

In reply, Mr. Balfour said that he agreed with Mr. Churchill "general maxim" that you should not

"relax, for one instant, the necessary augmentation of your strength, so that no foreseeable revolution will ever put you at the mercy of some naval or military accident.....and I am glad that the government have come round to that opinion."

Mr. Balfour did not think it probable that the United Kingdom would be at war, without allies, against an European combination, and, contemplating a possible Armageddon, he said that

"Looking at it from a naval point of view, it seems to me that the fleets of the triple *entente* are not inadequate now, and are not going to be inadequate, to any strain that is going to be placed upon them."

His very temperate criticism of Mr. Churchill's proposed changes in the Mediterranean was:

"Is he not running it rather fine?"

Mr. Asquith's reply was short. Referring to Mr. Balfour's allusion to the government's change of attitude, he said:

"There never has been a moment, and there is not now, when we have not been overwhelmingly superior in naval force against any combination which could reasonably be anticipated" (a).

Sir Charles Beresford (whose irresponsible recklessness deprives his utterances of significance) was not satisfied. He declared that

"The fleet was divided, and altogether was not equal to the German fleet."

Compare that with the remarks, on the following day, by Lord Selborne, a leading Unionist who had himself been a First Lord of the Admiralty:

"If next year and in the years ensuing, the government acted up to the spirit of utterances of the Prime Minister and the First Lord, they would do their duty" (b).

This confidence is founded upon the following figures:

(a) Mr. Asquith also said: "I deprecate anything in the nature of panic or scare. I do not think there is the least occasion for it."
 (b) The above extracts are taken from *The Times* of 23 and 24 July 1912. A further debate is reported in the issue of the 25th.