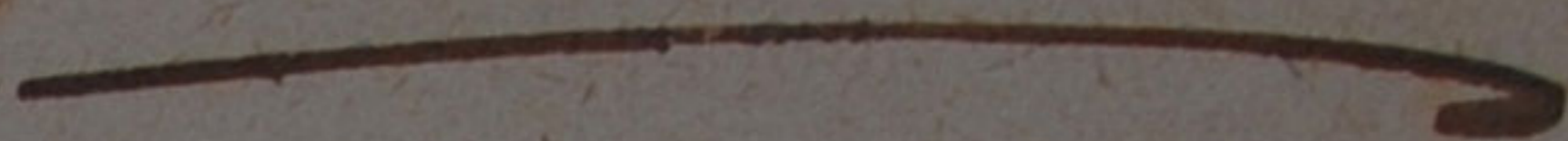


**THE
BETRAYAL**

Lord Charles Beresford

2s. 6d. net.

Fernando Ponce



THE BETRAYAL

FIRST IMPRESSION . . . Jan. 29th, 1912.

SECOND IMPRESSION . . . Feb. 1st, 1912.

THE BETRAYAL

BEING A RECORD OF FACTS CONCERNING
NAVAL POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION FROM
THE YEAR 1902 TO THE PRESENT TIME.

BY

ADMIRAL LORD CHARLES BERESFORD,
M.P.

LONDON

P. S. KING & SON
ORCHARD HOUSE
WESTMINSTER

1912

“When all its work is done, the lie shall rot ;
The truth is great, and shall prevail,
When none cares whether it prevail or not.”

COVENTRY PATMORE.

PREFACE

THIS book is a statement of facts. I have written it, in order that my countrymen should possess the opportunity of acquainting themselves with the truth concerning the naval administration and the naval policy in force during the years from 1902 to the present time, and of estimating the results of that policy and of that administration.

For it is only by means of the acquisition of such knowledge that the country can be enabled to judge for itself of the adequacy of the first line of defence to-day, when the posture of international affairs demands extreme vigilance, lest at a crisis we be found unprepared.

Precisely that contingency occurred during the summer of last year.¹

In the result, the First Lord of the Admiralty was removed, the Board of Admiralty was reconstituted, and the formation of a War Staff was announced.

¹ See Appendix XII.

PREFACE

In view of the nature of these events, it was decided to suspend the publication of this book during their progress.

The author has for thirty years consistently advocated the creation at the Admiralty of a War Staff charged with the duty of organization for war.¹

Now that the foundation of a War Staff has actually been established, it rests with the country to see to it, in the light of the facts of the case, that the War Staff is so constituted as to fulfil the object of its existence: which is, to prevent such a betrayal of the national confidence and of the security of the Empire as that which is exemplified in these pages.

CHARLES BERESFORD,

ADMIRAL.

CANNES,

January, 1912.

¹ See Appendix XIII., "Memorandum drawn up by Captain Lord Charles Beresford (Junior Lord of the Admiralty) in 1886," etc.

CONTENTS

CHAP.	PAGE
PREFACE	v
I. THE MAKING OF THE NAVAL OFFICER	1
II. THE RESTORATION OF DISCIPLINE	19
III. THE RESTORATION OF FLEET UNITS	35
IV. SHIPS WITHOUT DOCKS	49
V. THE DELUSION OF THE DREADNOUGHT POLICY	57
VI. THE FRAUD ON THE PUBLIC	67
VII. ORGANIZATION FOR WAR.	77
VIII. THE COMMITTEE OF INQUIRY	85
IX. HOW NOT TO DO IT: THE ADMIRALTY MEMORANDUM	95
X. THE ORIGIN OF THE SCARE OF 1909	113
XI. THE SHIPBUILDING PROGRAMME	127
XII. THE MANNING OF THE FLEET	137
XIII. PROBLEMS OF THE FUTURE	145
XIV. A SURVEY OF THE SITUATION	161
APPENDIX	173
INDEX	205

I

THE MAKING OF THE NAVAL
OFFICER

I

THE MAKING OF THE NAVAL OFFICER

THE fighting efficiency of the Royal Navy depends first of all upon the quality and the ability of its officers. Therefore the selection, the education and the training of officers are matters of paramount importance. And not only do they affect the Navy, but they intimately affect those hundreds of families who give their sons to the service of their country.

During some years prior to 1902, the subject of the selection, education and training of cadets was engaging the consideration of naval officers. It was not that the three branches of the Executive, the Marine and the Engineer were unsatisfactory. Perhaps there was never a time when naval officers of all three departments were more competent or more zealous. But it was felt that the curriculum on board the old *Britannia* needed revision. All

schemes of education need revision from time to time. The naval officer could learn, and did learn, his duties, but it may be said that in some respects, he learned them rather in spite of his theoretical teaching than because of it. His real education was gained, where the sailor always has learned his trade and where alone he can learn it, at sea.

It was also considered that the Marine officer was not permitted under the rules of the Service to take his fair share in the work of the ship.

There was a third element in the situation, which was perhaps the only factor recognized by the public, because it was the theme of trade union agitation on shore. The element in question was the position of the Engineer officer.

When I went to sea, the engineers were artisans who were drafted into the Fleet to work the engines, which were presently to supersede sails. As their responsibilities increased with the development of steam power, they demanded commissioned rank, and received it. The difference in social position, of course, remained. It was this difference

which was the real origin of the trouble. But, as the new generation of Engineers passed through Keyham College, the difficulty was already in process of disappearing.

During some years before 1902, the Engineers' organizations on shore had been pressing the claims of the naval engineer officer upon the Admiralty. A small section of the naval engineers afloat took part in the agitation. They claimed the privilege of being known as Lieutenant-Engineer, Commander-Engineer, Captain - Engineer, Admiral - Engineer. They demanded the power to "punish their own men"; they desired to wear "the curl" of gold braid worn by the executive officer; and they asked for increased pay.

There were thus three matters in which change was suggested: the scheme of education in the *Britannia*; the distribution of duties as regarded the Marine officer; and the claims of the Engineer officer.

The problem might readily have been solved without any break in the continuity of tradition. The curriculum in the *Britannia* should have been improved; the work on

board ship should have been so distributed as to give the Marine officer his fair share; and the case of the Engineers should have been treated on its merits.

Some of the difficulty might have been met by the simple expedient of instituting the common entry of all three branches. The Admiralty, however, while establishing the common entry, chose to abolish at a stroke the whole of the existing system, and to substitute another.

At Christmas, 1902, the Admiralty issued a "Memorandum dealing with the Entry, Training and Employment of the Officers and Men of the Royal Navy and of the Royal Marines" (Cd. 1385). This document is known as the Selborne Memorandum.

The effect of the new scheme was to propose the creation of a new kind of naval officer altogether.¹

What the Navy asked then, and asks now, is whether the naval officer of the future is to be an Executive, a Marine or an Engineer.

No clear reply has been given by the authorities. It has been officially stated that

¹ See Appendix I.

the executive will understand the engineer's duties, that the engineer will be available for executive work, and the Marine will be a sailor and an engineer as well as a soldier. Briefly, it is intended that there shall be "interchangeability."

The position to-day is that if the new officers are competent executives, they will not take charge of the engine-room; if they are competent engineers, they will remain below, and if they are competent soldiers, they will neither direct the ship nor take charge of her engines.

In the First Lord's "Statement Explanatory of the Navy Estimates, 1911-1912," it was stated that "the first group of officers entered under the new scheme will, on passing the necessary examination, attain the rank of Sub-Lieutenant in May next," that is, May, 1911.

But at this moment, no one knows whether these new officers will be fully skilled in any one of the three branches of the Service. There is only one thing certain, which is that they cannot possibly be competent in all of them.

The sequence of events which has brought about this very remarkable and disquieting situation, in which the whole fighting efficiency

of the Fleet is involved, is highly perplexing. The crux of the problem was and is the question of specialization.

Either the separating of the Service into the three branches of Executive, Marine and Engineer is essential, or it is not. The principle upon which the division is made is simple enough.

It is that the men who direct the ship and who fight the ship cannot possibly learn their duties unless they devote their whole time to them; and that the men who are charged with the care of the motive power of the ship cannot possibly learn their duties or practise them, unless they devote their whole time to them. It follows that the three branches, Executive, Marine and Engineer, each separate and distinct, are essential to the fighting efficiency of the Service.

The Admiralty admitted the validity of the principle in the Selborne Memorandum of 1902. It was therein laid down that all naval officers should enter the Service upon the same footing, at the age of twelve to thirteen;¹ that they should all receive the

¹ See Appendix II.

same education up to the ages of nineteen to twenty ; but that, having then attained the rank of Sub-Lieutenant, specialization should begin, and should be "definite and final."

"Henceforward," it was stated, "their education must be differentiated to make them fit to perform those specialized duties which are the product of modern science."

The phrase, "the product of modern science," is not strictly accurate. Specialization, or division into three branches, is the result of centuries of development of the art of sea warfare. But the intention of the Admiralty was at that time quite clear. It was that the preliminary training should be common to all three branches, and that when specialization took place, it should be definite and final.

The conclusion to be drawn from the Selborne Memorandum, although it was not quite explicit with regard to the point, was that there was to be no interchangeability among the three branches. It followed that, as heretofore, only the executive branch would command ships and Fleets.

The objection raised at the time was that

specialization, being postponed to an age (nineteen to twenty) so advanced, could not be effective. It was held by a great body of opinion in the Navy then, as now, that specialization should begin much earlier if it was to confer a thorough training. A competent engineer requires ten years' training; a Marine officer should be trained in his regiment; and an executive officer should be accustomed to deal with men as soon after his entry into the Service as possible.

These conditions were actually fulfilled under the old system, which did actually produce most efficient officers in all three branches.

Apart from the fatal defect of the inadequacy of the specialist training, the Selborne scheme might have been adapted to the requirements of the Service. But three years after the publication of the Selborne Memorandum, and two years after the new scheme came into operation, there was issued (in 1905) the Cawdor Memorandum (Cd. 2791), in which the system was altered in essential particulars.¹

In the Cawdor Memorandum, it was definitely stated that interchangeability

¹ See Appendix III.

among all three branches was contemplated. It was stated that the Committee appointed to consider the subject under Admiral Sir Archibald Douglas had reported "that there will be no need for a final division into the three branches, and that specialisation for a period only is necessary, as opposed to classification into separate lines."

The report of the Douglas Committee was not published, nor was any mention made of the fact that a Minority report condemned certain proposals as invalidating the whole scheme.

The reason adduced to account for this momentous change with regard to specialisation was that the first two years' experience of the work of the children under training at Osborne had enabled the Admiralty to "forecast the general state of professional knowledge of the new officers when they arrive at the rank of Sub-Lieutenant."¹ That forecast was represented as proving to the Admiralty that they were justified in deciding that "all Executive, Engineering and Marine duties will be performed by Executive officers of common entry and training, who will

¹ See Appendix IV.

specialize for the different duties without separating into permanent and distinct branches. The consequence of this development of the original proposals is that there will be in future only one class of officer in all departments, and, whether performing Engine-room, Marine, Gunnery, Torpedo, or Navigation duties, *all will be equal and all will be Executive officers.*"

The real reason for introducing this sudden innovation was that there was great difficulty in obtaining volunteers for the Engineer branch. Under the old system there was no such difficulty. But under the new scheme, which attracted to a large extent a richer class, there was an evident disposition to avoid the engine-room, and a prospect that, when any given Sub-Lieutenant was entered for the engineering branch, his parents, being able to afford the required expenditure, would remove him from the Service. It was this danger which suddenly determined the Admiralty so to modify the scheme as to persuade the young officers, their parents, and the public, that the same chance of attaining the positions of a Captain of a ship, and of

an Admiral commanding a Fleet, was offered to all.

The attraction thus presented is a complete delusion. Under no circumstances is it possible that a Marine officer or an Engineer officer, who has thoroughly qualified himself in his own profession, should command a ship or a Fleet.

Yet the same misrepresentation appeared in the Press¹ no later than May, 1911, while the first batch of midshipmen were being examined at Portsmouth. It was definitely stated that all officers entered under the new scheme had a chance of commanding a Fleet.¹

It is of the last importance, both to the Service and to the parents of young naval officers, that the present wholly artificial situation should be understood.

Either the Admiralty have abolished specialization or they have not. If they have abolished

¹ "Upwards of 1,500 cadets and midshipmen have already been entered under the new system, and by the existing regulations, no matter in what branch they specialize, or even if they do not specialize at all, each according to his merits will have an opportunity of becoming an Admiral of the Fleet or filling the office of First Sea Lord of the Admiralty."

Naval Officers' Training. First Fruits of the New System.—*The Times*, May 15th, 1911.

it, then the Fleet in a few years' time will be seriously deficient in Marine and in Engineer officers. If the Admiralty have not abolished specialization, then the promise that all the officers entered under the new scheme should be eligible for the command of Fleets cannot be fulfilled.

In the meantime, so deplorable is the confusion resulting from this dilemma, the Admiralty have postponed the period of specialization for another two years.¹

To suggest that the specialization involved in gunnery, torpedo and navigation duties, is analogous to the specialization required to fit a Marine officer for military duties, and an engineer for mechanical duties, is utterly misleading.

By what means are first-class skilled Engineer officers, and Marine officers trained as soldiers, to be obtained in the future? There can be little doubt that the Admiralty will be compelled to revert to the system of thorough, "definite and final" specialization. In that case, do the Admiralty propose to apply compulsion to officers who do not desire to

¹ See Appendix V.

enter the engineering branch? The result of such action would be deplorable. It can hardly be doubted that many young officers would quit the Service, or that there must be a grave deficiency of officers, in consequence.

Another disastrous change in the original scheme is the abolition of the whole of the shore courses for acting Sub-Lieutenants: the courses at Greenwich, the *Excellent*, the *Vernon* and the Navigation School. It was asserted that the young officer could take these courses at sea. The thing is totally impracticable: first, because the gunnery, torpedo and navigation officers at sea have no time to teach their juniors; and second, even had the senior officers the time to spare and the teaching ability required for the purpose, a ship is not fitted with the necessary appliances. The abolition of these courses must result in a grave defect in the course of education.

The main object of the training of an executive officer is to fit him to handle ships and men. Under the new scheme of naval education, a civilian, the Director-General of Naval Education, settles the curriculum, and issues reports upon the results without showing how

those results are attained. The curriculum involves a system of cramming for examinations which is not only useless for the main object of education but, positively injurious to the efficiency of the young officer.¹

The proper person to adjudicate upon the capabilities of an officer under training is the captain of a ship in which a few young officers are trained under his supervision. But under the new system the civilian Director-General of Education is supreme.

What is required at this critical moment is the abolition of the office of Director-General of Naval Education, and the reconstitution of the Committee of Education at the Admiralty, composed of naval officers, whose first business should be to inquire into the whole system. The report should be laid before Parliament.

As matters stand, the fighting efficiency of the Service is imperilled; the public, the parents and guardians of the cadets, and the

¹ The result of the first examination for the rank of sub-lieutenant was that a large percentage failed. The examinations were held for six hours a day for a fortnight, during the last few days of which these young officers were so worn out that they could not answer questions.

boys themselves, have been deceived by misleading representations; the corps of the Royal Marines has been slighted and deprived of its proper complement of officers; and the Engineer branch of the Service has been most unfairly treated. Owing to the increase in the cost of naval education, the old type of engineer parents can no longer afford to enter their sons. In too many cases, the same condition applies to naval officers. It is not desirable that the Navy should become a preserve of the monied classes.

The three branches of the officers of the Fleet represent three links of a chain, which, under the new schemes, it was proposed to amalgamate. It is now stated that the Marine link will be restored. The Engineer link must also be restored. There remains the Executive, and the chain will be once more complete.

Admiral of the Fleet Sir Frederick Richards has described the new scheme of education as a "hazardous experiment." The sooner its failure is recognized the better.

II

THE RESTORATION OF
DISCIPLINE

II

THE RESTORATION OF DISCIPLINE

THE Cawdor Memorandum of 1905, in which were described the changes in the new scheme of naval education established in 1902, arousing grave anxiety among the senior officers of the Fleet, was naturally and rightly the subject of discussion among them. A large proportion of naval opinion undoubtedly held that the policy of the Board was highly inimical to the true interests of the Service. The Admiralty, on their part, were determined to force the scheme through; and for that purpose means were employed which no end, however admirable, could justify.

Events are now beginning to prove that, as the great body of naval opinion held at the time, the policy was wrong. But the merits of the policy itself have nothing to do with the nature of the methods employed to enforce it.

Those methods consisted in the exercise by

the Admiralty of their influence upon any person who might be used to help the scheme ; in establishing a system of espionage, officers being requested to report secretly upon their brother officers ; in utilising the information thus gained to threaten naval officers and thus secure their support ; and in endeavouring by illicit means to discredit those who, in the interests of the Service, believed it to be their duty adversely to criticise Admiralty policy.

There is a number of officers whose careers have been ruined because, having been asked their opinion by the authorities, they gave it in all good faith. They are to-day kept without employment.

These are grave charges. Irrefutable evidence of their truth was published in the Press and elicited in Parliament during the year 1909. But other and not less reprehensible incidents occurred which have not been made public, for the simple reason that, under the rule of the cabal formed at the Admiralty, an officer who made known that attempts had been made to suborn him, or that he had been threatened, would gravely jeopardize his career.

One of the worst aspects of the system was the abuse by the Admiralty of the honourable reticence of officers.

Such, however, was the system which, three years after its constitution, was defended by Mr. McKenna before Parliament. That a Minister of the Crown capable of condoning such conduct should have continued to hold office, affords a very grave reflection upon the character of public life to-day.

It is clear that under such an administration at the Admiralty, no officer, whether on active service or retired, could feel his reputation to be safe. The responsibility for this state of affairs, constitutionally speaking, rests upon the First Lord of the Admiralty and, by constitutional usage, upon the Cabinet of which he is a member. Part of the evidence in question appeared in the form of letters published in the Press and quoted in the House of Commons. When the incriminating letters were written, the late Lord Tweedmouth was First Lord of the Admiralty. It is doubtful whether he had any knowledge of the printing and circulating of these documents by the Admiralty.

But when two of them were published three years after they were written, responsibility belonged to Lord Tweedmouth's successor, Mr. McKenna. We have now to remark how the First Lord dealt with the scandal.

The matter was very properly made the subject of questions addressed to the First Lord in the House of Commons. In reply to written questions put by Mr. Carr-Gomm with reference to one of the documents published, Mr. McKenna stated that: "It is a perfectly proper letter. . . ." ¹

In this statement the First Lord of the Admiralty deliberately associated himself with the system of which the letter in question was a part. "It is," he says, "a perfectly proper letter." We are, then, to understand that it is perfectly proper for a junior captain to forward confidential reports upon the conduct of his superior officers, and of the Sovereign himself, direct to the Admiralty.

In that one statement, Mr. McKenna struck a deadly blow at the discipline of the Fleet, and at a stroke forfeited once for all the confidence of the entire Service.

¹ See Appendix VI.

At the same time the First Lord endeavoured to convey to the House the impression that the letters had only been printed as a matter of routine, and that their distribution was an accident. A Liberal member was put up to ask: "Whether it had not been the custom from time immemorial to reprint letters of a private nature in order that the subject-matter of these letters may be brought within the official ambit, and brought to the knowledge of officers within the department." Mr. McKenna, with the artless assumption of innocence proper to these occasions, replied that his friend was perfectly right, and "nothing more was done in this case than was quite regular." The letter, he said—referring to the second letter—"was never published and circularized in the ordinary sense of the word."

These forensic equivocations and evasions must be recorded, however disagreeable the task, because they demonstrate, as nothing else can demonstrate, the injury inflicted upon the honour and discipline of his Majesty's Service, for which no reparation has yet been made. A First Lord is not like a private individual; his actions must in one respect or

another affect a great tradition ; hence the importance of episodes which, in private life, would be swiftly consigned to a contemptuous oblivion.

The exact value of Mr. McKenna's assertions is sufficiently indicated—other evidence apart—by the evidence of another letter published in the Press on May 27, 1909. It proves that the letters to which Mr. McKenna referred were printed, not as a mere matter of routine, but to serve a definite purpose, and that they were deliberately circulated by the Admiralty. The document in question is officially docketed : L. 42890.50—4/06. Pk. E. and S.

It is now nearly four years (November, 1907, to June, 1911) since I had occasion to appeal to the Admiralty with reference to a grave instance of indiscipline, in which my authority as Commander-in-Chief and also my personal character were involved. The matter having passed out of my hands and having become known to the public at the time, the Admiralty, and the Admiralty alone, could have set it right. I have no intention of reviving things better consigned to oblivion. It is not the

conduct of officers which is in question, but the conduct of the Minister responsible to the country for the Admiralty.

So long as I was on the active list of the Navy, I was necessarily debarred from making known the facts. These were concealed from the public while false versions of what occurred were freely published. The effect upon the discipline of the Fleet was very serious. It is useless to expect that officers can maintain discipline unless they are confident that they will be supported by superior authority. It is equally futile to rely upon the control of Parliament over national affairs, if Ministers are permitted to mislead the House.

During my tenure of the command of the Channel Fleet, two incidents occurred of which highly misleading accounts appeared in the Press.

The first occurred in November, 1907. The breach of discipline was of so grave a character, and was committed in so public a manner, that it was my duty to make strong representations to the Admiralty with regard to the offender.

Those representations were so far disregarded that the officer in question was per-

mitted to retain his position, without having proffered a public apology for a public offence.

At the same time, a campaign of calumny, directed against myself, as Commander-in-Chief in Home Waters, broke out in the Press, injurious articles highly prejudicial to discipline being anonymously circulated among the officers of the Fleet.

I appealed to the Admiralty, in the interests of discipline, to take such measures to put a stop to these nefarious proceedings as I was myself debarred by the King's Regulations from adopting.

The only response of the constituted authorities to my request was a brief statement made in the House on March 9, 1908, many weeks after the event, by the Civil Lord of the Admiralty, in answer to a question. By that time the mischief was done; and the events which occurred during the interval and subsequently indicate that the action of the Admiralty had no appreciable effect.

In January, 1908, there was sent to every officer under my command in the Channel Fleet, a copy of a newspaper containing a violent attack upon myself. The personal

aspect of the matter did not interest me ; but the offence against discipline could not, in my view, be ignored. The incident was therefore reported to the Admiralty. Their Lordships, however, did not see fit to take any action.

In July, 1908, there appeared simultaneously in many newspapers articles assailing my character, and adversely criticising my conduct as an officer. The Fleet, under my command, was at that time carrying into execution manœuvres in the North Sea. On Thursday, July 9, an account of a signal said to have been made by me was published in the Press, together with a statement to the effect that, had the signal been obeyed, a disaster comparable with the accident which befell the *Victoria* and the *Camperdown* must have occurred. The account was totally incorrect, and the comment wholly misleading. Their publication was in the highest degree prejudicial to my reputation as a seaman, and, therefore, extremely injurious to discipline.

As the Fleet was at sea when the alleged incident took place, the information published in the Press could only have been communicated by an officer in the Fleet.

On Thursday, July 24, 1908, the Fleet under my command had returned to Portland. Upon my arrival, I received a telegram from the First Lord, Mr. McKenna, asking me to call at the Admiralty upon the following day. In the course of my interview with Mr. McKenna, I showed to him the written evidence in my possession with regard to the person who had sent the account of the signal to the Press. Mr. McKenna refusing to accept the evidence, I subsequently forwarded the document officially to the Admiralty, at the same time informing their Lordships of my determination to hold a Court of Inquiry upon the matter. Upon the following day, Saturday, July 26, 1908, I discussed the case with Mr. McKenna again. To my surprise, Mr. McKenna was vehemently opposed to the holding of a Court of Inquiry.

The same evening, I wrote a letter to Mr. McKenna in which, in accordance with his urgent request, and having no personal feeling in the matter, I left the defence of my professional reputation in his hands.

I had, then, every reason to believe that the First Lord would take such action as would

restore discipline, which had been publicly outraged.

On July 30, 1908, Mr. McKenna stated in the House of Commons that the signal made by the Commander-in-Chief, Channel Fleet, was not dangerous, but that if the officer to whom the signal was made thought it to be dangerous, he was justified in disobeying it.¹

This brief statement dealt with a part, and only a part, of the case. The accounts and comments which had appeared in the Press were thereby corrected. There remained a question intimately affecting the discipline of the Fleet. The question was, who had sent the information to the Press? Mr. McKenna had in his possession documentary evidence showing the identity of the person who, in defiance of the King's Regulations and to the common knowledge of the Fleet, sent the false information to the Press with regard to the signal said to have been made by me.

With that evidence in his possession, Mr. McKenna, on July 30, 1908, stated in the House of Commons that "*he had no knowledge who sent the message, and it was impossible for him to find out.*"¹

¹ See Appendix VII.

The House of Commons is customarily supposed to be able to maintain its own standard of honour. The point here to consider is what effect such a statement as that deliberately made by Mr. McKenna, had upon the discipline of the Fleet. The author of the message, as I have said, was known to the Fleet, though the proofs of his complicity, then in Mr. McKenna's possession, were, of course, kept secret. Officers and men drew their own conclusions. They assumed that insubordination and breach of the King's Regulations were condoned by the constituted authorities.

It is of the first importance to-day that the discipline of the Fleet should be restored. Those who are responsible for the existing conditions must be dealt with by the proper tribunal, which is Parliament. So long as Parliament continues to neglect its plain duty, so long will the evil continue, and the country will suffer the certain penalty.

It was precisely by the employment of such methods as those introduced into the Admiralty in 1906, and subsequently either approved or condoned by the late First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. McKenna, that the

authority responsible for the Navy of a neighbouring foreign Power so utterly ruined the discipline and comradeship of its Fleet that it ceased to be reckoned as a factor in international politics.

III

THE RESTORATION OF FLEET
UNITS

III

THE RESTORATION OF FLEET UNITS

IN December, 1904, an Admiralty memorandum, signed by Lord Selborne, was issued, setting forth a new device for saving money on the Fleet, henceforth to be known as the "scrapping" policy. It consisted in an endeavour to prove that the fewer ships a Navy contains, the stronger it is.

After describing the various classes of large armoured cruisers which, taken together, were to form a force of twenty-six such vessels during the ensuing year, the memorandum proceeded to set forth arguments.

One was that the invention of the armoured cruiser made useless the existing protected cruiser, hitherto employed in inshore squadrons, for scouting purposes with the Fleet and for peace patrol duties upon foreign stations. The armoured cruiser was thus supposed to

replace the protected cruiser, of which class of vessel it was stated no more were to be built, nor were the existing ships to be kept in repair.

The other assumption was that, as men were required for manning the nucleus crew ships in Home Ports, they could be obtained without detriment to the Service from the protected cruisers, which might then be "scrapped."

Both these assumptions have since proved erroneous. They were not accepted by foreign nations.

In March, 1909, Germany had nine more small cruisers available in home waters than Great Britain. One of the first results of the scrapping policy was, therefore, to place this country at a disadvantage with a neighbouring foreign Power in respect of a most important Fleet unit.

The assumption that the large armoured cruiser was to replace the small protected cruiser was utterly disproved in practice. In 1904, when the statement was published that small cruisers were no longer required, there were twelve such vessels in full commission in home waters and in the Mediterranean;

whereas five years later, in March, 1909, there were fifteen such vessels, the authorities having been compelled to bring back some of the vessels struck off the list. Nor can it be contended that, under these conditions, the scrapping policy did not in effect weaken the Fleet. Although there was even in 1904 a considerable deficiency in small cruisers both for Fleet work and for patrol duties on foreign stations, the scrapping policy abolished whole squadrons of these craft, which are now being replaced—but too slowly—at a vast expense to the nation.

The truth is that, in 1904, the development of the small cruiser had not kept pace with the development of the large cruiser, especially in the matter of speed. Owing to confusion of thought, or to sheer ignorance of the use of small cruisers in war, or to both causes, it was argued that the duties of small cruisers could be executed by ships of 12,000 tons and upwards, merely because these vessels could steam at high speed. Such considerations as the necessity for protecting trade, for encountering torpedo attack in advance, for dispersing force in scouting, for subsidiary

Fleet work involving absence from the main body, for navigation in shallow waters : all these practical needs were wholly ignored.

It is contrary to common sense and practical experience to suppose that British naval power should be organized only for purposes of battle. The British Fleet heretofore carried the British Flag and the British ideas of justice and good government to every corner of the globe, and the service rendered to the peace of the world by the British Navy is not to be reckoned in first class battleships, armoured cruisers and torpedo craft alone. Similar vessels, but less powerful, are still needed in all parts of the world for the training of officers and men, and for the vindication of the laws of civilization whether against slave-trading, gun-running, or any other breach of the peace, for kindly and often necessary ministration of charity and consolation as well as for the courtesy and compliment which form no inconsiderable part of the complex duties of the British Fleet.

The large armoured cruiser is useless for these purposes. Events have proved the absurdity of the theory which led to the construction of the *Minotaur* and *Indomitable*

classes, to the neglect of the smaller classes of cruisers, involving the country in an immense waste of money, while depriving it in a large measure of security.

It is true that in building these immense cruisers, our example has been followed by other nations, including Germany, which recognizes the necessity of possessing modern vessels of all the types owned by a potential opponent. But Germany (for instance) has not at the same time neglected to develop the smaller classes of cruisers.

With regard to the second assumption, that cruisers could safely be withdrawn from foreign stations and the men might be taken out of them to replenish the nucleus crews of the Reserve without detriment to the Service, it is to be noted that the intention was that the duties of trade protection and of attention to British interests in various parts of the world should be executed by squadrons of large armoured cruisers, making long cruises in company. In point of fact, the thing is impossible.

The futility of the theory needs no demonstration to the naval officer. Ships intended

for the protection of trade on the outbreak of war must be on their station in time of peace. They are the officers on the spot, and these alone, who, knowing local conditions and affairs, can take the right action at the right moment. A captain of a gunboat who is thoroughly acquainted with local affairs is of more value to the place in question and to the Admiralty than a whole squadron of armoured cruisers paying a flying visit.

A consideration of an equal importance is the fact, well understood by naval officers, that the peace patrol of the Royal Navy, conducted by small vessels, provides the finest possible school of training in responsibility for the whole of their crews, from the commanding officer downwards. In a small ship a commander or a lieutenant becomes accustomed to the responsibility of commanding his own ship on detached service, of communicating with high officials with regard to matters of importance, and of acting upon his own initiative in emergencies. It is impossible to overestimate the value of such experience in the formation of self-reliant and independent-minded captains and flag-officers, nor can such

experience be obtained by any other means. The effect on the men is not less salutary. In a small craft ordinary seamen often do the work of able seamen, and able seamen often do the work of petty officers. There are no superfluous hands, and the absence of a very few men is severely felt.

The principles of sea-power do not change. It is one of those principles that the defence and patrol of the Empire require a large force of comparatively small vessels. Nothing can alter that necessity. In 1904, it was recklessly ignored. The power of the Fleet was gravely weakened.

The real reason for this action on the part of the Admiralty was to save money. In 1904, there were needed, for the future requirements of the Fleet, from 8,000 to 10,000 more men. These were secretly struck off the list of requirements without reference to Parliament.

The Admiralty were then confronted by a dilemma. It was impossible even to provide nucleus crews for all the second and third class cruisers in the reserve, and to keep these vessels in repair, without asking Parliament for

more money. The Admiralty therefore decided to abolish the ships in question.

It was announced that 155 ships were to be struck off the list. The statement was deliberately misleading. Out of that number, twenty-six vessels were already on the "subsidiary list"—the category of ships no longer useful—and twenty-seven vessels were harbour ships and hulks. What the Admiralty really did was to add 102 ships to the subsidiary list. Of these eighty were useful second and third class cruisers and torpedo-gunboats, upon several of which large sums of money had recently been expended.

The true statement therefore stands as follows:—

Total of ships already on Subsidiary List on October 1st, 1904	26
Total of ships added to Subsidiary List by the "scraping" policy	102
Total of harbour ships, hulks, etc., struck off	27
	<hr/>
Grand total	155

The public, by means of the methods introduced into the Admiralty in 1904, were led to believe that a much greater saving had been effected than was actually the case, fifty-three ships out of 155 being in point of fact practically condemned already in the natural course of elimination. The real saving was in illegitimate economy, which has since been costing the nation millions to make up, while dangerously weakening the security of the Empire. Subsequently, during the next five years, seven of the condemned vessels were secretly brought back into service, involving a heavy expenditure on repairs.

In 1909, when the "scrapping" policy was reversed, and the construction of small cruisers was tardily recommenced, the total of these vessels in commission and reserve in Home Waters had been reduced from forty-five to thirty. During the same period Germany had increased the number of her ships of a similar class from twenty-three to forty.

In the meantime, the trade routes had been left with a seriously diminished protection, which remains very dangerously inadequate to-day.

It is as necessary to scrap obsolete vessels as it is to scrap obsolete tools and machinery in an industrial concern; but in the case of the industrial business a newer and a better plant is installed. In the case of the Navy, the protection on the spot against a sudden, secretly organised attack on our trade routes has been removed, and nothing has been substituted. The Admiralty Memorandum in Sir Ian Hamilton's book, "Compulsory Service," begins by stating that "our really serious danger" is the unprotected trade routes, but by some fatality of unreason provides no protection for the danger indicated.

The true explanation of the whole deplorable business is the desire to save money on men and officers, by keeping the *personnel* within certain limits.

Given a certain number of men, there can only be a certain number of ships. But the public demand ships, as concrete objects which they can understand. They do not demand men and officers. Therefore, it was decided to effect illegitimate and contemptible economies in the very life of the Fleet, by systematic undermanning. His Majesty's ships have been

undermanned for years. But the most disastrous act of all was to cancel the provision of men for the future requirements of the Fleet, and then to throw away whole squadrons of valuable ships.

Let the public fix their attention on the men: on the training of officers, the welfare of the men; and the "ironmongery" will follow in due course. Let the public take warning by the "scrapping" policy, when the ships were reduced in order to save on the *personnel*.

The link between the "scrapping" policy and the further reduction of the Fleet, still with the object of saving money on the *personnel*, is the paying off into the nucleus crew reserve of seven battleships and four armoured cruisers, which occurred in 1906. The effect, as will be shown, was to substitute a reserve for part of the Active Fleet, for which a sufficient number of men could not be provided.

IV

SHIPS WITHOUT DOCKS

IV

SHIPS WITHOUT DOCKS

IN July, 1906, as I have said, the situation with regard to naval affairs was that the Admiralty, having been informed of the fact that Germany was enormously increasing her shipbuilding resources, and having previously abolished eighty valuable ships, declined to extend the British shipbuilding capacity, neglected to lay down new cruisers in place of those struck off the active list, and reduced the shipbuilding programme from four heavy armoured ships to three.

But these vessels were to be of the *Dreadnought* type, which is of so great a size that, with the exception of the new docks at Devonport, there were no docks which could accommodate the new ships. Now it is as wise to build ships without providing docks for them as it would be to build a locomotive engine without providing tools for cleaning

and repairing purposes. But in the case of the locomotive, the necessary equipment of tools can be quickly made, whereas docks take longer to build than a ship. Furthermore, what is not generally understood by the public is that docking accommodation is more important to the Fleet in respect of the periodical cleaning of ships, than in respect of repairs. A foul bottom retards the speed of the vessel and involves increased coal consumption. In other words, docks are more necessary before an action than after it.

For some years before the advent to power in 1906 of a Liberal Government "pledged to economy," the necessity of a naval base on the East coast had been recognized by the Unionist administration. Although there had been procrastination and delay, the Unionist Government, before their retirement, had actually made all arrangements to begin the construction of the naval base at Rosyth.

One of the first acts of the Liberal Government was to postpone the work. The Admiralty in this matter as in others was in collusion with the Government. On July 2, 1909, there was published in the Press an Admiralty

document, of which twenty-five copies were printed, in which were described various economies effected, at the request of the Government, among them being an item of £7,000,000 allocated for the construction of Rosyth.

Had a War Staff existed at the Admiralty, it is permissible to believe that such a betrayal of the public trust would not have occurred. In Germany, the Admiral Staff arranged that the construction of docks for the new heavy armoured ships should proceed concurrently with the building of those vessels.

Under pressure of public opinion the authorities were compelled to begin work at Rosyth, the cost of their procrastination being not only represented by inefficiency in the docking accommodation affecting the seaworthiness of the battle fleet, but by the increased price of the work, and the bonus offered to the contractor for its acceleration.

In July, 1909, I included in my proposed shipbuilding programme four floating docks to be provided at once. The Admiralty have since provided two. It should be clearly understood that the construction of floating docks was advocated instead of graving docks to

meet an emergency. Floating docks can be built quicker and at a smaller cost than graving docks, but they cannot serve the same purposes as graving docks, and can only be regarded as temporary substitutes.

Had the development of the Fleet been conceived and carried into execution upon a logical and a comprehensive scheme, including the provision of docks, stores, smaller fleet units and men, the country would have been saved the expense of the floating docks. The Fleet would also, in so far as material is concerned, have been organised for war, instead of being left to take its chance in case of emergency.

The reconstruction of Portsmouth Dockyard, which has long been unfit for modern requirements, has recently been begun, some years too late. To carry into execution a complete scheme is estimated to cost some eight million, of which only a small proportion is yet provided.

The scheme presented not long ago by the shipbuilders and civic authorities of Newcastle and the Tyne for the construction of a naval base at Jarrow Slake, adjacent to the great

private shipbuilding yards, has been rejected by the Admiralty.

My own suggestions for the construction of a repairing base at Immingham on the Humber have also been rejected.

There is to-day no Government dock, and only one private dock on the East coast in which a heavy armoured ship of the *Dreadnought* type can be accommodated, although there are thirty-one such ships built, building and projected (July, 1911).

In the event of an emergency, this condition of things must result in grave loss. In any event, the country will sooner or later be compelled to pay immense sums for the tardy fulfilment of deferred obligations.

Those who are unable to understand why the Navy Estimates have been increased, or why the increase should continue, may be recommended to study, among other aspects of naval administration, the question of dock accommodation.

V

THE DELUSION OF THE
DREADNOUGHT POLICY

V

THE DELUSION OF THE DREADNOUGHT POLICY

FOR the sake of clearness, I recapitulate the main aspects of naval affairs in July, 1906, a date which marks the beginning of disorganization as distinct from other "economies." The Fleet had been deprived of several squadrons of cruisers, the supply of gun-mountings was restricted,¹ the shipbuilding programme had been reduced, and the construction of an East Coast base postponed in order, according to an Admiralty memorandum, to save £7,000,000.

In each of these respects, the country has since been compelled to pay vast sums for the reversal of the policy, and the expense must continue to increase. It is always more expensive to make mistakes and then to repair them, than to pursue a settled plan.

In 1906, what has since (most unfortunately

¹ See Appendix VIII.

been known as the *Dreadnought* policy, was introduced to the public by means of an organized system of advertisement in the Press. The public were told that in the *Dreadnought*, a vessel had been designed which could sink any other two—or more, sometimes a fleet—of warships afloat; that she was the greatest triumph of shipbuilding skill known to history; that beside her, all other battleships were to be regarded as “obsolete,” or at least as “obsolescent.” These eulogies were inspired by the Admiralty, and the Press naturally believed what it was told by authority.

When the *Dreadnought* was launched the public were further informed that her construction had occupied the shortest time on record. The basis of comparison as regards other battleships was, however, vitiated by the fact that the time of construction was dated from the laying down of the *Dreadnought* to her launch. But between the date when the order was given for the material, and the laying of the keel-plate, months were occupied in manufacturing the material and in bringing it to the building slip. The time thus expended

was not reckoned in the comparison. Furthermore, the gun-mountings of two most valuable ships then under construction, the *Lord Nelson* and the *Agamemnon*, were taken for the *Dreadnought*, so that the completion of the vessels for which they were intended was delayed for nearly two years. By means of taking gun-mountings from other ships, of collecting material ready to fix in place, of postponing the official date of commencement until as much material is collected as the adjoining ground will hold, and of working overtime, it is very easy to show that a ship is built in a shorter time than her predecessors.

No doubt the speed with which the *Dreadnought* was built was a creditable achievement. But to serve their own ends, the Admiralty, supported by a deluded Press, chose to pretend that the achievement was much greater than in reality it was.

The effect of the blaze of advertisement was both to blind the public to the facts of the case, and to distract their attention from other, less obvious but more important, aspects of naval affairs. The public were, and are, hypnotized by the *Dreadnought* policy.

What was the *Dreadnought*?

She represented a development in shipbuilding nearly analogous to the development represented by the superiority of the *Lord Nelson* and *Agamemnon* class of battleship over the *King Edward VII.* class. Yet the *Lord Nelson* class enjoyed no advertisement.

The *Dreadnought* embodied the new idea called the "all-big-gun" theory. The secondary armament of 6-inch guns was omitted, and ten 12-inch guns were provided. In addition there were twenty-four 12-pounder guns, described by the Admiralty (Cd. 3048) as "for use against torpedo-craft." But it is problematical whether a 12-pounder shell would stop a destroyer.¹ The superior speed of the *Dreadnought* was stated to give "the power of choosing the range." These are technical matters, upon which there was, and is, considerable variation of opinion in the Service.

They are mentioned in order to show that the

¹ No guns, heavy or light, will protect a battle fleet from torpedo attack by night. The only effective method of protection is to employ a large number of small cruisers to clear a wide area about the battle fleet at sundown. These cruisers do not exist in the requisite numbers.

excessive and vulgar advertisement lavished upon this experimental vessel was by no means justified.

But the effect of that advertisement, for which the Admiralty were responsible, not only led the British public into a delusion from which they are still suffering, but created a natural irritation among foreign Powers.

In 1906 the tradition of dignity and courtesy hitherto prevailing in the Service was rudely violated, and Great Britain proclaimed herself the Bully of the Seas.

The British traditional policy was reversed in another respect. Hitherto it had been our practice to keep so powerful a margin of strength in ships that we could afford to await the result of the experiments of other Powers. In due time, when it became clear what our requirements with regard to other Powers were, we proceeded to fulfil them.

In building the *Dreadnought* we boasted—the Admiralty boasted—that we led the world. It was constantly stated that the launching of the *Dreadnought* had “paralysed” foreign Powers.

Both these statements were false. Every

great naval Power was already working on the problem, of which the *Dreadnought* was declared to be the final solution. In due time it appeared that the new Japanese, American and German battleships were actually superior to the *Dreadnought* in fighting power.

All that the British Admiralty had accomplished was to publish a new design just in time to enable other nations to profit by its defects.

These circumstances are recalled, disagreeable and humiliating as they are, because to-day,¹ when we have thirty-one *Dreadnoughts* built and building, the British public still regard the whole Navy as consisting of *Dreadnoughts*.

To the building of these great ships, necessary as it has become, every other naval requirement has been partially sacrificed; men, small cruisers, destroyers, docks, and stores. Without an adequate provision of these essentials, the battle fleet is useless for fighting purposes, and the money spent on it is a present to the future enemy. But the Admiralty succeeded in concentrating the public attention

¹ July, 1911.

upon battleships called *Dreadnoughts*. That is the delusion of the *Dreadnought* policy. Other essentials do not show. Their need is known only to naval officers. The public, naturally enough, know nothing of them. They trust the Admiralty to provide what is necessary.