of the invasion peril, and if the enemy threw ten or twenty thousand troops into these islands those who before the war had no faith in the Navy as an anti-invasion force would be the first to contend that the Fleet had failed to fulfil its function, since it had not checked raids.

The pendulum of public opinion has swung its full course. Since the Great War opened no community in Europe has felt as safe from enemy action oversea—not even the Germans—as the people of the British Isles. With hostilities, they not only banished from their minds the fear of invasion, but apparently ceased to believe in the possibility of comparatively small numbers of German troops being put ashore in this country. They have

attributed to the Navy a guarantee of safety, which none of the leaders of naval thought has ever given. It is well to recall that there were limits to the naval guarantee, and that nothing has occurred in the past three years and more to alter its form or its implication.

We have been engaged in warlike operations unique in their character and involving risks which no other country has ever had the courage to face. Prior to August, 1914, it was an axiom of naval war that a country should not commit itself to oversea operations until the sea passage was secured beyond peradventure. It was held that "as long as one belligerent fleet is intact or at large the other is reluctant to carry out any considerable expedition oversea. In fact, the command of the sea has not been secured whilst the enemy continues to have a 'fleet in being.'" <sup>1</sup> Have we possessed what pre-war students of naval history would have described as command of the sea at any period since the war opened? We have been confronted, and are still confronted, with a navy second only in strength to our own. The German ships are well designed and well built. The German seamen have revealed themselves full of resource and courage. Experience has taught us that they employ all the aids which physical science in its wonderful developments can lend them. The Higher Command is patient, circumspect, and ever ready to take advantage of any fortuitous circumstances.

What has been the course of events? In a notable speech which he delivered in the House of Lords on July 12th, 1909, Field-Marshal Earl Roberts discussed the position of this country in the event of war:—

<sup>1</sup> Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, in *Sea Power and Other Studies*.

“ I am well aware that the public generally have most unfortunately been led to believe that the Regular Army—no matter how urgent the demand for its services may be elsewhere—will not be sent out of this country until the Territorial Army has been sufficiently trained to be able of itself to defend these shores—a period of six months after the outbreak of war being the minimum that Mr. Haldane calculates on as having at his disposal for this purpose—and until the Navy has asserted itself sufficiently to ensure its supremacy at sea being undisputed. I cannot find words, my Lords, to express my amazement that such a policy should ever have been contemplated.

“ I cannot believe that anyone in the United Kingdom could be so absolutely lost to all sense of proper feeling as to consent to such an arrangement, if it were really understood that it implies leaving India and the Oversea States to struggle unaided against possibly overwhelming numbers, and the possible sacrifice and abandonment of our countrymen abroad, who are doing Great Britain’s work under the shelter of Great Britain’s flag. These men have entered upon their duties realizing that they were running certain and often grave risks, but at the same time in the firm faith that, in event of serious trouble arising, assistance would at once be sent to them from the Mother Country.

“ Serious trouble has happened suddenly and unexpectedly in a distant part of our Empire, within the memory of many of us now alive. At that time, owing to the want of rapid communication, months elapsed before the much-needed help arrived, many valuable lives were lost, and a number of helpless women and children were ruthlessly massacred. Surely in these days of quick communication we are not going to allow such a deplorable catastrophe to happen again without straining every nerve to prevent it. Are we going to keep the Regular Army at home for our own protection—the Army that is specially maintained for foreign service—because, forsooth, we are so utterly selfish as to refuse to undergo the very slight sacrifice needed for the establishment of a citizen Army ? ”

Five years later Lord Roberts (impressed with the home position, and not with the possibility of offensive action being required on the Continent) declared that "the Territorial Force was little better fitted for the special duty for which it was established than the displaced Volunteers, and neither the one nor the other, under the Voluntary system, could ever be fitted for the onerous duty." He declared that "the present Government, like their predecessors, allowed the nation to believe that, so long as we possessed a powerful Navy, an invasion of these islands was an impossibility, and therefore there was no need for an efficient land force." Lord Roberts urged that "there was a very real danger." In the Prize Essay Competition of 1905<sup>1</sup> of the Royal United Service Institution, when Lord Roberts was chairman, the Gold Medal was awarded to Major W. C. Bridger, of the South Staffordshire Regiment, who, after a review of our naval and military position, reached deliberately the following conclusions:—

(1) That the numbers and organization of our military forces and our adherence to the Voluntary system tie us down to a *defensive* attitude so far as other Great Powers are concerned.

(2) That the teachings of history, the march of science, and the political outlook combine to create situations which would render *invasion of the United Kingdom feasible, if not easy*.

(3) That the *Regular Army* at home is not strong enough or properly organized to deal with such an invasion.

(4) That none of the auxiliary branches of the Service as at present organized and recruited are capable of properly co-operating with the Regular Army or of making up for its lack of strength.

<sup>1</sup> The essays were written before Lord Haldane had undertaken the creation of the Expeditionary Force.

Contrast those anticipations with what actually happened in the summer of 1914 after Germany had begun the invasion of Belgium. When the final word in the negotiations with Germany was spoken by the Foreign Office, the Regular Army was mobilized and the Territorial Force was embodied. Were these steps taken in order to provide for the safety of these islands? Within a fortnight the main portion of the Expeditionary Force had crossed the Channel, and shortly afterwards all its divisions<sup>1</sup> were engaged not on English, but on Belgian and French soil. That action has no parallel in history. It was the fruit of policy; the rapid mobilization of the British Fleet had its counterpart in the rapid mobilization of the Expeditionary Force, crowning with success the work of the Imperial General Staff. Never before had a maritime Power embarked on oversea operations in such circumstances as then existed. With a Fleet second only in strength to its own among the fleets of the world within three hundred miles of its shores, and that fleet still intact, this country took the offensive on the Continent. It is open to doubt whether our Allies realize the courage which the inhabitants of the United Kingdom exhibited in assenting to that operation. It may be that British public opinion at the moment was too dazed to appreciate its significance, but we have good evidence to show that the Germans experienced a surprise, the magnitude and consequences of which history will in time reveal.

<sup>1</sup> Practically the whole Regular Army (256,614 strong) was, in a short period, engaged overseas. "The British contingent of the Expeditionary Force to the Crimea, consisting of 33,500 men and 3,500 horses, is the largest body of troops that ever left these shores" (Colonel H. B. Hanna, in October, 1912). In the South African War a larger number of troops were employed, but they left Britain slowly and in dribbles.

Lord Roberts' prophecy was not fulfilled ; there was no interval of six months. The Higher Command in this country ignored the timorous counsels which had been pressed upon an uninstructed country, and boldly embarked on the first offensive war on the Continent of Europe which England had undertaken since the Seven Years' War. We gave hostages to fortune such as no great nation before had ever given. With a great fleet-in-being within a winter night's steaming of our shores, we committed ourselves to military operations which involved keeping open in all conditions vulnerable maritime lines of communication. Nothing succeeds like success. Within a few months, although the Germans still possessed a powerful fleet-in-being, we proceeded to create other lines of military communication. Not only were troops sent to the Dardanelles, Mesopotamia, East Africa, and to all the German Colonies—all these men being sea-supported—but we proceeded to rest heavily on another line of communication, namely, with the United States. Orders were placed in that country on behalf of ourselves and our Allies for munitions costing tens of millions of pounds sterling. They could not be ready for delivery for some months. Faith in the Fleet was complete. It was confidently assumed that it would justify itself to an extent which no fleet in the past had done. Admiral Mahan has declared that : " The control of the sea, however real, does not imply that an enemy's single ships or small squadrons cannot steal out of port, cannot cross more or less frequented tracks of ocean, make harassing descents upon unprotected points of a long coastline, enter blockaded harbours. On the contrary, history has shown that such evasions are always possible, to some



extent, to the weaker party, however great the inequality of naval strength." During the ten years which separated Trafalgar from Waterloo there was no period when the British Government would have felt justified in undertaking the responsibilities which Mr. Asquith's Administration, confiding in the Navy, did in fact undertake at the opening of the present war.

There is a tendency to regard the British Army and the British Navy as separate and distinct services. It has been suggested that, while the former has been acting on the offensive, the latter has been acting on the defensive. The Navy and Army, in fact, are like the right and left arms of a pugilist. They draw their strength from the same source and they are both employed to the same end. The position of a maritime country is peculiar. It is conceivable that such a country should adopt the offensive by sea and the defensive by land; but the contrary is impossible, because the Navy must act on the offensive if the Army is to be employed outside its homeland. In the present war the Navy, in guarding, with unparalleled success, the lines of military and economic communication of the peoples of the British Empire and in large measure of the Allies also, has been acting offensively. This country has been protected against invasion and against starvation—in that sense the Navy has been a sure shield; but the Navy has also thrown vast military forces across the seas. In other words, it has not only prevented this country from being either invaded or starved, but it has placed the Army in positions best calculated, as was believed, to enable it to invade enemy territory. The Army is an extension of the power of the Navy, and to talk of the British Fleet

having adopted a defensive policy reaches the limit of the ridiculous.

A defensive naval policy on the part of this country would have meant reversion to conditions definitely adopted by Lord Palmerston's Government in 1860, only ten years before the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War. A Royal Commission then solemnly decided that the English Channel, our main sea frontier, should not be defended. Cruisers were to be placed on the trade routes, some sort of naval force was to be maintained in the Mediterranean, but the main reliance of this island people for safety in time of war was to be placed on the Army, the Militia, and the recently-formed Volunteer Force. It was held that the creation of any such Grand Fleet as we possess to-day involved a financial expenditure which this country would never undertake. In accordance with that policy, millions of pounds sterling were spent on the construction of fortifications along the coast—the subject of ridicule to-day, but in their time the source of confidence on the part of a people misled by their leaders.

How does that defensive policy compare with the one with which we have become familiar? Except at points of great naval and military importance, we possessed in August, 1914, not a single strongly fortified post on the East Coast, even the mine defences of our harbours had been abolished, and the Brennan torpedo had been scrapped. To those with little faith in sea-power our position was perilous. What happened? The country learnt without dismay that a larger Expeditionary Force than had ever before crossed the Channel had left this country. It embraced practically all the organized troops we possessed in these islands. We parted later with

the Territorial Army ; the United Kingdom in process of time became, in the main, a reservoir from which the vast armies in the various theatres draw reinforcements. In 1860 we relied on our soldiers for safety. The country was committed to a hedgerow policy of defence. No responsible person entertained any idea that we should land an expedition of even twenty thousand men on the Continent, though between 1864 and 1871 Prussia fought three successive wars of aggression. Even if the country had desired to intervene on behalf of either of the three nations which was eventually to be defeated, could it have done so ? In accordance with the decision of the Royal Commission of 1859-60, dominated by military opinion, it had abandoned all idea of commanding the Channel, and without some sort of command of the Channel, absolutely assured, how were men to be transported to the Continent ?

If we are to realize the real character of the operations in which we have been engaged since August, 1914, we must study them not in detail, picking a hole here and there, but as a whole. With an audacity which has no parallel in history, this country asserted its determination to use the seas and proceeded to act on the assumption that neither Germany nor Austria-Hungary, both possessing large fleets, would, or could, interfere with the maze of military communications on which reliance was placed or invade these islands in force. The British naval and military authorities acted as though the Central Powers did not possess fleets. No such challenge had ever been thrown down before in the face of great navies. The two enemy fleets, accepting the humiliation which the conditions imposed upon them represented, forthwith with-

drew behind minefields, supported by heavy coast artillery, and, assured that their battleships were safe from attack, were content to confine their naval activities to a relatively small number of submarines and destroyers.

Have the Germans evaded naval action—a battle on the grand scale—with a view to employing their fleet in some carefully planned scheme for the invasion of these islands? Before the opening of the war many persons believed that the early phase of hostilities would be marked by the landing of hordes of enemy troops in this country. It was suggested that the British Navy would be lured away on a wild goose chase. When Mr. Balfour some years ago suggested that even if our main squadrons were absent from the North Sea, this country would be in little danger of invasion, owing to the swarm of torpedo craft which would remain on duty, he was severely lectured in many quarters. There was nothing surprising in Mr. Balfour's statement, for the principal function of the main fleet does not consist in protecting our shores. It has a bigger rôle than that, as the progress of this war has shown and as the Germans have learnt.

It will be a nice point for the consideration of historians whether the responsible naval and military authorities in Germany ever had any hope that, in face of a superior fleet, they would be able to land troops in large numbers on our shores. Germany had everything to gain from convincing the British people that in case of war an invasion would not only be attempted, but that plans existed which ensured the success of the operation. It may be assumed that the reputable naval and military writers in Germany who set out to prove how easily this country could be overrun wrote under inspiration. It is not good

strategy to announce beforehand the plan of attack which it is intended to adopt ; thereby the future enemy is warned and enabled to take precautionary measures. Why did Germans, and in particular German officers of high rank, write books in which they attempted to prove how simple a proposition it would be to land German soldiers on our coasts ? They not only wrote books, but they were delighted when those books were translated into English and circulated far and wide. If such plans were entertained, success would depend largely on secrecy. And yet the scheme was discussed in elaborate detail.

This war, it may be suggested, has supplied the key to the riddle. When Germany fought she intended to fight Russia, and if necessary, France and Russia. That, it may be confidently assumed, was the fixed purpose which she kept in view. The German Fleet was created to frighten us. " Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that even for the adversary with the greatest sea-power a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil its position in the world." It was argued that when the emergency arose, the British people, impressed with the size of the German Navy, and not less impressed by the arguments of German writers as to the peril of invasion, would decide against sending an army to the Continent. It was believed that fears as to the home position would cause us to retain, as Lord Roberts had anticipated, the whole of the British military forces in the United Kingdom ; Germany would be left with a free hand to work her will on the Continent. With the supreme British Fleet and the mobile British Army neutral, the Germans calculated that they were assured of victory over France

and Russia, and that if Great Britain confined her activity to the sea the result would be the same. They were right. Their calculations, tested and re-tested, were accurate. There was only one flaw—the common sense of the British people convinced them that, though the enemy might undertake raids, it was impossible for the British Isles to be invaded in force until the British Fleet had been defeated, and hence they were free to use the British Army for offensive purposes on the Continent from the very opening of hostilities, sending the Expeditionary Force across the Channel without hesitation or delay.

What were the arguments against the possibility of invasion? They were admirably summarized by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur Wilson. When he was First Sea Lord, towards the close of 1910, he prepared a Memorandum on the question, dealing with the matter in some detail.<sup>1</sup> He pointed out that “the main object aimed at by our Fleet, whether for the defence of commerce or for any other purpose, is to prevent any ship of the enemy from getting to sea far enough to do any mischief before she is brought to action.”<sup>2</sup> Any disposition that is even moderately successful in attaining this object will almost certainly be effective in preventing a large fleet of transports, than which nothing is more vulnerable or more difficult to hide, from reaching our shores.” Sir Arthur Wilson then proceeded to place himself in the position of the officer undertaking the responsibility of conducting

<sup>1</sup> It may be recalled that Sir Arthur Wilson's views were severely criticized at the time, notably by Lord Roberts and Lord Beresford, the latter denouncing the Memorandum in *The Betrayal: Being a Record of Facts concerning Naval Policy and Administration from the Year 1902 to the Present Time*. (P. S. King & Son, 1912.)

<sup>2</sup> That is the policy which has, in fact, been adopted by the Admiralty in the present war.

the invasion :—

“ His first difficulty is to consider how he is to get his great fleet of transports to sea without any information of it leaking out through neutral nations or otherwise.

“ Next, he will consider that somewhere within wireless call we have nearly double the number of battleships and cruisers that he can muster, besides a swarm of destroyers.

“ He has probably very vague and unreliable information as to their positions, which are constantly changing.

“ His unwieldy fleet will cover many square miles of water, and as all the ships will be obliged to carry lights, for mutual safety, they will be visible nearly as far by night as by day. How can he hope to escape discovery ? .

“ Many of his transports will have speeds of not more than ten to twelve knots, so that there will be no hope of escape by flight if he is met by a superior force.

“ If he is sighted by any of our destroyers at night, they will have little difficulty in avoiding the men-of-war and torpedoing the transports.”

The British people, ignoring the scare stories put in circulation by Germans, and relying upon their own responsible experts, placed their confidence in an offensive-defensive scheme. It is not without interest to recall the explanation of the new British policy, made seven years ago, in which a summary was given of the decisions that had been reached on the highest authority.<sup>1</sup> It was pointed out that “ the country to-day has not two lines of defence—one on the sea and the other on the land—but actually four lines. The new policy indicates a return to the first essential principles of defence for a maritime Power, the centre of which is a group of islands liable to invasion by an enemy who must come by sea, while the periphery consists of a number of Oversea Dominions—the whole

<sup>1</sup> *The Daily Telegraph*, January 23, 1911.

Empire possessing more than half the merchant shipping of the world, with a vast proportion of its wealth always afloat, and therefore always exposed to the danger of attack.

It was remarked that it was in the light of those circumstances that the new policy of 1906 had been evolved, consisting of four lines :—

(1) The basic principle is the existence of a sea-going force of predominant strength.

(2) For the first time in its history the nation possesses to-day a second line of naval defence—a mobile coastal defence—consisting of destroyers and submarines, stretching from the far North down the East Coast to Dover. This is an innovation—due to Lord Fisher's policy—which has powerfully affected the home defence problem.

(3) The country has the largest organized Expeditionary Force for work overseas which has ever existed. It is the only large professional and long-service army in the world. It comprises, roughly, three army corps, of about 160,000 officers and men, which are ready to be sent overseas as circumstances may dictate. But in the absence of a call to duty overseas the Expeditionary Force, with its reserves—the reservoir from which war wastage would be made good—remains in the British Isles.

(4) The last link in the defensive chain consists of the Territorial Army, with an establishment of 315,000 men, of which approximately four-fifths are now enrolled and under training.

The first and the third lines of defence are Imperial ; they exist in order that they may go anywhere and do anything.

The second and fourth lines are for the specific protection of the British Isles.

Owing to the creation of the second line, consisting of destroyers and submarines, the sea-going fleets . . . are no longer tied to our shores in order to prevent invasion. The swarm of mosquito craft on the East Coast are the naval antidote to invasion, and Sir Arthur Wilson holds that “ an



invasion on even the moderate scale of 70,000 men is practically impossible."

The influence of the decision of the naval and military authorities was then traced at a moment when Lord Roberts and others were declaring that the Regular Army was necessary for the defence of these islands, and that it was not strong enough for that duty. "The Regular Army has no more to do with the direct defence of these Islands than the Native Army in India has. It is in the United Kingdom because the United Kingdom is the brain and executive centre of the Empire, and it is held in readiness to proceed oversea immediately the Admiralty guarantee that the command of the sea is secure. It is the extension of our main naval arm; the Fleet's duty is to carry a war to the extreme point to which it can be pushed on the sea, and then it will devolve on the Expeditionary Force to push the war forward ashore to its successful termination. The command of the sea is the essential condition to the mobility of the Expeditionary Force—as was illustrated during the campaigns in Egypt and the war in South Africa." It was remarked that "the object which the responsible experts of the Navy and Army have kept in view, in evolving the new scheme, is the mobility of the Imperial forces for Imperial purposes—the first and third lines of the whole system—in other words, the sea-going fleets and the Expeditionary Force. It has been the aim to create adequate means of defence for the United Kingdom, so that these two forces may be free to respond to the distant claims of the Empire, as they have never been free before." And then it was added—and the words, written in 1911, bear recalling now :—

“ Neither the First Sea Lord nor any naval officer has stated that there is no danger of raids ; in other words, of attempts by small bodies of foreign troops to land on our shores in certain circumstances. Naval opinion has always admitted that adverse conditions might arise in the course of a war which would render such an adventure on the part of a daring enemy not only possible, but under some conditions a diversion well worth the effort and the risk to which it would be exposed. Let this admission be clearly understood, because it is all-important. . . . Raiding forces, each consisting of a comparatively few thousand men, might . . . be despatched by an enemy, in the more or less desperate hope that, owing to the small tonnage of shipping employed in transporting them, some way might be found through the chain of mobile defence on the British coasts.”

That statement, based upon knowledge of the work which Lord Fisher and Lord Haldane had done at the Admiralty and the War Office to reform and co-ordinate the Navy and the Army, may now be examined in the light of experience. The British people remained undismayed when, contrary to the anticipations of the invasion school, the Regular Army was transported to France. But that was not all. The Regular Army was followed by the Territorial Army. Confidence remained unabated. The Dominions took courage from the Mother Country's faith in the virtue of sea-power. They gathered up all their available armed men and sent them to fight in France, Gallipoli, Egypt, or Salonica. The Overseas Empire realized, in a flash, that, so long as the British Fleet remained undefeated, they required no soldiers in their own territories, and that, if the Fleet were defeated, any soldiers they could provide for the defence of their territories would be useless owing to the strength of the forces which an enemy, victorious at sea, could bring against them.

How does the problem of invasion of Britain stand in the fourth year of this war? We can re-read with equanimity all the German books and articles which were written to prove that of all operations that of invasion, in face of a fleet holding the world's seas, was one of the easiest. We know that if at any moment the Germans could have landed troops in large bodies on our coast they would have done so. A blow struck with success at the nerve centre of the British Empire would have brought the war to a close. Suddenly the British effort—naval, military, and economic—would have collapsed. We are confronted with two German failures, each conspicuous. In the first place, before the war the German propagandists failed to frighten the people of the British Isles, with the result that they poured out their manhood to fight on battlefields overseas; the war of pamphlets and books was a failure. In the second place, after the British people had exhibited this fine faith in sea-power, leaving the country in all military respects weaker than the Germans ever expected to see it, the much-advertized invasion scheme was not carried out. The British people have not seen the British Grand Fleet or any other of the naval services since the ships, great and small, streamed out of Spithead at the end of July, 1914. The phrase, "the first line of defence," has gained a new meaning in the months which have followed. Without fear of the consequences, the people of the British Isles learnt of the transportation overseas of the Expeditionary Force, of the Army Reserves, and of the Territorials. Those soldiers, Regular and Citizen, have been followed by the new Armies, and yet the British people have remained undismayed. In that condition of mind rests the most

supreme triumph of sea-power over ignorant fears of which history holds any record.

The oversea danger remains to-day what it has always been. The peril of invasion does not exist. On the other hand, "raiding forces, each consisting of a comparatively few thousand men, might . . . be dispatched by an enemy, in the more or less desperate hope that, owing to the small tonnage of shipping employed in transporting them, some way might be found through the chain of mobile defence on the British coast." That relatively small peril confronts us. The more desperate the condition of the Central Powers, the greater it will become. Let us be on our guard against flying from one extreme to the other. In the early months of 1914 no mean proportion of the people of the British Isles believed in the possibility of an enemy invading this country in force. There is a danger that we may now reach the conclusion that even raids are absolutely impossible. That statement is supported by the surprise which was occasioned when ten enemy destroyers in 1916 broke through into the Channel. The Germans selected ten well-armed and swift ships; a dark night was chosen for the venture; the enemy force dashed through the Straits of Dover; the German crews had orders to fire at everything they encountered afloat and not to spare their torpedoes if opportunity offered of using them with effect. What was the position of the British patrol service? It had no more reason to expect an attack on that night than on any other of the eight hundred nights since the war began. The British Navy, incidentally, is guarding both exits to the North Sea and is standing sentinel over the six-hundred mile line of the British coast without what can

legitimately be described as a fortress from end to end, as the Germans well know in spite of their lying references to Scarborough, Yarmouth, Margate, and other undefended towns as fortresses. No measures, however complete, could prevent an enemy, with well-defended bases so close to our shores, from darting out in the darkness of a winter night from time to time and making an attack at one point or another. Each attempt would be accompanied by risk, but previous reconnaissance by aircraft would reduce the risk to a minimum. On the particular night chosen it was decided to break into the Channel, steaming through the Straits of Dover and firing at everything in the way. The exploit somewhat resembled the wild career of a madman with a revolver down Piccadilly in the dead of night when the lights are practically extinguished. The British patrol ships, surrounded by other vessels under the White or Red Ensign, had to exercise the greatest care in firing, lest they should hit a friend. Aided by the darkness and assisted by the element of surprise the German force passed, at a speed of about thirty knots, up the Channel for a short distance—not more than twenty miles—and then steamed back, eventually being driven to their lair by superior British forces. The attempt to cut our communications with the Continent failed. The transport of troops continued as before; and later the *Swift* and *Broke* avenged what was only an unfortunate incident.

Such occurrences—"tip and run" excursions—have never had any importance except in so far as they suggest that the enemy has the power to adopt a raiding policy. Lord French, using the word "invasion," it may be presumed, to indicate a raid, has remarked that: "Invasion

is no impossibility ; it may not be probable, but it is perfectly possible, and it is what we do not expect that always happens in war." The Field-Marshal, who commanded the British Army in France during the most critical period of the war, has done fine service to his country by organizing what may be described as the new Volunteers. They constitute a valuable reserve to be respected by us and by the Germans. While it would be a mistake to let either the British people or the German authorities imagine that this country has been left without trained troops for defence against raids—for that is not the case—it must be apparent that the development of the Volunteer Force, fully equipped and armed and well trained, offers an additional guarantee of safety. These citizen soldiers constitute a Citizen Army with high military potentialities, numbering not far short of 300,000 rifles. Lord French, on taking up his appointment as Commander-in-Chief of the Home Forces, placed before these citizen soldiers a high ideal of patriotism. "Understand," he remarked, "that we must send our last available man of military age to the Front, and therefore by the work you are doing the authorities will be able to accomplish that object." If Lord French had not faith in the Fleet, he could not speak in those terms. If the British people had not learnt the value of sea-power, his words would occasion uneasiness. After troubled years of war we have at last realized by experience the supreme rôle of the Fleet ; but let there be no mistake—the Navy has given, and gives to-day, no guarantee against raids on our shores.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SUBMARINE : ITS MENACE AND ACHIEVEMENT

OPERATIONS at sea in the early days of the war were mainly remarkable by reason of the successes achieved by submarines. Those vessels, employed for the first time in actual hostilities, robbed the British Fleet of the cruisers *Pathfinder*, *Cressy*, *Hogue*, *Aboukir*, *Hawke*, and *Hermes*, and the gunboat *Niger*; the German Fleet lost the cruiser *Hela* and a destroyer; while the Russian Navy was the weaker by an armoured cruiser, the *Pallada*. Submarines thus destroyed eight cruisers, a gunboat, and a destroyer at the very outset. These events led to many enquiries. Must we, it was asked, conclude that the development of the submarine has already sounded the death-knell of battleship, cruiser, and destroyer? Are we compelled to look forward to a future when the defence of our world maritime interests will be confided to craft resembling in their general characteristics the submarine? Does this revolution point the way to an appreciable reduction in our naval expenditure, since whereas a Dreadnought may cost as much as £3,000,000 and requires nearly 1000 officers and men, a submarine can be constructed for a sum of £200,000 or so, and her crew numbers only about thirty?

By a coincidence the opening of the war was preceded by a lively controversy as to the future of the submarine.

Admiral Sir Percy Scott, in a letter dated Dec. 15th, 1913, which was not published in the *Times* until the following June, claimed for under-water craft the primacy of the seas. This officer's declaration was all the more notable because he had gained world-wide fame as a gunnery officer, and was responsible for a revolution in gunnery methods. He boldly asserted that the introduction of vessels that travel under the water at will had, in his opinion, entirely done away with the utility of the ships that travel always on the surface of the water. Proceeding to develop his argument, Sir Percy Scott examined the functions of a vessel of war. He declared that they were as follows :—

Defensively—

- (1) To attack ships that come to bombard our ports.
- (2) To attack ships that come to blockade us.
- (3) To attack ships convoying a landing party.
- (4) To attack an enemy's fleet.
- (5) To attack ships interfering with our commerce.

Offensively—

- (1) To bombard an enemy's ports.
- (2) To blockade an enemy.
- (3) To convoy a landing party.
- (4) To attack an enemy's fleet.
- (5) To attack an enemy's commerce.

The Admiral then examined the influence of the submarine on the battleship and cruiser :—

“ The submarine renders 1, 2, and 3 impossible, as no man-of-war will dare to come even within sight of a coast that is adequately protected by submarines ; therefore, the functions of a battleship as regards 1, 2, and 3, both defensively and offensively, have disappeared.



“ The fourth function of a battleship is to attack an enemy’s fleet, but there will be no fleet to attack, as it will not be safe for a fleet to put to sea. This has been demonstrated in all recent manœuvres, both at home and abroad, where submarines have been employed, and the demonstration should have made us realize that, now that submarines have come in, battleships are of no use either for defensive or offensive purposes, and, consequently, building any more in 1914 will be a misuse of money subscribed by the citizens for the defence of the Empire.

“ As regards the protection of our commerce on the high seas, we must examine who can interfere with it.

“ Turkey, Greece, Austria, and Italy must pass through the narrow Straits of Gibraltar to get at our commerce.

“ Cyprus, Malta, and Gibraltar, well-equipped with aeroplanes to observe the enemy’s movements, and submarines to attack him, would make egress from the Mediterranean very difficult.

“ Spain and Portugal have ports open to the Atlantic, and could interfere with our commerce, but war with those countries seems very improbable, and they are not very far from Gibraltar.

“ France from Brest could harass our commerce, but if homeward-bound ships gave that port a wide berth and signalled by wireless if they were attacked, fast cruisers and submarines from Plymouth could be very soon on the spot.

“ Russia and Germany are very badly placed for interfering with our commerce : to get to the Atlantic, they must either run the gauntlet of the Channel, or pass to the north of Scotland, and even if they get out they have nowhere to coal.

“ America could attack our commerce, but she would have a long way to come.

“ If by submarines we close egress from the North Sea and Mediterranean, it is difficult to see how our commerce can be much interfered with.

“ It has been suggested to me that submarines and aeroplanes could not stop egress from the Mediterranean ; that a fleet would steam through at night. With aeroplanes that would report the approach of a fleet, and thirty or forty sub-

marines in the narrow Strait of Gibraltar, trying to pass through them at night would be a very risky operation.

“Submarines and aeroplanes have entirely revolutionized naval warfare ; no fleet can hide itself from the aeroplane eye, and the submarine can deliver a deadly attack even in broad daylight.”

In this declaration Sir Percy Scott threw down the glove to the champions of the battleship and the cruiser. “I can see,” he stated, “no use for a battleship and very little chance of employment for a fast cruiser.” In other words, this distinguished officer, who had devoted his active career to the study of the gun, expressed his conviction that the under-water vessel carrying the torpedo was supreme. It was his opinion that the Navy would undergo a complete change : “Naval officers will no longer live on the sea but either above it or under it, and the strain on their systems and nerves will be so great that a very lengthy period of service will not be advisable ; it will be a Navy of youth, for we shall require nothing but boldness and daring.” This was the picture which this officer drew of the Navy of the future, and he proceeded to visualize the conditions which would exist when the peace was broken.

“In war-time the scouting aeroplanes will always be high above on the look-out, and the submarine in constant readiness, as are the engines at a fire-station. If an enemy is sighted the gong sounds and the leash of a flotilla of submarines will be slipped. Whether it be night or day, fine or rough, they must go out to search for their quarry : if they find her, she is doomed, and they give no quarter ; they cannot board her and take her as a prize, as in the olden days ; they only wait till she sinks, then return home without even knowing the number of human beings that they have sent to the bottom of the ocean.

“ Will any battleship expose herself to such a dead certainty of destruction ? I say, No.

“ Not only is the open sea unsafe ; a battleship is not immune from attack even in a closed harbour, for the so-called protecting boom at the entrance can easily be blown up. With a flotilla of submarines commanded by dashing young officers, of whom we have plenty, I would undertake to get through any boom into any harbour, and sink or materially damage all the ships in that harbour.

“ If a battleship is not safe either on the high seas or in harbour, what is the use of a battleship ?

“ It has been argued to me that if a Foreign Power destroys our submarines we are at the mercy of his Dreadnoughts. There can be no doubt about the accuracy of this statement ; but submarines are difficult to destroy, because it is difficult to attack what you cannot see. A Power which sends out ships to look for and destroy submarines will be courting disaster ; the submarine when in the water must be kept away from, not looked for.

“ Submarines will be hauled up on land, with arrangements for instantly launching them when required ; they can only be attacked by airships dropping bombs on them.

“ What we require is an enormous fleet of submarines, airships, and aeroplanes, and a few fast cruisers, provided we can find a place to keep them in safety during war-time.

“ It has been argued to me that our enemy will seize some island in the Atlantic, get some fast cruisers there, with plenty of coal, and from this island prey on our commerce. This is ridiculous : the moment we hear of it we send a flotilla of submarines towed by an Atlantic liner, she drops them just when in sight of the island, and she brings them back to England when they have sunk everything they found at the island.

“ If we go to war with a country that is within the striking distance of submarines, I am of opinion that that country will at once lock up their Dreadnoughts in some safe harbour ; we shall do the same ; their aeroplanes and airships will fly over our country ; they will know exactly where our ships are, and their submarines will come over and destroy anything and everything that they can get at.

“ We shall, of course, do the same ; but an island with many harbours and much shipping is at a great disadvantage, if the enemy has submarines.”

War is a great educator. At that time the number of senior officers of the British Navy who had faith in the submarine could be counted on the fingers of one hand. The view of the majority of admirals and captains probably was that submersible craft were “just marvellous toys, good for circus performances in carefully selected places and in fine weather.” Admiral Lord Beresford, who had recently been in command of the main British Fleet, while not ignoring the possibility of further development, declared that “the submarine could only operate by day and in fair weather, and it was practically useless in misty weather.” After stating that a submarine must come to the surface to see the object it was going to attack, he claimed that the crowning defect of these craft lay in their want of habitability. “If in a week’s peace manœuvres,” he added, “they got to the bottom of the health of officers and men, what was going to happen in time of war?” Lord Sydenham, who for some years was Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence, was of much the same opinion as Lord Beresford. “On the surface, the submarine,” he remarked, “is a most inferior destroyer, slow, supremely vulnerable, and unsuitable for long habitation. When submerged it can be navigated only by the periscope ; . . . in this position it is not wholly invisible, and if caught by a destroyer it would be sent to the bottom.” Lord Sydenham went so far as to state that “on the high seas the chances [of successful attack] will be few, and submarines will require for their existence parent ships.”

The British Admiralty, fortunately, did not share such views, but had pressed on the construction of submarines from year to year. Under the enthusiasm of a body of young officers, great progress had been made in submarine navigation by the time war broke out, and attention had been directed to meeting the menace which these vessels, employed in accordance with the dictates of law and humanity, suggested. For ten years the British Navy had been experimenting with nets, sound signalling apparatus, and other devices. During manœuvres of the British squadrons in home waters in the summer of 1904, a series of most interesting tests were made. In the light of events, the account of the operations published at the time has a fresh interest as an indication that the British naval authorities, contrary to a widespread impression, were not caught unawares when hostilities broke out and the Germans confided their hopes to submarines :—

“ While a torpedo boat attack was in progress, and the undivided attention of the defending force was attracted entirely thereto, the battleships of the enemy quietly dropped picket boats, manned with full crews. These craft are small, light, mobile, and easy to handle, though they can steam at from 16 to 18 knots an hour. Their scope was to destroy the submarines. Each picket boat was equipped with some fine nets of specially fine hard steel. When expanded they stretched to 70 or 100 feet in length, and were fairly broad. Along one side of each net a hawser was threaded. One end of this hawser was attached to a compensating drum on one picket boat, and the other end was fixed to a similar arrangement on a second picket boat. The net thus rigged at once sank down like a thin wall into the water. Owing to the fine, delicate construction of these nets, they can be dragged through the water like a fisherman’s seine by the picket boats at a pace far in excess of that of a submerged travelling submarine.

This curious process of fishing, or trawling, for submarines was eminently successful. Officers on the picket boats attached to one of the nets saw a periscope moving on the surface of the water. They immediately manœuvred their boats so that the steel net was stretched across the submarine's path. The submerged boat continued its progress, unsuspectingly. In a few minutes the officers in the picket boats at either end of the hawser felt a straining, which told them that they had stopped the career of the submarine. Immediately the boats altered course, so as completely to envelop the unfortunate underwater craft in the net. The manœuvre was crowned with absolute success. The submerged craft was completely caught. To accentuate further the predicament of the sailors in the submarine, the hawser carried away the periscope, so that the navigators of the submerged craft were deprived of their sole means of seeing what was happening on the surface, and, consequently, the crew could do nothing but await developments. By some means or other the picket boats contrived to raise the submarine to the surface, and its capture was completed."

When war occurred and the Germans determined to hide away their main fleet and conduct a war of attrition with submarines and mines, the British naval authorities had by them a great deal of information, the result of many patient experiments, as to the best way of countering the German campaign. It is a complete error to imagine that the British authorities were unprepared for the appearance of the submarine, though they had, of course, no prevision that any country would indulge, as Germany did after an interval, in what is termed "sink-at-sight submarine warfare" on commerce, involving wholesale murder and outrage on the high seas.

There is another misconception which should be removed. The Germans, who had talked so loudly, were not the pioneers of the submarine ; French and American

and Italian inventors led the way. In 1901, when the British Admiralty determined to build submarines, they came to the conclusion that the Holland boat was the most perfect type then evolved, and arrangements were made with the American company to construct three experimental craft. They were small—120 tons when submerged—of slow speed, and of limited offensive value, but they contained the germ of an idea which was afterwards to be successfully developed. When the war opened in 1914, the British Admiralty had under construction a large number of big submarines, those of the F class displacing 940 tons on the surface and 1200 tons submerged. Those vessels were reputed to have a speed of 20 knots when travelling awash, and about half that speed when below the surface; their armament consisted of six torpedo tubes and two quick-firing guns. There is no greater fallacy than the belief that the Germans were responsible for the development of the submarine. Until within a few years of the outbreak of war they regarded it almost with indifference. It was only after considerable experience of war that they realized its possibilities.

What has been the experience of war? In one respect at least Sir Percy Scott was right; he foreshadowed the policy of the Germans. Their battle squadrons have been seen in the North Sea very infrequently since hostilities opened. Whether this inactivity has been due to the fact that Germany found herself confronted with an enemy on the West and an enemy on the East, or whether it has been due to a nervous dread of British and Russian submarines, may be a matter of some doubt. Probably both considerations have had their influence in determining enemy action. Germany could not concentrate all her

strength in the North Sea, because it was necessary to mask the Russian Fleet. On the other hand, she could not detach any considerable section of her fleet for duty in the Baltic, because, if it were defeated, she would be left so weak that she could not hope to offer battle in the North Sea, however favourable the strategic conditions might become. There can be no question, on the other hand, that the Germans, who were late converts to the submarine, believed that by the use of these under-water craft and by sowing mines they could wear down the British margin of superiority in the North Sea and weaken the Russian Fleet in the Baltic. In other words, Germany determined to lock up her valuable big ships until her submarines and mines had produced advantageous conditions such as would enable the battle fleet and its cruiser squadrons to come forth with some hope, if not of victory, then of fighting an action at sea on such terms as would leave the British Fleet no longer in a position of supremacy in relation to other great fleets of the world. Germans have always admitted that they would be well satisfied with a result which robbed us of the trident—even though it were not transferred to their own hands.

So far as the German Fleet is concerned, Sir Percy Scott's prophecy has been fulfilled to a considerable extent ; it has remained hidden from view except on the occasion of infrequent dashes beyond its protective mine-fields. On the other hand, have British battleships and cruisers remained during all these months shut up in harbour and exposed to the dangers which Sir Percy Scott foreshadowed ? That has not been the experience of war. What happened to the Grand Fleet when war opened and it disappeared from view behind an impene-



trable screen cannot now be told. Some light has, however, been shed upon the matter by the despatches of October 21st, 1914, and by other announcements made by the Admiralty. Admiral Sir John Jellicoe has stated<sup>1</sup> "that the Germans possessed a great many more oversea submarines than we did—that might not be generally known. They were about equivalent to our strength in regard to destroyers. They were very near equality in regard to light cruisers, and we possessed a very considerable superiority in heavy ships." That considered statement is of importance if we are to visualise the conditions which existed at sea when war was declared. Germany mobilised a force second only in size to our own. Our margin of strength lay in battleships, battle-cruisers and armoured cruisers, and not in light cruisers, destroyers or submarines. And yet the Germans were content to adopt a purely defensive policy, submitting to the whole of the High Seas Fleet being contained, their foreign service cruisers destroyed, their merchant navy captured or driven off the seas, and their colonies seized.

In those circumstances what happened? "Three hours after the outbreak of war, submarines E6 (Lieutenant-Commander Cecil P. Talbot) and E8 (Lieutenant-Commander Francis H. H. Goodhart) proceeded, unaccompanied, to carry out a reconnaissance in the Heligoland Bight. These two vessels returned with useful information, and had the privilege of being the pioneers on a service which is attended by some risks." The offensive war at sea was begun by British submarines—a point of historical interest. Nor is that all. British submarines were the guardians of the original Expeditionary Force when it was crossing the Channel:—

<sup>1</sup> Sheffield, Oct. 24, 1917.

“ During the transportation of the Expeditionary Force the *Lurcher* and *Firedrake*, and all the submarines of the Eighth Submarine Flotilla, occupied positions from which they could have attacked the High Seas Fleet had it emerged to dispute the passage of our transports. This patrol was maintained day and night without relief, until the personnel of our Army had been transported and all chance of effective interference had disappeared.

“ These submarines have since been incessantly employed on the enemy’s coast in the Heligoland Bight and elsewhere, and have obtained much valuable information regarding the composition and movement of his patrols. They have occupied his waters and reconnoitred his anchorage ; and, while so engaged, have been subjected to skilful and well-executed anti-submarine tactics ; hunted for hours at a time by torpedo craft and attacked by gunfire and torpedoes.” <sup>1</sup>

British submarines, of which we possessed a considerable flotilla of various types, supported by a great superiority of above-water vessels, in effect established an effective blockade of the enemy in the earliest stage of the war by penetrating to the very entrance to the Kiel Canal, in which the Germans had hidden their battleships and cruisers. British battleships and cruisers were not, however, content to remain on the defensive. In the fourth week of August no inconsiderable number of big ships—Dreadnoughts and armoured cruisers—took part in the scooping movement in the Bight of Heligoland. They challenged the enemy’s battle fleet, cruiser squadrons, destroyers, and submarines, and the heavy guns mounted in the defences of Heligoland. In this operation five Dreadnought cruisers—the *Lion*, *Invincible*, *Queen Mary*, *Princess Royal*, and *New Zealand*—took part, together with four large armoured cruisers, the *Cressy*,

<sup>1</sup> Despatch of Commodore Sir Roger Keyes, October 17, 1914.

*Euryalus*, *Hogue*, and *Sutlej*, and the vessels forming the Fourth Light Cruiser Squadron, comprising the *Southampton*, *Birmingham*, *Lowestoft*, and *Nottingham*.

We thus have evidence, supported by the naval despatches, that in spite of the menace of the enemy's submarines over a dozen Dreadnoughts and cruisers of the British Fleet, offering targets varying in length from 430 feet to 660 feet, penetrated into the territorial waters of the enemy, where his under-water craft might hope to operate with the greatest success. The operation was carried out in daylight, though there was a mist. Admiral Sir David Beatty has stated that "at 11 a.m. the squadron (of Dreadnought battle-cruisers) was attacked by three submarines. The attack was frustrated by rapid manœuvring." Under a full head of steam these huge ships proceeded to the assistance of the light cruisers and destroyers, which were already heavily engaged. "Our high speed . . . made submarine attack difficult and the smoothness of the sea made their detection comparatively easy." In these circumstances the Dreadnought cruisers, unscathed, entered the fighting area where the British light cruisers and torpedo craft had been for some time heavily engaged, and gave the *coup de grâce* to the enemy's cruisers, besides maiming a number of destroyers, and then withdrew. "At 1.40 p.m.," it is added, "the battle-cruisers turned to the northward, and *Queen Mary* was again attacked by a submarine. The attack was avoided by the use of the helm. *Lowestoft* was also unsuccessfully attacked." This action, the first in this or any other war in which submarines had been engaged, proved innocuous to the many large British ships which were employed, though they offered to the enemy's

under-water craft apparently such easy targets. Each attack failed. The reason is not far to seek. The British ships possessed high speed and their captains used the helm in order to manœuvre rapidly, and thus they eluded the torpedoes aimed at them.

Nor is this the only testimony to prove that the Grand Fleet has not accepted the rôle of inactivity which it was assumed it would have to accept. On September 10th, 1914, the Admiralty announced that "yesterday and today strong and numerous squadrons and flotillas have made a complete sweep of the North Sea up to and into the Heligoland Bight. The German Fleet made no attempt to interfere with our movements, and no German ship of any kind was seen at sea." That statement supplies further evidence of the vigour which the Grand Fleet has exhibited in face of the submarine menace. Such sweeps of the North Sea have been carried out so frequently that the Admiralty has not troubled to record movements which have been made in the ordinary routine of the military blockade imposed on the Germans. On the other hand, the Germans, by their elaborate mine-fields and other expedients, have since made the Bight of Heligoland much less accessible than it was in the summer of 1914, except at great risk.

But it may be contended that the German submarines, nevertheless, achieved considerable success. A number of British cruisers were sunk in the early days of the war. The success of the enemy with submarines was greater than the success of the British vessels, owing to the fact that the enemy kept his larger ships hidden from attack, while British ships had to maintain a constant patrol of the North Sea in order to "contain" the enemy, thus

confining the war to one main strategical theatre and cutting off his commercial communications. The circumstances in which six British cruisers and one Russian vessel, of which mention has been made, were sunk by German submarines will repay examination. The sinking of the light cruiser *Pathfinder* off the East Coast and the *Hermes* in the English Channel were ordinary incidents of war—successes of the submarine due to no fortuitous circumstances, unless it be that the British ships were steaming slowly. One of the survivors of the *Pathfinder* has stated :—

“ About half-past three tea-time was piped, and all the available hands went to their messes. I suppose there were about two hundred men having tea below at the time. I went down to see the meal was going on all right, and after a minute or two went on deck again. I mounted to the top of the hatch about midships on the port side, and was just commencing to speak to Mr. Morrison, gunner, when the chief boatswain's mate shouted, ‘ There's a submarine away there on the starboard quarter.’ Mr. Morrison just saw her periscope, but before I could see it it had either disappeared in the trough of the sea or the vessel had sunk. I believe the torpedo-officer (Lieutenant-Commander E. T. Favell) also saw it, for in an instant he gave the orders to ‘ Full steam ahead starboard,’ and ‘ Full speed astern port,’ and just after a gun was fired. It all occurred in a few seconds, and while I was still standing with Mr. Morrison the ship shook, and there was a rumbling sound from her bottom on the starboard side, just opposite to where we were. At the same time both engines were stopped, and this I found was by the order of Mr. Favell, who, no doubt, saw the torpedo coming.”

The success of the Germans in the attack upon the *Aboukir*, *Hogue*, and *Cressy*, on the one hand, and on the *Hawke* and *Theseus* on the other, and similarly the success-

ful attack on the Russian cruiser *Pallada* were effected by the use of a neutral flag. In each case a merchant vessel, flying the Dutch ensign, acted as decoy and enabled the enemy's submarine to discharge a torpedo at a target which was apparently almost stationary. When the war opened British naval officers can hardly have anticipated that an enemy, which is fighting for the spread of culture, would employ dishonestly the flag of a neutral country in order to get in his blows. That, however, is the stratagem which he used. On the first occasion, according to the statements of survivors, the destroyers, which were acting as the screen of the cruisers, had been driven into port by heavy weather, and were on their way to resume duty when the *Aboukir* noticed a fishing vessel flying the Dutch flag. Immediately afterwards she was struck by a torpedo. Commenting upon this action the Admiralty afterwards announced :—

“ The sinking of the *Aboukir* was, of course, an ordinary hazard of patrolling duty. The *Hogue* and *Cressy*, however, were sunk because they proceeded to the assistance of their consort, and remained with engines stopped endeavouring to save life, thus presenting an easy and certain target to further submarine attacks.

“ The natural promptings of humanity have in this case led to heavy losses which would have been avoided by a strict adherence to military considerations. Modern naval war is presenting us with so many new and strange situations that an error of judgment of this character is pardonable. But it has been necessary to point out for future guidance of His Majesty's ships that the conditions which prevail when one vessel of a squadron is injured in a minefield, or is exposed to submarine attack, are analogous to those which occur in an action, and that the rule of leaving disabled ships to their own resources is applicable, so far, at any rate, as large vessels are concerned. No act of humanity, whether to a friend or foe,

should lead to the neglect of the proper precautions and dispositions of war, and no measures can be taken to save life which prejudice the military situation. Small craft of all kinds should, however, be directed by wireless to close the damaged ship with all speed."

Subsequently the *Theseus* and *Hawke* were approached by the same stratagem. The latter ship was sunk ; the *Theseus*, in view of the danger which threatened her and the warning issued by the Admiralty, steamed away from the area of danger. This incident is a reminder that the submarine has introduced two new horrors into warfare. In the first place, a vessel of this type, having delivered a fatal blow, can render no service to its victims. There is little or no accommodation for survivors. Having discharged a torpedo, it must for its own safety keep out of range of its victim and her consorts. Nor is this all. If the cruiser or battleship which is attacked be accompanied by another cruiser or battleship, the latter, recognizing that speed means safety, must at once run away. That does not apply to all vessels ; destroyers or other small craft ought as a military duty to stand by a large ship which is sinking. They can not only render assistance to the crew, but if the submarine comes to the surface they can open fire upon her, themselves offering an insignificant target and exposing to danger a relatively small number of officers and men.

The submarine, despite the successes achieved during the early phase of the war, has been proved to be neither invincible nor invulnerable as a legitimate engine of war. Whether or not it will ever drive the battleship off the seas is a matter on which naval officers of experience hold diverse views. What the submarine is they know ; what

the submarine may become no one knows. It may be capable of almost indefinite development. Ten years ago the under-water craft which were then passing into the navies of the world were small, fragile, slow, and therefore comparatively ineffective. The submarines of recent construction are large, fairly stoutly built, and on the surface develop a speed superior to that of the battleship which was our pride in the opening years of the present century. The Americans are building a vessel of 1400 tons, with a radius of action of 3000 miles. Even larger submarines than this may be built in the near future. They will be vessels able to operate freely at a great distance from their base. In normal circumstances they will cruise on the surface, but they will be able to submerge at will. It is probable that they will not only have tubes for discharging torpedoes, but will be specially constructed so as to enable them to drop mines. Submarine cruisers of the immediate future will be vessels of great menace. They will combine in some measure the qualities of a surface cruiser with those of the under-water craft with which the war is rendering us only too familiar. They will have guns as well as wireless installations, which will enable them to send and receive intelligence. They will be fitted, as is the German practice, with some form of sound-signal apparatus, the hull of the vessel acting as a drum against which the sound caused by the screws of a big ship will strike, to be caught by a microphone and thus carried to the ears of one of the officers on duty. A vessel of this description, displacing even as much as 4000 or 5000 tons, may be regarded as the probable development of the immediate future, if Edison or some other inventor is able to evolve a light type of



accumulator to provide the current required for running the propellers when submerged. It is possible that the new large sea-going submarine will also use electricity when travelling on the surface instead of some form of oil-fed motor engine.

It may be concluded that when large submarines of the seagoing type have been built the day of the battleship will be over. That, however, does not necessarily follow. War has already shown that speed is the big ship's best defence against submarine attack, and it is impossible to conceive a submersible man-of-war which can approach in rate of travelling the achievements of surface craft. Probably about 20 knots is as much as will ever be obtained in a submarine vessel on active service. We already have in the British Fleet battleships—we call them battle-cruisers—which can steam at over 30 knots, and the limit in these men-of-war has not yet been reached. It may be anticipated that as the submarine increases in offensive powers, and increases also in size, battleship design as well as cruiser design will undergo considerable alteration. Increased attention will be directed to the engine-room installations of surface vessels and their lines, with a view to securing the highest possible speed. Experiments will undoubtedly be carried out in order to render them less liable to sink under torpedo attack. At the same time, it may be that a form of ram specially suited for attack upon submarines will be introduced. If these anticipations are realized, it is possible that the submersible vessel will, after all, prove merely a passing phase in naval warfare, and that surface craft will once more emerge as the undoubted arbiters of command of the sea.

The latest submarines in the German service are larger than most of the German destroyers, and are, in fact, very remarkable vessels. Instead of displacing less than 200 tons, as was the case with the early boats, they have a displacement of a fairly large cruiser. They are very long, and have a considerable beam. Their speed on the surface ranges from 18 to 20 knots, and they carry sufficient fuel to travel 2000 sea miles on the surface without replenishing their oil-tanks, and can travel 100 miles under water without coming to the surface to recharge their electric accumulators. Their speed when submerged is about 12 knots, and they can submerge in from 30 seconds to 2 minutes, remaining under water, if desired, for 48 hours—two complete days. These craft have three or more tubes for the discharge of torpedoes, of which as many as 20 are carried in some U-boats. They can be discharged while the submarine is under water, and travel, kept on their course by the gyroscope, a distance of five miles at a speed of 30 to 40 miles an hour. "All that is necessary is for the submarine to show about 3 inches of periscope, with a diameter of 2 inches, above the surface."<sup>1</sup> The latest type of U-boat mounts two and in some cases three guns, 6 in. guns being carried.

In considering the future influence of the submarine, it should be borne in mind that the conditions under which the crews exist have entirely changed in the past few years, and changed for the better. The boats no longer possess only cramped accommodation and therefore little air. They are large and roomy—as large, in fact, as a modern destroyer ; they are provided with what

<sup>1</sup> Sir John Jellicoe, Sheffield, Oct. 24, 1917.

passes for a deck ; the commanding officer possesses a bridge from which to navigate the vessel when running on the surface, and when submerged the depth can be adjusted so nicely as to leave one or two periscopes, small fish-like eyes, on the surface of the water. These instruments are constructed on the principle of the camera obscura—one is available for the commanding officer when searching for his prey, and the other can be used for navigation purposes. Although it is believed that the periscopes used in different navies resemble each other in general principle, it is by no means certain that the German type is not better than that fitted in the submarines of other countries.

When submerged to a depth of a hundred feet or more even the most modern submarine is blind, for the periscope is then also submerged, but existence has its compensations. The vessel, propelled by electric motors fed from accumulators, is comparatively quiet and well lighted ; there is an ample supply of fresh air ; and the accommodation for the crew is good. The interior of a submarine, when running below the surface, somewhat resembles a section of a " Tube " railway, but the atmosphere is fresher, and the vessel is more brilliantly lighted. The two or more officers can pass the time reading or writing ; while the crew may play cards, turn on the gramophone, or hold an impromptu concert. A submarine is somewhat democratic ; the stricter rules of discipline are relaxed.

What is it like in the interior of a submarine ? A German sailor's account conveys an admirable impression :—

" The sea is calm. Our hull is now completely submerged, and the water is lapping over the deck. Another few feet and

the conning-tower is covered. Only the slim periscope betrays our position to the watchers on the surface. Through the periscope the spires of Kiel some distance away can be discerned. 'Five metres' (16 feet) announces the man at the depth indicator, and, a moment later, 'six metres' (19 feet). Deeper and deeper we sink, and it begins to grow chilly. The steel hull is very sensitive to changes of temperature, and down in the depths it is cold enough. Without delay the electric heater is turned on, and gives forth welcome warmth. Sixty-five feet is the depth now recorded on the dial.

"I learn that we are to engage in torpedo practice at a target towed along the surface by a steam pinnace. In the bow compartment, which usually serves as living and sleeping accommodation, the chairs and tables have been stowed away and the torpedo gunners are busy at the bow tube. A torpedo is taken from its rack, placed in the slings and swung into the breech of the tube. This is a difficult operation considering the weight and length of the torpedo and the narrow space in which the work has to be done, and it is further complicated by the gentle rolling of the boat. But the tube is loaded and the breech swung home. A pump fills the air-chamber at the breech of the tube with compressed air, which is to drive the torpedo out, while the missile itself has already been charged with the compressed air which propels its engines.

"From the conning-tower come repeated orders to the men in charge of the motors, pump, and other appliances. Suddenly the motor stops. 'Stand by!' shouts the man at the voice pipe. For one moment a deadly silence reigns, broken only by the gentle hiss of the oxygen apparatus. Then the motor starts again, this time going full speed astern. We are probably determining the range of the target."

In continuation of this narrative, this German added :—

"What would be happening if this were war? Supposing the enemy's ship had escaped our torpedo and discovered our position by the wash of our screws, which even at some depth

still make a slight disturbance on the surface ; and what if he were pursuing us, ready to drive his ram through our thin plating or to overwhelm us with a storm of bursting shell ?

“ At this moment there is a dull thud from the bows, and the boat quivers slightly. The torpedo has been discharged and is now speeding towards the target at a velocity of forty knots. We shall not know till later whether we have made a hit or a miss.

“ With the firing of the torpedo our exercise is practically over, and preparations are now made to return to the surface. The bilge pumps are set in motion to clear the diving tanks and restore our buoyancy. The horizontal and vertical rudders and the diving planes are readjusted, and we begin to ascend.

“ Very soon a faint green light pervades the interior, and grows stronger. The conning-tower emerges, and an instant later we are on the surface, while the internal-combustion motors come into action and propel us through the water at increased speed. At last comes the welcome order, “ Open hatches ! ” Ours is the first head to be thrust through the opening, and never before had the daylight seemed so welcome. The lungs take in deep draughts of fresh air instead of the ‘ tinned ’ atmosphere we have been breathing since we went below, and which, in spite of the oxygen and purifying apparatus, still leaves much to be desired. The electric lamps are burning dimly and give but a pale light in comparison to the sunshine which now floods the sea. It is good to be alive and under the open sky again.”

In summary, one point should be emphasized before passing to the consideration of the submarine as the weapon of piracy. *After three and a half years of war German submarines have sunk no unit of the battle squadrons of the Grand Fleet.* Whatever successes have been obtained have been at the expense of older and slower vessels acting as detached forces. In their chagrin, the Germans determined to use the submarines they had constructed in a campaign against Allied commerce. The gross inhumanity

which characterized this new piracy is familiar to the world. At length, the American Government intervened, and compelled Germany to give a pledge not to sink ships with passengers on board without warning. That undertaking was observed for less than a year, and, in the meantime, the Germans devoted themselves to the construction of more ships of the submersible type. When convinced that they possessed sufficient submarines to defy the authorities at Washington, the pledge was torn up—another “scrap of paper”—and what was described as “unrestricted U-boat warfare” was resumed.

In human annals there is nothing to compare with the barbarity pursued by German submarines since the beginning of 1917. What happened may be stated in a few words. The German naval authorities have practised the methods of barbarism of the dark ages with all the assistance which the triumphs of physical science in the twentieth century could lend them. They have disregarded the laws of nations, the dictates of humanity, and the rights of neutrals; they have attacked ships bearing supplies to the starving Belgians; they have destroyed hospital ships crowded with wounded and attended by doctors and nurses, protected by the sign of the Red Cross. They have shown mercy neither to defenceless men, unprotected women, nor helpless children; they have treated the flags of neutrals with contumely. One story may be cited as an illustration of the depths of infamy which the Germans have plumbed. When two hundred miles west of the Scilly Isles, the Swedish schooner *Dag* was stopped in the dark early hours of a winter morning. The captain was accompanied by his wife, and there was a crew of eight men. The sub-

marine commander peremptorily demanded the ship's papers, and told the captain that he intended forthwith to sink the vessel. That threat he carried out within a few minutes, not even sufficient time being given for adequate rations to be put in the boat. With callous indifference, this officer of the Kaiser left nine men and a woman to fare as best they could on the wide sea, in a boat which had been damaged while being launched. For four days and three nights the overcrowded boat drifted at the mercy of wind and current until eventually a lightship was sighted. What will be the verdict of history on an incident of this kind, one of many which have occurred? There has never been anything like it before. The death roll of German piracy has already reached about 10,000 ; and it is still rising. Consideration has been shown to none. The campaign has been conducted in accordance with one law only—German "necessity knows no law."

The Germans calculated on producing a reign of terror at sea and frightening sailors. They assumed that their threats and acts would deter seamen from pursuing their avocations. So far as the British Merchant Navy is concerned the policy from the first was a failure ; not a single seaman has refused duty owing to the fear of piracy. An incident which occurred on board a British vessel passing through the war zone illustrates the attitude of British seamen towards submarine piracy. Early one morning a German submarine opened a rapid fire on the ship. Among the passengers was a King's Messenger with important despatches. Without waiting to dress, but picking up a pair of binoculars, he rushed on deck in his pyjamas. He found that shells were falling fast around the vessel and was speculating whether his last moment

was come ; he felt a hand on his arm as, with strained vision, he watched the progress of the contest. Turning round he found a steward standing at his elbow. " Excuse me, sir," said the man, " but your shaving water is getting cold." The world has been moved to admiration by the manner in which the British people have created an army, according to the last Parliamentary vote, now numbering 5,500,000 men, and have developed a vast munition movement. It is a wonderful record, but it may be doubted whether the record of the sea is not more remarkable. In spite of all that Germany has done in contravention of the ordinary decencies of humanity, the Royal Navy has never been short of men and the merchant fleet has been well manned. The sea-going population of the British Isles is larger to-day than at any time in the past. The personnel of the Navy has been nearly trebled ; the training establishments for officers and men are full to overflowing. For every vacancy in the officers' training colleges at Osborne and Dartmouth there are three candidates who come forward with the approval of parents or guardians ; much the same proportion obtains in regard to lower deck ratings. Shipowners have experienced no difficulty in manning their liners and freight vessels. The sea instinct in the British people is stronger to-day than ever before. Perhaps not the least notable development is the extent to which youths from the British Dominions—Newfoundland, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa—have volunteered for service in European waters. The British Navy has become Imperial.

What shall be said of the influence of the German policy of piracy, open and unashamed ? In February, 1917,



Germany instituted something in the nature of a blockade of the British Isles when she determined to resort to intensified submarine warfare. It was declared to be by way of reprisal for the blockade to which she herself had been submitted. But this point may be emphasized. Submarine piracy brought the enemy no relief from the effects of the legitimately enforced British blockade; piracy has, indeed, hastened the process of economic exhaustion, for Germany has only a certain amount of labour and material to employ on land or sea.

The development of a piratical policy by the enemy was not foreseen by the naval authorities of this country or any other country. In the first place, reliance was put on the dictates of humanity and the law of nations; in the second place, the sea-going capacity and military value of the submarine were underestimated. Germany since February, 1917, has used the submarine without restraint because it is the only type of man-of-war which she can trust outside her mine-protected areas, except at increasing risk. When the campaign opened a large number of submarines had been constructed and manned; they were suddenly released on the trade routes in the confident expectation that they would produce a coup, sinking so many merchant ships that within a few weeks this country, humiliated and terrified, would seek peace; Germany knew that without uninterrupted sea communications the Allied armies could not be maintained, and the civil population of these islands and of the Allies could not exist. The following is an analysis of the Admiralty's figures for ten complete months—from February 25 to the beginning of December, 1917:—

## Sunk by Mine or Submarine.

	1600 tons gross or over.	Under 1600 tons gross.	Total sunk.	Unsuccess- fully at- tacked.	Total at- tacked.
Feb. 25.....	16	0	22	16	38
Mar. 4.....	15	8	23	14	37
„ 11.....	12	4	16	12	28
„ 18.....	18	8	26	21	47
„ 25.....	20	7	27	11	38
April 1.....	17	14	31	20	51
Mar. (5 weeks)	82=16.4	41=8.2	123=24.6	78=15.6	20=40.2
April 8.....	17	2	19	13	32
„ 15.....	19	9	28	13	41
„ 22.....	41	15	56	29	85
„ 29.....	39	12	51	29	80
April (4 weeks)	116=29.0	38=9.5	154=38.5	84=21.0	238=59.5
May 6.....	19	22	41	30	71
„ 13.....	17	5	22	15	37
„ 20.....	19	9	28	12	40
„ 27.....	18	2	20	22	42
June 3.....	15	3	18	15	33
May (5 weeks)	88=17.6	41=8.2	129=25.8	94=18.8	223=44.6
June 10.....	24	10	34	20	54
„ 17.....	25	5	30	37	67
„ 24.....	21	6	27	19	46
July 1.....	16	5	21	14	35
June (4 weeks)	86=21.5	26=6.5	112=28.0	90=22.5	202=50.5
July 8.....	13	3	16	16	32
„ 15.....	15	4	19	11	30
„ 22.....	19	3	22	16	38
„ 29.....	21	3	24	12	36
July (4 weeks)	68=17.0	13=3.25	81=20.25	55=13.75	136=34.0
Aug. 5.....	20	3	23	12	35
„ 12.....	15	1	16	9	25
„ 19.....	14	4	18	14	32
„ 26.....	20	5	26	8	34
Sept. 2.....	19	2	21	6	27
Aug. (5 weeks)	88=17.6	16=3.2	104=20.8	49=9.8	153=30.6
Sept. 9.....	11	14	25	10	35
„ 16.....	9	11	20	11	31
„ 23.....	12	12	14	12	26
„ 30.....	10	4	14	11	25
Sept. (4 weeks)	42=10.5	31=7.75	73=18.25	44=11.0	117=29.25

Sunk by Mine or Submarine.

	1600 tons gross or over.	Under 1600 tons gross.	Total sunk.	Unsuccess- fully at- tacked.	Total at- tacked.
Oct. 7.....	13	2	15	4	19
„ 14.....	14	5	19	6	25
„ 21.....	18	8	26	7	33
„ 28.....	13	4	17	4	21
Oct. (4 weeks)	58=14.5	19=4.75	77=19.25	20=5.25	98=24.5
Nov. 4.....	6	3	9	3	12
„ 11.....	1	5	6	5	11
„ 18.....	11	7	18	3	21
„ 24.....	13	7	20	10	30
Dec. 1.....	16	1	17	10	27
Nov. (5 weeks)	47=9.4	23=4.6	70=14.0	31=6.2	101=20.2

That record must be discouraging to the Germans and encouraging to us. The basis upon which the campaign was undertaken was that it would offer to Germany the absolute assurance of an early peace in accordance with her wishes—in short, save her from another winter of warfare. Preparations for the campaign had been made over a period of twelve or fourteen months. The engine-making and shipbuilding resources of Germany had been concentrated on the construction of submarines, and a large training-school had been established for officers and men. Arrangements were made for sending to sea an increasing number of submarines from February onwards. What has happened? It is already evident that piracy has failed when the results are contrasted with German hopes crystallized in February, 1917, in the official declaration—made in a confidential circular to the newspapers throughout the Empire—that submarine piracy offered “the best and only means of a speedy victorious ending of the war.”

The history of warfare reveals that an offensive weapon, however barbarously employed, has never yet been introduced against which a satisfactory defensive was not developed in process of time. The improvement of naval ordnance led to the invention of armour, and for over half a century a fierce contest has been waged for mastery between the offensive and defensive. Within a few years of the introduction of the quickfiring gun of medium calibre, the automobile torpedo made its appearance. The torpedo of to-day has an effective range of 10,000 yards, and, since every type of man-of-war is armed with this auxiliary weapon, it is no longer safe for battleships or cruisers to fight except at long range ; as a battle-gun the 5-inch and 6-inch rapid fire pieces have ceased to be of value. The perfection of the mine seemed at one time likely to change the character of naval warfare and rob ships of their freedom of movement ; but the need created the antidote, and ingenious methods of sweeping and otherwise destroying these deadly menaces to navigation are now available. The Germans devoted time, energy and labour to the production of Zeppelin airships, in the confident anticipation that they could be employed with impunity in bombing the opposing fleets when at anchor in torpedo-proof harbours. The existence of this danger led to a vigorous defensive policy on the part of the Allies, with the result that to-day all their larger ships are provided with anti-aircraft guns. A German airship consequently dare not approach the main bases of the British Fleet. There is no reason to doubt that as the airship has been defeated, so the submarine as an agent of piracy is doomed to failure. It is common knowledge that the British naval authorities

have already developed effective offensive-defensive measures, and that the Germans are paying a heavy toll in submarines destroyed, with all on board. The Allied Powers have armed their merchant ships. The result of these developments has been to place piratical submarines at a disadvantage. The submarine is extremely vulnerable; a chance shot may carry officers and men to eternity. The skin of the hull is thin, and, although the Germans use a certain amount of armour, it is necessarily thin, as the weight which can be carried by these vessels is limited. The effect of arming merchantmen is to drive the submarine below the surface. It must then depend for observation upon its periscopes—two or three in number, as the case may be—and the periscope is an imperfect instrument when employed at sea, and particularly at night time. But the influence of the gun is even more far-reaching. When the submarine is driven below the surface its speed is reduced by nearly one-half, its gun-armament is put out of action, and its torpedoes, of which it carries only a limited number, are discharged under great disadvantages.

Limitations were imposed on the submarine when the arming of merchant ships, with guns and trained gunners to work them, had been completed. It may be confidently anticipated that as a result of the German campaign every passenger ship and freight-carrier in future, even after the close of the war, will be armed. The maritime Powers will never again put their trust in the dictates of humanity, the laws of nations, or The Hague Convention. Experience has shown that they can one and all be torpedoed by a Power which knows no law except its own necessity. This will be no new departure. During the

Napoleonic wars trading vessels frequently went armed, both those of the subjects of belligerents as well as ships of neutral States, and the right and duty of all belligerent merchant ships to defend themselves were recognized by the prize courts of France, England, and the United States. Not only did the ships of belligerent States carry guns for self-defence during hostilities, but vessels carried arms in times of peace, and the continuity of the practice after the close of the Napoleonic wars is to be seen in the fact that the ships of the East India Company went armed certainly down to 1834, and probably till a much later date.<sup>1</sup> Many were the fights in self-defence which these gallant East Indiamen made during the period of the French wars. At a time when the British Fleet was suffering from embarrassment owing to its many and urgent duties, and it was inconvenient, except at the expense of its offensive policy, to provide convoys for merchant vessels, the duty of defending their property was imposed by Act of Parliament on all shipowners. During the later years of the nineteenth century the practice fell into desuetude. The peace at sea was for many years unbroken, and piracy had been put down with a strong hand, largely as the result of the activity of British and American men-of-war. The shipping communities throughout the world concluded that if a war on commerce occurred it would be conducted by cruisers, and against such heavily-armed and well-protected ships no ordinary merchant vessel could hope to make an effective defence. Moreover, cruisers had a marked advantage in speed, and could rapidly overhaul the typical tramp

<sup>1</sup> *Defensively Armed Merchant Ships and Submarine Warfare*, by A. Pearce Higgins. (Stevens & Sons.)

steamer. On the other hand, owing to their high cost and the large number of men required for crews, it was assumed that the number of cruisers which would be employed would be comparatively small; their dependence on a base for coal, food, and other stores suggested that such cruisers as were available would be able to keep the seas only for short periods. The Germans, denying international law, have since pressed into their desperate service the submarine—cheap, rapidly constructed and requiring only small crews. In conducting war on commerce, there are certain customs which have hitherto been universally observed. The commercial ship must be warned to stop; she must be visited and searched in order to make certain that she is liable to capture. Under the naval code of all civilized Powers, a captured ship may be destroyed in exceptional circumstances, but in that case the crew, and any passengers who may be on board, must be removed to “a place of safety.” The Germans have made the exception their rule, and they have callously ignored the humane obligation laid upon them, leaving undefended men, women and children to confront death under heartrending conditions. In the new circumstances which Germany created, shipowners were compelled to revert to the policy of defensive armament, which there is reason to believe will be maintained long after the conclusion of the present war.

Defensive measures will never completely overcome the menace of the submarine. We must look, and we shall not look in vain, for the development of methods enabling the submarine when travelling submerged to be tracked down until the moment arrives when she is compelled by circumstances—lack of air or motive power—

to rise to the surface. The submarine lies under several permanent disadvantages. When travelling on the surface, it is extremely vulnerable to attack by gunfire; when travelling submerged, not only is its vision limited but its speed is slow, owing to the powerful resistance of the water, and its motive power, electricity stored in accumulators, is quickly exhausted. As long ago as 1905 Sir William White, then Director of Naval Construction at the British Admiralty, anticipated the perfection of means of submarine signalling. This confidence was based on the fact that signals under water pass more rapidly than through the air, the relative speeds being 4700 feet per second through the water and 1090 through the air. He regarded hopefully the experiments which were initiated in the United States at the end of last century, as offering increased safety and speed of navigation under circumstances when aerial signals are practically useless,—during fogs or thick weather, when lights cannot be seen, or under atmospheric conditions in which signals cannot be made on certain bearings.

Twenty years ago, Mr. A. J. Mundy, of Boston, in collaboration with Professor Elisha Grey and Mr. J. M. Millet, carried out a series of tests with a view to developing a system of submarine signalling. They met with considerable success. The work which they initiated has since been continued, notably by Professor Reginald A. Fessenden. That scientist has invented an apparatus known as the oscillator, which can either send signals under water or pick up submarine noises; in other words, it can either "talk" or "listen." If, as there is reason to believe, some such apparatus can be developed so as to enable a swift surface ship to detect the movement of a



submarine travelling below the water and follow it until it is forced, by want of air or motive power, to rise to the surface, the problem of suppressing the new piracy will be far on the way to solution.

The experiments of the various inventors have realized to some extent Sir William White's anticipations, as the experiences of coastwise shipping on the Atlantic shores of the United States during the past ten years have proved. The Director of British Naval Construction regarded submarine signalling as capable of wide application. "For ordinary navigation," he remarked, "the apparatus is applicable to warships as to merchant ships; but the special feature which is now receiving attention in all war fleets is the possible adaptation of submarine signalling apparatus as a means of increasing the power of submarines, or the possible provision in ships threatened by submarines of means for detecting their approach. This opens a wide field for investigation, and it is practically certain that the subject will be experimentally studied by experts without delay."

Physical science has made rapid progress since submarine signalling apparatus was adopted for the lightships on the Atlantic coast of the United States, and ship-owners, including the North German Lloyd and the Cunard Companies, adopted it on board their vessels. Mr. H. Christian Berger and Professor Fessenden have effected marked improvements in under water sound signalling. The latter's "oscillator" has been referred to. Shortly before the outbreak of war, in a paper read before the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the Lawrence Scientific Association, in joint session, he described his apparatus. It consists of an electric

mechanism which vibrates a diaphragm with sufficient force and frequency to generate compressional waves of sound in water; conversely a diaphragm when acted upon by such waves and "listening," acts as a sound receiver. During tests which were carried out at the Boston Lightship, it was found that with only 10 per cent of the full power of the oscillator telegraphic signals could be read at a distance of thirty miles, the receiver being as much as a foot away from the ear. The oscillator works with such nicety that it can detect, by submarine echoes, the presence of icebergs, the submerged ice, consisting of seven-eighths of the bulk, reflecting submarine waves. But that is not the end of this line of research. Sir William White had confidence that submarine signaling might prove effective when fitted in men-of-war for detecting the approach of submarines. At that time the apparatus available suffered from many imperfections. Considerable progress has since been made.

Who can doubt that eventually an instrument will be developed which can be fitted in armed patrol ships. These vessels in large numbers will be sent to sea and, well distributed over an area in which submarines are known to be working, they will listen for suspicious sounds. When the noise of the engines or propellers of a submarine is heard, chase will be given and the underwater craft will be hunted down. Confidence in the doom which will eventually overtake the submarine rests in the permanent condition of speed superiority of the surface craft, the noises which a submarine must make when travelling under the surface of the water, and the conviction of scientists that we possess at present only an imperfect model of the type which will be produced.

That apparatus will distinguish between the noises made by the patrol boat as she steams at full speed and the sounds coming from a submarine, and once the "scent" has been picked up the quarry will be followed until at length the submarine, her electric energy exhausted or her air supply consumed, is forced to come to the surface, to be forthwith either destroyed or captured as the commanding officer may determine.

## CHAPTER XI

### “THE FREEDOM OF THE SEAS” : GERMANY’S POLICY

IN reviewing the first year of naval war, Count Reventlow, the intimate missionary of Grand Admiral von Tirpitz, declared that “the past twelve months have demonstrated that the days of absolute British supremacy are at an end.” The Imperial Chancellor, on behalf of the Emperor, has also claimed that Germany is fighting, among other things, for “the freedom of the oceans.” In a recent issue of the North German Lloyd Company’s Year-Book an article appeared with the same burden. It was assumed that sea conditions would undergo, as a result of the war, a “complete transformation”; that an International Prize Court will be established as “a sort of conscience against the British acts of violence”; and that the “theory of *mare liberum* will form a whole programme of further progress in the development of International Law as soon as England’s naval power has been broken down under the German arms, and, so far from being able further to hinder the advance movement of an international law at sea, she will at last become ripe for co-operating in the creation of such a sea law as would redound to the blessing of the entire world.”<sup>1</sup>

In the United States there is also apparently a wide-

<sup>1</sup> *Kölnische Zeitung*.

spread impression among those who are generically known as pacifists, as well as in pro-German and Irish-American circles, that the conditions which have existed during the past hundred years at sea are likely to undergo some modification. President Eliot, of Harvard University, who has been foremost in denouncing German atrocities on land and sea, has contended that the day of sea control by the one Power is past, and has urged that the seas are the property of all nations, and that their free use for commerce should be guaranteed by a joint alliance of the Powers. " A strong, trustworthy, international alliance<sup>1</sup> to preserve the freedom of the seas under all circumstances," he has argued, " would secure for Great Britain and her federated commonwealths everything secured by the burdensome two navies' policy, which now secures the freedom of the seas for British purposes. The same international alliance would secure for Germany the complete freedom of the seas, which in times of peace between Great Britain and Germany she has long enjoyed by favour of Great Britain, but has lost in time of war with the Triple Entente."

Although there may be a tendency on our part to dismiss these suggestions as absurd or Utopian, it is well that the British people should recognize that, though the British Navy has more than fulfilled the hopes which resided in it on the outbreak of war, they are involved already in controversies of a serious, if not critical, character with neutral nations,—delayed, but not yet decided—as to the extent to which British sea-power may legitimately be employed without infringing the freedom of the seas as defined by ancient precedent, regu-

<sup>1</sup> Such as the Treaty guaranteeing the neutrality of Belgium.

lated by the general body of the Law of Nations, and governed by international usage. These controversies will remain dormant while Great Britain and the United States are Allies in the war, but they may be revived after peace. In fact, the British Government is confronted with a situation which takes the mind of an historian back to the opening years of the nineteenth century. We then became parties to a controversy which was concerned with the freedom of the seas, and that controversy led to one of the most deplorable and unnecessary wars in the world's history.

The two principal immediate causes of the war of 1812 were the impressment of seamen (alleged to be deserters from the British service) from American merchant ships upon the high seas to serve in the British Navy, and the interference with the carrying trade of the United States by the naval power of Great Britain. And the result? The Treaty of Ghent, which was signed on December 24th, 1814, left unsettled the main points of dispute. Thus closed one of the tragedies of history, leaving the doctrine of the freedom of the seas practically where it was before hostilities began. After an interval of over a hundred years, we are engaged in war and have again become involved in a controversy as to the interpretation of this ancient doctrine, and associated difficulties connected with the application of international law.

There was a time, as Professor Oppenheim<sup>1</sup> recalls, when there was no such doctrine as that of freedom of the open sea. Antoninus declared that, "being the Emperor of the World, I am consequently the Lord of the Sea," and

<sup>1</sup> *International Law*, vol. i, "Peace," by Professor L. F. L. Oppenheim, Whewell Professor of International Law, Cambridge University.

each successive emperor of the old German Empire claimed to be " king of the ocean." Towards the second half of the middle ages specific claims were made to sovereignty over various parts of the open sea. Thus, " the Republic of Venice was recognized as the Sovereign over the Adriatic Sea, and the Republic of Genoa as the Sovereign of the Ligurian Sea. Portugal claimed sovereignty over the whole of the Indian Ocean and of the Atlantic south of Morocco, Spain over the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico, both Portugal and Spain basing their claims on two Papal Bulls promulgated by Alexander VI in 1493, which divided the new world between these Powers. Sweden and Denmark claimed sovereignty over the Baltic, Great Britain over the Narrow Seas, the North Sea, and the Atlantic from North Cape to Cape Finisterre." Claims of this character were more or less successfully asserted for several hundreds of years. " They were favoured by a number of different circumstances, such as the maintenance of an effective protection against piracy, for instance. And numerous examples can be adduced which show that such claims have more or less been recognized. Thus Frederick III, Emperor of Germany, had in 1478 to ask the permission of Venice for a transportation of corn from Apulia through the Adriatic Sea. Thus Great Britain, in the seventeenth century, compelled foreigners to take out an English licence for fishing in the North Sea ; and when in 1636 the Dutch attempted to fish without such licence, they were attacked and compelled to pay £30,000 as the price for the indulgence. Again, when Philip II of Spain was, in 1554, on his way to marry Queen Mary, the British Admiral, who met him in the ' British Seas,' fired on his ship for flying the Spanish

flag. And the King of Denmark, when returning from a visit to James I in 1606, was forced by a British captain, who met him off the mouth of the Thames, to strike the Danish flag."

Maritime sovereignty, Dr. Oppenheim adds, found expression in maritime ceremonials at least. "Such State as claimed sovereignty over a part of the open sea required foreign vessels navigating on that part to honour its flag as a symbol of recognition of its sovereignty." Even as late as 1805 the Regulations of the British Admiralty contained an order that "when any of His Majesty's ships shall meet with the ships of any foreign Power within His Majesty's seas (which extend to Cape Finisterre), it is expected that the said foreign ships do strike their topsail and take in their flag, in acknowledgment of His Majesty's sovereignty in those seas; and if any do resist, all flag officers and commanders are to use their utmost endeavours to compel them thereto, and not to suffer any dishonour to be done to His Majesty."

Down to a comparatively recent date certain Powers not merely asserted their sovereign rights over specific areas of water, but they levied toll on foreign shipping. The entrance to the Baltic is a case in point. Down to 1857 Denmark refused to permit foreign vessels passage through the two Belts and the Sound without payment of a toll. During preceding centuries the Danish right had not been opposed. Denmark, apart from the commercial and financial advantages which she obtained, had an interest in maintaining the rule, since she, in common with Sweden, was anxious to prevent the Baltic becoming the scene of naval activity on the part of Powers which did not possess territory washed by the Baltic; in



short, Denmark then desired the Baltic to be treated as a *mare clausum*, just as Germany did on the eve of the present war, regarding the presence of British men-of-war in those waters, except with her consent, as an affront to her arrogant claims. But in 1857, when the principle of the open sea<sup>1</sup> had received world-wide recognition, Denmark gave way under the Treaty of Copenhagen, and the Sound dues were abolished, the Danish rights being purchased by the maritime Powers of Europe; and in the same year the United States concluded a similar arrangement with Denmark, paying an indemnity for the future free passage of vessels carrying the American flag.

Another case of recent restrictive claims arose in connection with the Alaskan coast. In 1821 Russia, as the owner of Alaska, prohibited foreign ships approaching the shore, but abandoned her assumed rights a few years later in face of a determined protest on the part of Great Britain and the United States. In 1867 the United States purchased this territory from Russia, the transaction being

<sup>1</sup> "The Open Sea or High Seas is a coherent body of salt water all over the greater part of the globe, with the exception of the maritime belt and the territorial straits, gulfs, and bays, which are parts of the sea, but not parts of the Open Sea. Wherever there is a salt-water sea on the globe, it is part of the Open Sea, provided it is not isolated from, but coherent with, the general body of salt water extending over the globe, and provided that the salt water approach to it is navigable and open to vessels of all nations. The enclosure of a sea by the land of one and the same State does not matter, provided such a navigable connection of salt water as is open to vessels of all nations exists between such sea and the general body of salt water, even if that navigable connection itself be part of the territory of one or more littoral States. Whereas, therefore, the Dead Sea is Turkish and the Aral Sea is Russian territory, the Sea of Marmora is part of the Open Sea, although it is surrounded by Turkish land, and although the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles are Turkish territorial straits, because these are now open to merchantmen of all nations. For the same reason the Black Sea is now part of the Open Sea."—Oppenheim, *International Law*, vol. i, "Peace," p. 321.

followed by the adoption of exclusive regulations with reference to the killing of seals in the Behring Sea, which was so evidently part of the open sea. It was not, however, until 1893 that the matter was settled, the British claim of freedom being upheld as the result of arbitration. Many other illustrations could be quoted, all showing that from time to time in the past most maritime Powers have endeavoured to restrict certain areas of the open sea for the exclusive benefit of their own traders or fishermen. These claims are now things of the past, even Turkey's exclusive rights in the Dardanelles having been abrogated under pressure.

For many years past the doctrine of the freedom of the seas has been universally accepted. The world owes the initiation of this beneficent movement in no small measure to the determined opposition offered by Queen Elizabeth to the claims over the Indian Ocean and Pacific which were advanced by Portugal and Spain. In 1580 the Spanish Ambassador protested against Drake's invasion of the Pacific. The English Queen was willing to sacrifice nothing of her pretensions in the Narrow Seas, but she urged that "all nations could navigate on the Pacific since the use of the sea and the air is common to all, and that no title to the ocean can belong to any nation, since neither nature nor regard for the public use permits any possession of the ocean." There was a fundamental distinction between the Spanish and Portuguese claims, which were exclusive and restrictive, and those on which Queen Elizabeth insisted, which were mainly ceremonial. "For England had never pushed her claim so far as to attempt the prohibition of free navigation on the so-called British seas," whereas Spain and Portugal, after

the discovery of America, attempted " to keep foreign vessels altogether out of the seas over which they claimed sovereignty."

The setting up of the doctrine of the freedom of the seas was not intended to culminate in anarchy on the seas, although for a long period piracy and brigandage interfered with free navigation until, mainly owing to the action of the British Fleet, they were put down. The doctrine stipulated that on the open sea, as defined by Professor Oppenheim, no one State, but all the States of the world share in the responsibility of maintaining order. " If the law of nations were to content itself with the rule which excludes the open sea from possible State property, the consequence would be a condition of lawlessness and anarchy on the open sea. To obviate such lawlessness customary international law contains some rules which guarantee a certain legal order on the open sea in spite of the fact that it is not the territory of any State."

All the nations of the world give their adhesion to certain specific regulations which are of general application, and these regulations Dr. Oppenheim has defined in succinct language: First, that every State which has a maritime flag must lay down rules according to which vessels can claim to sail under its flag, and must furnish such vessels with some official voucher authorizing them to make use of its flag; secondly, that every State has a right to punish all such foreign vessels as sail under its flag without being authorized to do so; thirdly, that all vessels with their persons and goods are, whilst on the open sea, considered under the sway of the flag State; fourthly, that every State has a right to punish piracy on the open sea, even if committed by foreigners, and that,

with a view to the extinction of piracy, men-of-war of all nations can require all suspect vessels to show their flag.

These laws of nations are supplemented by the municipal regulations of individual States, which bear a close resemblance, and, in addition, there is a body of international law which governs the conduct of belligerents and neutrals in time of war. It is with reference to the latter that controversy has arisen owing to the action of the British and German Navies.

In a Note to the German Government in the early days of the war, President Wilson remarked that "the Government of the United States and the Imperial German Government . . . are both contending for the freedom of the seas." That statement that the United States and Germany "are both contending for the freedom of the seas" was open to misconstruction. Germany never has been the champion of this principle in the sense that we, on the one hand, and the Americans, on the other, have supported it. Her naval record is, in fact, opposed to any such theory. She has aspired to a dominion over the world's seas as the foundation of a Greater Germany and a world domination. In the early years of his reign the German Emperor declared: "I will never rest until I have raised my Navy to a position similar to that occupied by my Army." On another occasion he remarked: "Our future lies on the water." He embodied his ultimate ambition in the phrase: "The trident must be in our fist"; and he even had the arrogance, in a famous telegram, to describe himself as "The Admiral of the Atlantic." The basis of the German Navy Act of 1900 was the intention that the German Fleet

should become a " mailed fist," not merely in northern waters, but in every ocean of the world. It was announced that " to protect Germany's sea trade and colonies in the existing circumstances there is only one means—Germany must have a battle fleet so strong that even for the adversary with the greatest sea-power a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil his position in the world." Secondly, great importance was attached to the creation of foreign service fleets, " the representatives of the German defence forces " on which " the task often falls . . . of gathering in the fruit which the maritime potency created for the Empire by the Home Battle Fleet has permitted to ripen." It was the ambition of the German Emperor and his advisers to dominate every sea of the world. The foreign service ships, which were to have included eight Dreadnoughts, were to act as the advance guards of the Navy concentrated in the Baltic or the North Sea, and consisting of 53 Dreadnoughts, supported by 30 cruisers, 144 torpedo-boat destroyers, and 72 submarines. Germany aspired to a Navy larger than any State had ever possessed in the past, and in organizing that Navy she recognized that the seas were all one and that the power represented in normal conditions in northern waters would give insistent potency to her diplomacy in every quarter of the globe. To Germany the freedom of the seas meant domination by her Navy to the exclusion of the rights of others. The naval ambitions of our enemy of to-day are to be traced in official and unofficial publications, and they find their expression to-day in the denial of the dictates of humanity by the policy of submarine piracy.

Since the war opened enemy agents in neutral countries

have endeavoured to prejudice observers by conjuring up an entirely false picture of "British navalism" as though it were in any way comparable to "Prussian militarism." It is not for us to boast of the beneficent influence which British sea-power has exercised throughout the world during past centuries. We possess, fortunately, an impartial witness in the late Admiral Mahan, who, a few years ago, contributed an article to the *Scientific American*, in which he reviewed the recent development of the policy of the United States, and then passed on to general considerations which are our immediate interest :—

"Why do English innate political conceptions of popular representative government, of the balance of law and liberty, prevail in North America from the Arctic Circle to the Gulf of Mexico, from the Atlantic to the Pacific? Because the command of the sea at the decisive era belonged to Great Britain.

"In India and Egypt administrative efficiency has taken the place of a welter of tyranny, feudal struggle, and bloodshed, achieving thereby the comparative welfare of the once harried populations. What underlies this administrative efficiency? The British Navy, assuring in the first instance British control instead of French and thereafter communication with the home country, whence the local power, without which administration everywhere is futile.

"What, at the moment the Monroe Doctrine was proclaimed, insured beyond peradventure the immunity from foreign oppression of the Spanish-American colonies in their struggle for independence? The command of the sea by Great Britain, backed by the feeble navy but imposing strategic position of the United States, with her swarm of potential commerce-destroyers, which a decade before had harassed the trade of even the mistress of the seas."

If British sea-power has, as we are told, conferred these blessings upon the world, the benefits which it has secured

to us in these islands—and may it not also be added to Europe generally?—are even more conspicuous. This particular thesis is one the importance of which is only too frequently overlooked. The influence of sea-power upon a people left a deep impression upon German students of world history and development when they first began to interpret history in the terms of *Weltpolitik*. Many years ago Friedrich List reminded his fellow-countrymen that " a nation without navigation is a bird without wings, a fish without fins, a toothless lion, a stag on crutches, a knight with a wooden sword, a helot and slave among mankind." Another German writer—Ratzel—declared that " out of the infinite horizon there grows in the mind and character of seafaring people a strong tendency towards boldness, fortitude, and long-sightedness. Seafaring nations have materially contributed to the enlargement and heightening of the political standard. To them narrow territorial politics appear but short-sighted policy. The wide open sea serves to enlarge the views of both merchants and statesmen. The sea alone can produce truly great Powers." The people of the British Isles owe all that they have, and are, to their association with the sea. The Empire as we know it to-day is the fruit of sea-power. Our political institutions represent among us the freedom of the seas. It is impossible to exaggerate the influence which sea-power has exercised on our relations with the outside world.

Englishmen, using the term in its broadest sense, have never adequately appreciated the influence which they have had on the course of history during the past three hundred years, because of their association with the sea.

In virtue of its area the United Kingdom should rank with, but after, Norway. It is about half the size of the Dual Monarchy, smaller by nearly 74,000 square miles than Spain, and exceeded in size by Sweden by over 50,000 square miles. It is a little more than one-eighth the size of Turkey, and the United States is nearly thirty times as large. The United Kingdom is, and has always been, regarded by one or other of the European Powers antagonized against it for the moment as a pretentious absurdity. Why, it has frequently been asked, should the people inhabiting so small a territory exercise sway over nearly one-quarter of the earth's surface?

It has been said that the British Empire was created in absence of mind. In a sense that is true, but only in the sense that the average healthy man eats in absence of mind. It is natural to him to sit down periodically to his meals; and from the period when the English people, in the Elizabethan period, realized the close dependence of their future on the seas, they struck outward, now in this direction and now in that, without any intention of founding a world-empire, but merely because as sailors they required greater freedom of movement. As an inevitable consequence of this mode of expansion, this search for greater freedom, they have planted throughout the British Dominions and dependencies those free institutions, the secret of which they drew from the sea. As Mr. Balfour has remarked, "When universal history comes to be written, it will be recognized that in the development of free institutions, and the civilization which depends upon free institutions, England has not merely set an example at home by her political action within her own limits, not only shown an example of what con-



stitutional freedom is in those great dominions which are the glory and the security and the greatness of the Empire, but has ministered to and protected that freedom, and the freedom of all the world, by the fact that she possessed, and prevented great military Powers from possessing, that dominance at sea which in their hands would have been, and could have been, only an instrument of international tyranny." We are what we are because we have the sea instinct in our blood, and for that reason we are formidable as a Great Power, though in normal times we possess one of the smallest armies in the world.

Which of all the peoples of the world saved Europe a century ago? An impartial observer and an alien, though a friendly alien, has stated that "Nelson's storm-tossed ships, on which the Grand Army never looked, stood between it and the Empire of the World." What other people, encompassed by the sea and assured of security against attack so long as they maintained their sea defences, would have sent an army into the Peninsula and have fought the battle of European freedom on the field of Waterloo? What other people, having won a limited command of the sea on August 3rd, 1914, would, within three days, have begun sending forth their sons across the Channel to fight on the battlefields of France? No such course was adopted forty-eight years ago. Prussia had then defeated Denmark and Austria successively, and threatened to secure the domination of the Continent; and yet the British people stood aside, became mere spectators of events, as the Prussian Army surged across the frontier into France and eventually besieged Paris, the Emperor of the new and united

German Empire receiving his Imperial crown within the precincts of the Palace of Versailles.

What is the explanation of the contrast offered by the events of 1870 and those of 1914? It is to be found in the Navy Estimates of the former period. The British people had for the moment lost the sea instinct; it had been overlaid. The Navy was neglected; it was not realized that on sea command our all depended. The political eye was focussed on the United Kingdom. The British people were content to keep free from the current of the world's history and rather hoped that their Colonies would, in due course, drop off the mother stem like over-ripe fruit, thus removing a series of embarrassing burdens. If at any period of our history we were shopkeepers with petty ideals and clouded vision, that was our state when the Franco-Prussian War broke out. We dared not to hazard our prosperity and our comfort, although clear-sighted contemporary observers already realized that the seeds were then being sown of a warlike upheaval which would convulse Europe and place the world in the crucible.

When the crisis came in August, 1914, we had regained possession of our sea instinct. We were able to see beneath the mere appearances of contemporary happenings and to realize that our fortunes, as well as those of Belgium, France, and Russia, and the cause of civilization, were involved in the coming struggle. The First Lord of the Admiralty (Mr. Winston Churchill) used no words of exaggeration when he stated that "you might search the records of history in vain to find a more critical decision taken by any governors of men so far as the future of humanity was concerned. It was a critical moment in civilization, and the decision taken by the Government

of this country at that time, in my judgment, saved civilization." We proved when the crisis came in the summer of 1914 that we were no unworthy descendants of " the immemorial champions of freedom."

The die having been cast, what other country, enjoying a sense of complete, if only immediate, safety, having the ability to command the world's seas, and possessing only a small army for Imperial purposes, would have determined to call on its manhood to help wage battle across the Channel, where it never hoped to possess a square mile of territory? But that is not the only cause of pride. What other nation, embarked on so splendid an adventure in the cause of civilization, and realizing that it would test to the uttermost its manhood, its financial strength and industrial powers, would have stretched out its long arm to the Gallipoli Peninsula? A people who did not possess the sea instinct might well have been content to remain neutral, or at most to command the ocean communications of the world in the interests of the Allies, and profess itself unable to lend military assistance. Viewing the situation broadly and without far-sight, we are hardly more concerned with the issue of the struggle between the armies on the Continent than Japan and the United States, and yet our casualties in successive battles already represent many times the strength of our original Expeditionary Force. The sea instinct and all that it connotes led us to confront the Germans on the soil of Belgium and France, and the same instinct suggested the expeditions to the Dardanelles, Mesopotamia, and Palestine. There is no nation in the world which so persistently depreciates its own efforts. On the other hand, there is no nation which makes such colossal efforts. We have been told over and over again

that we are not a military people. In truth we are probably the greatest military people, because we possess strategic ideas which are wide as the sea and deep as the sea ; above all, because we are a seafaring people, we have capacity for improvization for the purposes of war which are unparalleled elsewhere. In virtue of the freedom of the seas and of our ability to command the seas, we are what we are and we have done what we have done.

But when this world-war opened we were confronted once more with the century-old controversy as to our right to command the sea in time of war against our enemies. A widespread and insidious effort was made by German agents to undermine the influence which we exercised in virtue of our fleet. It was not, let it be noted, supreme against the world, but supreme against any probable combination of foes. In other words, as our history has illustrated, we exercise sea command, even in war-time, only so long as we exercise it in accordance with the general sense of justice entertained by neutral and friendly Powers. The German campaign against what is described as " British navalism " is peculiarly dangerous, because it makes an appeal to sentiment and passivism. We have an illustration of this tendency in the speech delivered on January 9th, 1915, at the Republican Club, New York, by Herr Dernburg. He told his hearers :—

" The whole fight, and all the fight, is on one side for the absolute dominion of the seven seas : on the other side for a free sea—the traditional *mare liberum*. A free sea will mean the cessation of the danger of war and the stopping of world wars. The sea should be free to all. It belongs to no nation in particular—neither to the British nor to the Germans, nor to the Americans. The rights of nations cease with the territorial line of three miles from low tide. Any domination

exercised beyond that line is a breach and an infringement of the rights of others.

“ To prevent wars in future we must establish that the five seas shall be plied exclusively by the merchant ships of all nations. Within their territory people have the right to take such measures as they deem necessary for their defence, but the sending of troops and war machines into the territory of others, or into neutralized parts of the world, must be declared a *casus belli*. The other alternative would be to forbid the high seas to the men-of-war of any nation whatsoever, to relegate them to territorial waters, and to permit only such small cruisers as are necessary to avoid privateering.<sup>1</sup> If that be done, the world as divided now would come to permanent peace.”<sup>2</sup>

The attraction which this proposal has exercised, at any rate in the United States, is to be seen in the suggestion made by President Eliot, which has already been quoted.

It will be noted that Herr Dernberg's ideas are diametrically opposed to those expressed by the German Emperor when he was promoting the naval movement in Germany. Then Germany was determined that the trident should be in her hands ; now, since, in spite of all her efforts, she has failed in her ambition, it is demanded that the trident shall be abolished. “ When the devil was sick, the devil a saint would be.” What would be the consequence of such action as the German Emperor and his agents recommend ? Presuming that President Eliot's benevolent idea of a “ freedom of the sea ” alliance could be carried out, what guarantee would there be that any one of the signatory Powers would not secretly construct battleships or cruisers or submarines with a range action of 3000 to 6000 miles ? The present war has shown that

<sup>1</sup> Submarine cruisers would, presumably, be permitted

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, July 11, 1915.

with precautions, large numbers of submarines can be constructed without the fact coming to the knowledge of other nations. In the conditions which President Eliot regards as ideal, a very small naval effort on the part of one aggressive Power would be sufficient to secure command of the seas, since no other Power, actuated by honest intentions, would possess the ability to defend its sea-borne interests. The obvious result of such an alliance, if effective, would be a discontinuance of the construction of warships and the organization and training of personnel by all honest Powers of the world. There would be no navies worthy of the name, for the main purpose for which navies exist would have been abolished. And once navies had been disestablished, they could not be rapidly called into being again. The upshot would be that the command of the sea would pass automatically to the nation possessing the greatest ability for organization in secrecy. Can there be any doubt, in this fourth year of war on sea and on land, which country would possess the advantage of initiative in such conditions? President Eliot's conception of the freedom of the seas would provide the ideal conditions in which Germany would be able to secure the dominion of the world.

Those reflections do not exhaust the considerations which such an interpretation of the freedom of the seas suggests. There is a widespread impression that a country which is surrounded by the seas is *ipso facto* provided with an adequate defence. Water is not a defence, but a menace, in the absence of the military power which it can carry under this or that flag. Owing to the development of steam, invasion by sea is, in the absence of naval power, easier than invasion by land.

During the present war there is no reason why, had it not been for the British Fleet, Great Britain should not have shared the fate of Belgium. It would have been easier for Germany, with her vast mercantile marine, to embark troops at her North Sea ports and convey them across uncommanded waters to specified points on the British coast than it was for her to batter down the fortifications that had been erected for the defence of Belgian neutrality. An army can travel by sea, in the absence of opposing naval force, more easily than it can travel by land, and far more swiftly. An army on land can move, with all its services and over a long distance, only a few miles in twenty-four hours ; the army of a country possessing a large mercantile marine, such as Germany, can travel in the same period from two to three hundred miles.

Germany has everything to gain by recommending to the world the new doctrine of the freedom of the seas, because she is to-day—and hopes to continue to be to-morrow—the greatest of all military Powers. So long as the existing conditions at sea continue her army is imprisoned ; it cannot move beyond the confines of the Continent which, for decades past, she has found too narrow for her ambitions. If once she could prevail upon the peoples of the world to agree to her conception of the " freedom of the seas," as expounded by Herr Dernburg and Dr. Bethmann-Hollweg, or even the alternative scheme advocated by President Eliot, then, indeed, world domination would no longer be merely an idle dream. No " storm-tossed ships " would then stand between her and the attainment of " the Empire of the World." The master Power on land would automatically become mistress on the sea.

But if we dismiss, as we may dismiss, the German suggestion of the freedom of the seas, we do well to honour by our acts at sea the broadly defined doctrine which has received endorsement by the great civilized maritime nations of the world. It is to our permanent interest to do nothing in limitation of the influence of that doctrine, because the very existence of the Empire depends on its perpetuation. We are to-day fighting not only in defence of British interests, but in defence of the world's freedom, and it would ill become us to offend against the real cause of freedom at sea. To-morrow we may be in a neutral position while war is in progress between other Powers. The precedents which we establish to-day may be quoted against us to our detriment. We offer for attack a vast target—our oversea dominions, half the mercantile shipping of the world, and an ocean-borne commerce which is the very life-blood of the Empire. Lord Stowell, on one occasion, made a declaration of wide implication. "In forming . . . judgment," he said, "I trust that it has not escaped my anxious recollection for one moment what it is that the duty of my station calls for from me; namely, to consider myself as stationed here, not to deliver occasional and shifting opinions to serve present purposes of particular national interest, but to administer with indifference that justice which the law of nations holds out without distinction to independent States, some happening to be neutral and some to be belligerent. The seat of judicial authority is, indeed, locally here, in the belligerent country, according to the known law and practice of nations, but the law itself has no locality. It is the duty of the person who sits here to determine this question exactly as he would determine



the same question if sitting at Stockholm ; to assert no pretensions on the part of Great Britain which he would not allow to Sweden in the same circumstances, and to impose no duties on Sweden, as a neutral country, which he would not admit to belong to Great Britain in the same character."

Those words of one of the greatest authorities on prize law embody the policy of honesty. Let us use our sea-power to the full extent that is permitted by the generally accepted interpretation of international law as adapted to the conditions which confront us. But at the same time, even at some temporary inconvenience, let us be on our guard against committing acts even savouring of illegality or injustice. A temporary advantage may prove a permanent embarrassment. We are not less the champions of the freedom of the seas than we are the immemorial champions of freedom on land. If the war should close leaving on the minds of neutral observers an impression that " British navalism " is in any sense the equivalent at sea of " Prussian militarism," grave injury will have been inflicted on the future of the British Empire, and the war will leave as a legacy seeds which may produce a renewed and fierce, and it may be, to us, disastrous competition for naval power. Our claims to naval superiority at sea rest on the boast that we are, in our normal state, an unarmed and peaceful people, possessing in proportion to our wealth and position in the world the smallest army of any of the Great Powers. We can never make a war of aggression, because our military force is necessarily of slow development. As Mr. Balfour once observed, " Without any fleet at all, Germany would remain the greatest Power in Europe ;

it is our case that without a fleet the British Empire could not exist."

It would be a calamity if, by any act, we gave the world the impression that our naval power resembled in its expression and results Germany's military power, or that we intended to imitate Germany's policy, when she hoped to be supreme on sea as well as on land. Our case at the judgment-seat of history rests on the fact that our fleet is the life-line of a maritime Empire, that it defends the freedom of the seas for us and for all law-abiding Powers, and that behind it stands no great standing Army to which it can give safe and rapid transport on any errand of aggression.

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#### TRAFALGAR TO WATERLOO.

"Amid all the pomp and circumstance of the war which for ten years to come desolated the continent, amid all the tramping to and fro over Europe of the French armies and their auxiliary legions, there went on unceasingly that noiseless pressure upon the vitals of France, that compulsion, whose silence, when once noted, becomes to the observer the most striking and awful mark of the working of Sea Power." (*Mahan*).

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[The author has, with the approval of the Editor of the "Fortnightly Review," used in the preparation of this book some articles which have already appeared in that publication.]

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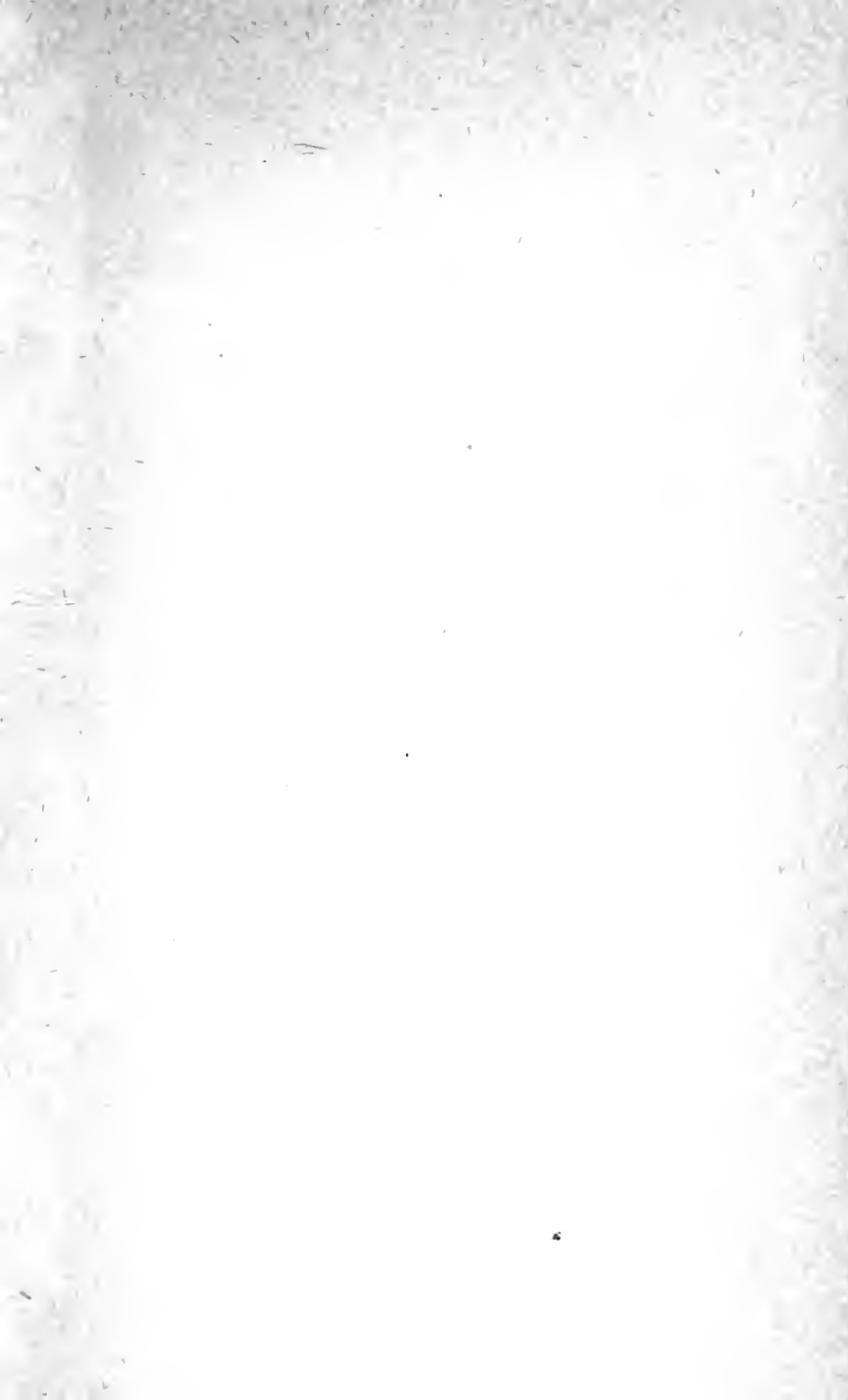
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