There could be only one other test of the justice of my contentions, and that is the test of war ; which the country (by better luck than it deserved) narrowly escaped in the summer of 1911.

It should not be supposed that the evil years of criminal economy which depleted the *personnel* of the Fleet can be remedied in a moment by joining thousands of men. Five years are required to train a really efficient seaman, and while he is being trained he is necessarily a weak element in a fighting Service. For this reason, the requirements of the Fleet should be estimated long beforehand, so that only a small proportion of new entries should be normally under training. (They were so estimated in 1904 ; and the estimate, as I have said, was secretly cancelled.)

The result, therefore, of prolonged neglect, followed by a sudden burst of recruiting, is to flood the Navy with untrained and half-trained men, thereby greatly enlarging the element of weakness. All depends on officers and men : the rest—as the poet has said—is ironmongery.

It is due to the action of the authorities during the period 1904 to 1909, that for years

to come the efficiency of the Fleet will be gravely impaired. During the whole of the period, 1904 to 1909, Parliament was continually and explicitly assured by officials that the numbers of the *personnel* were entirely sufficient. It was not true, and they knew it was not true. That advantage, in which consisted the peculiar superiority of the British Navy over all other Fleets, the long-service trained man, has been wantonly impaired.

If the deficiency is to be made up, the recruiting of the men required is only now beginning, and the short service system must be abolished. It is worse than useless to continue to build ships while trained men are withheld.

I will here refer to an ancient wrong done to the officers of the Royal Navy ; the system of half-pay. Naval officers dedicate their lives to their country's service. The country, in return, pays them as little as it can, and takes every opportunity to reduce that little by one half. I say that the half-pay system is a national disgrace.

The restoration of the *personnel* will be expensive. But whose fault is that ?

XIII

PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE

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The Declaration of London.

THE House of Lords, by their action in rejecting the Naval Prize Bill, have postponed, it is to be hoped for ever, the ratification of the iniquitous Declaration of London. But in case the issue should be revived, it is well that the public should understand to what the British Empire was being committed by the present administration.

The terms of the Declaration were the subject of vigorous protest throughout the country so soon as the public were made acquainted with their import. His Majesty's Ministers proved themselves totally unable to meet the objections urged against the ratification of the Declaration. The attitude of the Government was sufficiently defined by the Prime Minister on June 21, 1911, when, in reply to an observation made by

Mr. Rowland Hunt, reminding him that the Under - Secretary for Foreign Affairs, on July 21, 1910, stated that the Declaration of London would not be ratified unless passed by Parliament, Mr. Asquith said that "it will make no difference to the action of His Majesty's Government whether the House of Lords approve or disapprove";[1] and adding, in reply to a question put by Mr. Remnant, that "this Declaration has been approved by His Majesty's Government after the fullest examination and consideration. They regard it as a matter of high policy, and they are not going to abdicate their responsibility by leaving it an open question."

During the debate on the second reading of the Naval Prize Bill, in which the International Prize Court Convention has been incorporated, and which Bill, if enacted, would imply some sort of constructive acceptance of the Declaration of London, the late First Lord of the Admiralty took occasion publicly to insult the officers of the Royal Navy. It was subsequently elicited from Mr. McKenna, by Mr. Rowland Hunt, that the Declaration of

[1] What does Mr. Asquith say now?

London had never been submitted to the judgment of the Board of Admiralty. "It was," said Mr. McKenna, "approved by the First Sea Lord and myself."

A brief recapitulation of the history of the Declaration of London may serve to elucidate its origin. At the Peace Conference held at the Hague in 1907, the British delegates were instructed by the Government to urge upon the assembly a scheme for general disarmament. The suggestion was politely but firmly dismissed by the foreign delegates. But the British delegates were further instructed to agree to the German proposal for the institution of an International Prize Court of Appeal, in pursuance of that policy of arbitration dear to the late Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman and other amiable visionaries. It cannot be too clearly understood that the object of that policy was the ultimate reduction of the Royal Navy. The intention was to substitute for effective force a series of paper safeguards and agreements drawn up by international lawyers. It was applauded by the foreign delegates; for, as a matter of fact, it presented them with the opportunity towards which their efforts had

been directed since the signature of the Treaty of Paris in 1856. By that instrument, Great Britain, of her own act, relinquished a powerful weapon in maritime warfare, and the most potent argument for keeping the peace known to history. It was ordained that the neutral flag should cover the enemy cargo, except contraband of war, thereby enfranchising the neutral ship. If, by means of the constitution of an International Prize Court, Great Britain could be induced to forfeit her remaining maritime rights, the labours of foreign maritime Powers, insidiously pursued for more than fifty years, would at length be crowned with success.

The thing was done. It was agreed that the International Prize Court of Appeal should be established, in violation of the common law of England, and in derogation of the authority of the King in Council. There were to be fifteen judges, of whom only one would be British. To this amorphous body British interests were to be absolutely confided.

It was then suddenly discovered that the new tribunal had no code of law upon which to base its decisions. Even the British Government were staggered by the prospect

of fourteen foreign judges and one Englishman administering a law that did not exist. So it was decided to make the law. To that end, a Naval Conference was summoned to assemble in London. At that Conference, the Declaration of London was drawn up, and was signed on February 26th, 1909. As might have been expected, the British delegates were out-manœuvred upon every essential point. The most important point of all, whether or not privateering in disguise was to be recognized, the foreign delegates refused to allow to be decided.

As matters stand, the right to convert merchant-ships into warships on the high seas, which is the right, abolished by the Declaration of Paris, to commission privateers, remains an open question, to be decided, according to a statement made by the late First Lord of the Admiralty, when the occasion arises.

But under the Declaration of London, the right to sink neutral vessels is for the first time legally recognized. That right, however, does not belong to British warships in cases in which the neutral vessel, laden with contraband of war consigned to the enemy, is proceeding

to a neutral port. In the United Kingdom, it is open to the enemy to declare all ports "bases of supply."

It is also open to any foreign naval Power secretly to organize an attack upon the British mercantile marine conducted by transformed merchantmen in every quarter of the globe. Under the Declaration of London, if this country were not at war, British merchant-ships would still be liable to destruction as neutrals.

In the *Hamburger Nachrichten* of June 13, 1911, there appear the following comments upon the effect of the Declaration of London :

"A temporary disturbance (even if only partial) in the working of the oversea transport of food supplies would bring about the severest disturbance and crisis in Great Britain and not only in the direction of raising the price of food commodities, but also a financial overthrow and total collapse."

As the German writer justly remarks, this country is faced with the danger not of invasion, but of starvation.

It is argued that the danger would be as great or as little if there were no Declaration

of London. The answer is that the very fact that privateering is not mentioned in the new code of law laid down by the Declaration affords, at least, ground for its justification, and that the sinking of neutrals and prizes, permitted by the Declaration would immensely aggravate the "moral effect" of the outbreak of war, thereby creating in all probability a panic.

But the argument has this much truth in it, that the withdrawal of cruisers from the trade routes in 1905 did then leave the arteries of the Empire open to attack, and open they remain. Before 1905, there were in round number sixty such vessels disposed upon the trade routes. To-day, there are twenty-three.

The Declaration of London also restricts the rights of blockade, as Sir Edward Fry himself admitted. The *Hamburger Nachrichten* of June 13 observes that "the formation of the North Sea is one naturally favouring a blockade of German sea traffic, and even for what the English call 'the high sea blockade,' by the closing up of the arm of the sea between Scotland and Norway. This is what they call 'sealing the North Sea.'

By the Declaration of London such a blockade may not be carried out, as by Article 1 it is provided that a blockade must not extend beyond the ports and coasts belonging to or occupied by the enemy; and Article 18 says that the blockading forces must not bar access to neutral ports or coasts."

The writer ingenuously adds that "in Germany we have received these decisions with exceptional pleasure."

Sir Edward Grey will no doubt be gratified by this unsolicited testimonial to the success of his diplomacy.

British citizens will rather reflect upon the facts that the Declaration of London, representing the result of a determined effort of the Government permanently to reduce the Royal Navy, handed over British maritime rights to a Foreign Court, failed to forbid privateering, permitted the sinking of untried neutrals, doubled the danger of starvation in case of war, and, what is even worse, crippled in every way the action of the British Fleet.

These rules and regulations, and others hardly less injurious to British interests, were drawn by Foreign Office clerks according to

the suggestions of alien jurists. But they are the officers of the Royal Navy who would be charged with their execution, and who alone, by education and experience, are qualified to judge of their effect. Their business is to fight to win. If, by means of rules drawn up by civilians, naval officers are forced to fight at a disadvantage, they are not to be blamed if they are defeated.

But the Declaration of London affords full opportunity for the enemy to strike a fatal blow before the Navy can use even those powers left to it.

The Second Peace Conference (Conventions) Bill.

Among other acts and deeds of the disastrous Peace Conference of 1907, are fourteen "conventions" signed by the British delegates. The Government propose to authorize the ratification of "various" unnamed conventions among the batch by the Second Peace Conference (Conventions) Bill. One of the conventions gives an International Tribunal the right, exercised through the Secretary of State and the Governors-General of British possessions overseas, to summon a witness from any corner of the globe. The said witness has no appeal. He

must produce any documents required of him. No provision is made for payment of his expenses. British subjects are here introduced to one of the privileges resulting from the transference of their legal rights to a foreign tribunal.

Other clauses of the Convention ordain that the master of any British ship, being neutral, and having on board the sick, wounded and shipwrecked men of a belligerent, shall give them up on demand of "any of the belligerent States," and that—incredible as it may seem—the captain of a British hospital ship, having sick and wounded on board when this country is at war, shall give them up at the order of an officer of an enemy warship.

That these despicable and wicked provisions should be sanctioned by any man calling himself British, I cannot believe.

Nor can I avoid the reflection that a country which allows itself to be enmeshed in this tangle of sentimental agreements, illegal treaties, and lawyers' traps in matters which concern the national honour and the national safety, deserves the irremediable catastrophe which will befall it.

The Mediterranean and Pacific.

By the year 1915, the increase of the Austrian and Italian navies will involve the necessity of placing a squadron of at least eight modern heavy armoured ships in the Mediterranean, thereby reducing our force in Home Waters to an approximate equality with the force of Germany. It may become necessary, in addition, to keep a battle squadron on the China station. At no very distant date, the Panama Canal will be opened: an event which will have the effect of shifting the strategic balance of the world.

These are the most elementary considerations, with which every student of affairs is acquainted. I have yet to learn that the Government have even considered the measures required to meet the needs of a serious situation. It is indeed perfectly obvious that the time of Ministers is fully occupied in dealing with the domestic and purely partisan issues of the moment, to the neglect of that security upon which all social reform depends.

The Dominions' Navies.

The contributions of the Dominions towards the naval defence of the Empire are based upon the principle of local autonomy. New Zealand alone has

declared herself in favour of one Imperial Navy. Australia and Canada control their own navies, and reserve the right to decide whether or no in case of war their fleets shall aid the Imperial Government. It follows that, with regard to the naval forces of the Empire, there is dual control; a system which is impracticable in peace and disastrous in war.

The plain fact is that, when in 1909 the representatives of the Dominions were called together in conference to discuss the question of their contribution to the naval defence of the Empire, every difficulty was deliberately ignored by the Imperial Government, and the Dominions were led to believe that, if they built ships, all would be well.

The discussion of supreme control, of common discipline, of training, of rates of pay, all questions essential to the apprehension of the problem, was postponed.

According to the scheme of defence agreed upon at the Imperial Conference of 1911,[1] which was presented by Sir Wilfrid Laurier to the Canadian House of Commons before it

[1] See Appendix XI.

was laid before Parliament in this country, the Admiralty are to be responsible for the ships of the Dominions' Navies when those vessels go beyond the areas allotted to them. Such an arrangement cannot be successfully carried into operation. Training and discipline are to be uniform. In default of a single supreme control, such uniformity will be impracticable. The ships of the Dominions' Navies are to "hoist at the stern the white ensign as the symbol of the authority of the Crown, and at the jackstaff the distinctive flag of the Dominion." But the "authority of the Crown" is only to be exercised by consent of the Dominion Governments; therefore, except in cases when the Admiralty have been asked to assume responsibility for the Dominion Ships, those vessels will not be recognized as warships by foreign Powers.

I do not point out these grave difficulties in order to reflect upon the patriotism and the enterprise of the Dominions; but for the purpose of enabling British subjects to recognize the facts of the case, so sedulously disguised by the authorities. Difficulties may be overcome; but they can never be solved so

long as the authorities pretend they do not exist.

As matters stand, it must be said—however disagreeable the task—that the Dominions' Navies cannot be reckoned among the effective naval forces of the Empire.

XIV

A SURVEY OF THE SITUATION

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The facts above stated cannot with truth be denied. What is the conclusion to be drawn from them? I venture to affirm that there is only one conclusion possible. It is that the naval policy of the years 1902 to 1909 was mistaken in every important particular. From the beginning, the great body of naval opinion held that the new policy was wrong, that it endangered the security of the country and of the Empire, and that the expense of repairing the disastrous effects of a series of rash, violent, and unnecessary experiments would be immense.

Several officers, upon whom fell the disagreeable but inevitable necessity of expressing to the authorities, in response to official request, views adverse to the policy of the Admiralty, have been placed on half-pay and kept without employment, or their

Service careers have been summarily terminated. Among them, three officers would have been ruined by the authorities for daring to tell the truth when, at the request of the authorities themselves, they gave evidence with regard to certain matters, had it not been that public opinion intervened in time to save them from being hunted out of the Service.

These officers were right; the Navy was right; and the authorities were wrong.

Since the end of the period of maladministration, whose chief mistakes I have recorded, an honest attempt has been made to remedy them. But the evils have gone too deep to be cured by palliatives and half measures. The first step towards restoration is to understand the extent of the mischief to be repaired.

First in importance there falls to be considered the education and training of officers, upon whom the whole efficiency of the Fleet depends. The scheme of 1902, altered in 1904, is proving utterly impracticable. If the Fleet is not to be left gravely deficient in Marine and Engineer officers, measures must at once be taken to remedy the fatal defects of the existing system. The postponement by

the Admiralty of the specialization of officers for another two years (dating from May, 1911) will only serve to aggravate the evil.

The force of ships required is the next consideration. I have of my own personal knowledge, acquired in commanding fleets in various quarters of the globe, affirmed that the Fleet is gravely deficient in small cruisers and destroyers. It is so deficient as to impair the ability of action of the battle squadrons of heavy ships.

The essential requirements of a battle squadron in time of war may be briefly indicated. The proportion of cruisers should be five cruisers to every two battleships or large armoured cruisers. The small cruiser force must be disposed so that they form a protecting screen distant 120 or 140 miles on all sides from the battle squadron. By no other means is it possible to move a battle squadron at night without risking its destruction by the attack of torpedo craft. No anti-torpedo armament can effectually protect a fleet of battleships attacked at night by squadrons of torpedo craft.

Nor can the fleet act effectually so long

as the grave deficiencies in coal reserve, in stores, in docks, are not made up. The lack of proper provision of these items is common knowledge throughout the Navy.

Next in importance is the deficiency in the *personnel.* That deficiency will continue, in spite of the belated efforts of the authorities hastily to remedy it, until there exists a War Staff which shall be competent to decide for what purposes the men are required, how many are required, and how they should be distributed.

The present condition of the Trade Routes is a national danger. In 1903, there were sixty small cruisers placed on foreign stations. To-day, there are twenty-three. In the interval an event has occurred of the gravest moment to the country.

Privateering, abolished by the Declaration of Paris of 1856, has in effect been insidiously revived by the Peace Conference of 1907.

In 1903, the only danger to the Trade Routes to be apprehended was the attack upon commerce by naval warships. It was under these conditions considered necessary to keep a large force of cruisers on foreign