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THE BRITISH NAVY IN THE WORLD-WAR

BY

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In the World-War of 1914-18 the British Navy was an almost invisible element to the ordinary landsman of our British countries. He never saw the ships, he heard little of these great structures of steel and iron as they lay upon the deep or guarded convoys or fought submarines. He only faintly realized their work as they watched the sweeping seas with continuous and almost microscopic care for any appearance of the great German fleet which lay in hiding behind the guns and mines and submarines of the impregnable fortifications of Heligoland; as they carried on the vast network of blockade against German ports and shipping, German trade and transport of men, German import of munitions or food, German development of plots and propaganda by travelling spies and agents; as they triumphed in occasional encounters with a skulking enemy—at the Falklands, in the Bight of Heligoland, at the Battle of Jutland, or in the heroic fight of Zeebruggé. When the War began the Fleets of Great Britain and Germany were as follows:—

GREAT BRITAIN.		GERMANY.	
Super-Dreadnought type.....	14	Dreadnought type	13
Dreadnought type	18	(Under completion)	3
Pre-Dreadnought type (1895-1908)	38	Pre-Dreadnought type (1891-1908)	22
Super-Dreadnoughts completing	3	Old types (1889-1893)	8
Total	73	Total	46
Armoured cruisers (1901-1908)	34	Armoured cruisers (1892-1913)	40
Cruisers (1890-1914)	87	Cruisers (1893-1910)	12
Destroyers (1893-1914)	227	Destroyers (1889-1913)	152
Torpedo-boats (1885-1908) ..	109	Torpedo-boats (1887-1898) ..	45
Submarines (1904-1913)	75	Submarines	40

The danger facing Great Britain and our Empire was not in superiority of naval power or in any pitched battle; it lay in a possible surprise, in the strategy of constant German raids, in the forced personal inaction of the sailor so far as battle was concerned, in a continuous life of strained expectation and preparation which day after day, for passing months