

Year of Naval Unrest—Vacillating Admiralty



WHEN the year opened the British Navy was in process of being reorganized in accordance with a scheme which was described by the Board of Admiralty as increasing "the immediate striking strength of the Navy"; a description to which the Prime Minister, as chairman of the Committee of Defence, gave his authority, says the London Standard.

The scheme itself, details of which were first published in the Standard in October, 1906, consisted in laying up some 20 ships with "skeleton crews," reducing the sea-going squadrons by nearly one-quarter of their strength, and placing the ships thus withdrawn in the Reserve Fleet, henceforth to be known as the Home Fleet. According to Lord Tweedmouth (House of Lords, July 4), the number of available battleships was thus reduced to 39—a figure which agreed with the statement previously made in these columns, and which may be compared with the 63 battleships figuring in the official Navy List. The Atlantic Fleet was reduced from nine battleships to six, the Mediterranean Fleet from eight to six, the Channel and Atlantic Cruiser Squadrons from six cruisers each to four each. The Channel Fleet, the first line of defence, was reduced from 67 vessels to 21, and for several weeks during the year it consisted only of eleven battleships and three unarmored cruisers.

In January there were 19,000 officers and men kept from sea in nucleus crews. The percentage of captains at sea was 32.5, as compared with 44.4 in 1902, and of commanders 10 per cent, as compared with 17.

On January 2 the Parliamentary Secretary to the Admiralty stated that the Home Fleet "will be efficiently organized for instant readiness for war." The Standard pointed out that instant readiness for war was impossible to predicate of a fleet manned with nucleus crews and stationed in harbor. In consequence of the insistence upon this obvious fact, and of the representations of the true state of affairs in the navy made by the Standard and its supporters in the press, the following concessions were made by the Government and the Admiralty in the course of the year. In each instance the necessity for any change had been officially denied.

- 1.—Constitution of the Nore Division of the Home Fleet.
- 2.—Fully manning Nore Division and providing it with full ammunition.
- 3.—Checking intended reduction of gunnery schools.
- 4.—Restoration of Channel Fleet to nearly its former strength.
- 5.—Pledge to lay down medium cruisers.
- 6.—Pledge to carry out construction of naval base at Rosyth.
- 7.—Revision of obsolete regulations of battle practice.

Nore Fleet Fiasco

It was the original intention of the Admiralty to place six cruisers at the Nore. They were compelled to place a complete fleet of six battleships, six cruisers, five other cruisers, and torpedo flotillas there—on paper. It was officially asserted that the formation of this fleet made an equivalent to the loss of the sea-going squadrons. But the whole fleet has never been available, and in December every vessel, except one armored cruiser and two destroyers—three ships out of 37—was reported to be either in dock or waiting for docking. The Dreadnaught, the nominal flagship, has never been to the Nore, and cannot safely go there. Having constituted the Nore Division with nucleus crews and limited allowance of ammunition, the Admiralty were subsequently forced to provide full complements (thereby disconcerting the manning arrangements) and full allowance of ammunition. The Nore Division has been officially described throughout as instantly ready for war.

On May 27 the Standard published the fact that orders had been issued to reduce the gunnery schools. The order, as originally intended, was not carried out.

On February 19 it was officially announced that the Channel Fleet was not to be increased. On August 14 it was officially announced that it would be increased to nearly its former strength.

On March 7 it was officially announced that "we were sufficiently supplied with cruisers for the present." On July 30 a new and extended cruiser programme was promised.

A scheme for an East Coast base at Rosyth was presented by Mr. Lee in 1902. Last year the Government admitted the urgent necessity of the work. The 1907 estimates allowed only £10,000 for preliminaries, and all information was refused. On November 30 the First Lord announced that a large scheme would be begun.

On October 16 the Standard published a detailed account of the regulations governing the battle practice of the Fleet, and the way in which they were carried out, conclusively proving that, as a test of war efficiency, the battle practice returns were practically worthless. On August 19 precisely the same conclusions were proved with regard to the gunlayers' tests. On November 5 an official announcement was published outlining reforms

in the battle practice as suggested by the writer of the article.

Sir J. Fisher's "Admiral"

Yet the returns of both gunlayers' tests and battle practice had been quoted by the First Lord as absolute proofs of the efficiency of the whole fleet, and particularly of the Home Fleet. Even more significant is the fact that Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fisher, speaking at the Guildhall on November 9—four days' after the Admiralty had publicly withdrawn their own regulations—said that the gunnery efficiency of the fleet was "unparalleled," and that he was "lost in wonder and admiration at the splendid unity of spirit and determination that must have been shown by everybody from top to bottom to obtain these results."

There is one conclusion—among others—which is inevitably to be drawn from these facts. It is that the policy of an Administration which is driven by pressure of external opinion to these shifts and changes, cannot possibly be designed upon any coherent strategic scheme. It follows that public confidence is necessarily forfeited, and that the national security is endangered.

That, even in January, 1907, there was already a strong demand for a public inquiry into naval administration, is not surprising. The Prime Minister refused the request of a large number of members of parliament for such an investigation, giving as his reason that the First Sea Lord would resign if it were granted. During the year the demand has steadily strengthened, as the real condition of affairs in the fleet became known. In a letter read at the London Chamber of Commerce on November 13, Admiral of the Fleet Sir Frederick Richards advocated an inquiry, in which he was supported by Admiral Sir Vesey Hamilton.

Shipbuilding Programme

The building programme of 1906-7 was fixed, upon the advice of the Board of Admiralty, at a minimum of four large armored

ships. In July, 1906, one ship was dropped—with the approval of the same Board.

During the year the three new battleships of the Dreadnaught class—Bellerophon, Temeraire, and Superb—have been launched, together with the large armored cruisers, Defence (Minotaur class), Indomitable, Invincible, and Inflexible (Invincible class). The armored cruisers Achilles, Cochrane, Natal, and Warrior have been completed and have been placed at the Nore. The battleships Lord Nelson and Agamemnon are being completed, and are to be placed at the Nore.

The 1907-8 programme consisted of three Dreadnaughts. But the building of one of these was to depend upon the result of The Hague Conference—a weak concession to foolish sentiment. That Conference having proved—as regards Great Britain—a highly ignominious failure, the third ship was ordered. The one small cruiser Boadicea, parent ship for destroyers, is now under construction. As regards the torpedo flotillas, Mr. Robertson stated on July 31, that there was a steady annual output of five ocean-going destroyers, 12 coastal destroyers, and 12 turbine torpedo boats.

The real position with regard to destroyers is that, from 1897 to July, 1907, the number of destroyers built and projected by Great Britain is 73 (of which two have been lost), and by Germany, 73. But Great Britain has at one time been obliged to keep as many as 47 abroad. The German official life of a destroyer is 12 years. The inference is sufficiently plain.

With regard to the repairs of the fleet, the official statements of a general tenor, together with the constant refusal to give detailed information, have kept Parliament and the country in ignorance of the exact conditions. It is, however, clear to any observer of naval affairs that the ships of the Home Fleet, being kept in partial commission, must necessarily accumulate defects. No provision has been made for these in the Estimates.

The outlay in the future must, therefore, be very heavy.

As regards the repairs of the Fleet as a whole, Sir William White has stated that, basing his estimate on the percentage of repairs required on capital value, the estimates of 1905 were inadequate. The provision for 1906 was nearly £300,000 less. The estimates for 1906-7 showed a reduction on the previous year (maintenance, repairs, and sea stores) of nearly £1,200,000. At the same time, the salvaging of the Montague and the various accidents to large ships involved an outlay not included in the calculations. The refusal of the government to give repairs to private yards, and the large reductions in the dockyard establishments also indicate an inability to meet essential requirements. The general position may be inferred from these facts with some accuracy.

Two-Power Standard

The uncertainty with regard to the intentions of the government relating to the standard of naval strength was recently aroused again by Mr. Haldane, who, speaking at Hanley, on December 16, hinted that the Two-power standard might become untenable. But two days previously, the First Lord, speaking at Liverpool, had warned his hearers that large demands might be necessary in the interests of the national security. Again, Sir Edward Grey, speaking at Berwick, on December 19, stated that the present strength of the fleet was adequate. Which of these eminent politicians is to be believed?

The navy estimates showed a reduction of 1,000 men and £1,427,000. During the year the Coastguard, the most valuable of the reserves, was reduced by 316 men. Sixty-eight stations were closed and 13 reduced. On December 13 it was announced that only those stations where signalling was required would be retained under naval control. Should this intention be carried out, the government pledge that no more reductions would be made in the Coastguard service until Parliament had considered the matter, will be vio-

lated. Intense dissatisfaction has already been aroused in the lower ranks of the service at what is regarded as a gross injustice. Other important reductions in the estimates were a decrease of £225,000 for guns and £297,000 for ammunition. In October an order was issued whose effect was to reduce the pay of the lower deck under certain conditions—another cause of discontent.

At the end of June the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel fleet took a combined fleet (Channel and part of Home fleet), for a training cruise up the East Coast, round the North of Scotland, and down the West Coast. The various large seaport towns were visited on the way, with the excellent result of bringing the work of the navy under the direct observation of the country.

During the summer that part of the Nore division which was not in dock cruised in the North Sea.

On October 14 the Channel fleet, with a contingent from the Home fleet, was taken up the East coast and into northern waters for manoeuvres. No details of the work have been published, but it is known that very valuable results were secured under heavy weather conditions.

Home Fleet Review

On July 10 the Home Fleet was warned to mobilize for training and review on July 22. On that day the gunnery, torpedo, and other men went aboard the ships. Out of 244 vessels, over 60 were unavailable, but, as it was, the number of men available barely sufficed to man the remainder.

After a few days' cruising the Home fleet anchored off Cowes, and on August 3 it was reviewed by His Majesty the King. The fleet was illuminated at night. The cost of the pageant (which was not of the smallest practical use to any one) has not been disclosed, but it could hardly have been less than £100,000. On August 5 the King went for a short trip in the Dreadnaught, and witnessed an exhibition of gunlayer's skill, extremely creditable to the gunlayer, but bearing, of course, no relation to war practice. On the following day the Home fleet was occupied in "strategic exercises," the accounts of which were so obscure that no comment would be possible, even if it were desirable. The truth of the matter would appear to be that the whole business was arranged in accordance with the new Admiralty policy of popular advertisement and press inspiration.

"The signal made by desire of the King was sufficient testimony to the conduct of the officers and men. His Majesty the King is greatly pleased with the efficient condition of the Home fleet, and is very glad to have had the opportunity of inspecting it in such glorious weather."

Two of the new cruisers, Natal and Warrior, which had been taken out of dock for the occasion, were returned thither. Out of the total number of destroyers in home waters, about one-third were unfit for service owing to disrepair, irrespective of several which were disabled during the Home fleet exercises.

Admiralty Policy

There remains to be briefly considered a very grave aspect of the present naval administration. On October 19 there appeared in these columns a letter from a naval officer, who, acting under a sense of duty to his calling, deliberately infringed the regulations forbidding an officer on full pay publicly to comment upon matters connected with the service, and, in so doing, risked his whole career. He protested in the plainest terms against the system of "espionage" which had been introduced into the service. Mr. H. F. Wyatt and Mr. Spenser Wilkinson have since corroborated the allegation, affirming that they had documentary evidence of its truth.

The expenditure of public money by the Board of Admiralty upon the defence and explanation of their policy—an unconstitutional innovation—has been partly exposed in the House of Commons. The First Lord, whose duty it is to represent the Board, and upon whom the whole responsibility of its action rests, has made no statement on the subject. The Government are, of course, to be held primarily accountable for naval administration.

At the close of the year, the public uneasiness with regard to naval policy is steadily resolving itself into a demand for an impartial inquiry into the whole administration which, since the First Sea Lord was made responsible for all the business of Board by Order in Council, is associated with his name.

On December 21 the Standard announced that the Admiralty had decided to establish a Pacific and North American squadron, based on Esquimalt, the scheme to take effect in May next. As on a previous occasion had happened, an official denial was issued by the Admiralty. In the earlier case, the essential truth of our statement was at last admitted, and in the present case also we are content to await events.

In conclusion, The Standard and its supporters in the press may claim to have exposed the true state of affairs in the navy, and to have forced concessions upon seven essential points upon the Government and the Admiralty. In particular, the one test which has constantly been adduced in Parliament, and out of it, as a conclusive proof of the "efficiency" of the fleet—its achievements in gunnery—has been shown to be utterly fallacious.

Living London

FEW annual volumes are more replete with interest as well as information to the student of London problems than the 108th issue of the London Postal Directory, which Messrs. Kelly & Co. have just published.

To take an example at random, the bestowal of the Order of Merit on Miss Florence Nightingale is duly chronicled and included with her name and address in the Court section. We learn that there are no fewer than thirty-nine High streets, one borough alone having five within its boundaries, says the Belfast Whig. John street comes second in number, with twenty-two of its kind, although they were formerly the most numerous, some sixty of them having been re-named of late years. There still remain 14 of the 49 King streets and 14 of the 43 Queen streets. There are 13 Queen's roads and 11 Market streets. One street only is called "The Square," but most other titles are duplicated. The shortest street is Mansion House street, with only one house in it, and the longest Garratt lane, with numbers up to 998. Fulham road comes second with 969, and Old Kent road, formerly first, takes third place with 915 houses.

Even the "public-house" signs recorded become objects of interest to the historian, who will note the districts in which the Duke of York is ousted by the newer favorite, "The Duke of Wellington." The "Prince of Wales" is evidently the most popular sign, though king's and queens heads are almost as numerous. "Railway Taverns" abound mostly in the outlying parts of the county, and the 40 "Coach and Horses," as well as the three "Half-way Houses," remain as mementoes of the coaching days. Curiously enough there are two "World's Ends" in London, and a "World Turned Upside Down." There are six "Elephant and Castles," eighteen "Angels," as well as Chaucer's "Tabard" and "St. Thomas a Watering."

Quite a useful feature is the "Conveyance" section, which gives the best routes and various means of travel to and from the suburban districts. The "Church" section is as up to date as the rest of the volume, full details of the new denomination, "The United Methodist Church" being given, as well as the places of worship of every variation of religious faith extant in the metropolis.

The names of the members of the great Smith family in London occupy some sixteen columns of the "Court" directory, Jones fills some eight columns, Brown and Robinson seven and a half and four and a half respectively. There are some five columns of Whites and only 54 Blacks. Greys and Greens are fewer still. There are 190 Bells, but only one Peal. Agriculturists will be interested to know that there are 4 Acres and 97 Fields in London, which has also 48 Farmers, 13 Plowmen, and 3 Cows. There are 58 Frosts and 5 Fogs.

Two columns shelter the Foxes. There are three columns of Cooks and one of Carpenters, and pessimists will note there is at least one Man. Animal names are also to be found—viz., 65 Bulls, 2 Bunnys, 2 Rabbits and 17 Capons. There is only 1 Fatt and there are 7

Leans, 7 Pears, 1 Plum, 3 Grapes, 3 Oranges, 12 Peaches, and 16 Lemons also occur; and for trees there are 35 Alder, 46 Birch, 11 Beech, 8 Box, and 1 Oak. Two-Olives, 16 Vines, and 1 Primrose support 108 Birds, 16 Sparrows, 10 Eagles, 2 Pigeons, 27 Nightingales, and 5 Goldfinches.

There are several Drinkwaters and only 1 Coffee, 308 Bakers and only 1 Roll; 73 Barbers, with only 6 Poles, 4 Shaves, and 29 Beards, 8 Baths, and 4 Hairs. There are only 33 Batchelors, and only 3 own up to being Old; 256, however, claim to be Young. There are only 2 Plates, and for sportsmen there are only 8 Batts and 80 Balls. Ecclesiastical names include 42 Churches, 23 Chappels and 2 Sanctuaries. There are 42 Popes, 97 Bishops, 60 Deans, 13 Priests, and 26 Deacons.

There are many Kings, but no Queens, few Earls, but more Princes and Dukes.

Not only are there Fish, but also Crabs, Cod, Bass, Pike, and Whitefish, as well as 38 Bacons and only 1 Quarrell.

Financial Peace

THE Rome correspondent of the Standard says: Professor Luigi Luzzatti, whose name has been prominently before the public of late in connection with his proposal for an international conference for financial peace, outlined by him in the "Neue Freie Presse," is the veteran of the Italian Parliament, having been a member of the Chamber for over thirty-seven years; indeed, his first election was announced before he had reached the prescribed age of thirty required by the Italian Constitution for a member of the Senate or the Chamber. As professor to the university, as politician, and as Minister, he has devoted his time to the economic resurrection of the peninsula, and, whether in office or out he may be considered as the only man who really directs the financial policy of the country. All important steps in this field, as well as all the commercial treaties concluded by Italy are due to him.

The ex-minister of finance has explained to me some of the details of his great project, in which he combines a high ideal for humanity with a practical actuality that is peculiarly his own. He desires to follow the conference for peace by a conference having for its aim the eventual economic federation of the world, so that the financial support that is often extended by one great company or banking establishment to another in temporary need of gold should be rendered possible on a larger scale between great nations, who—reversing the usual order imagined by dreamers of the solidarity of the human race—instead of extending financial help to each other because they know themselves to be brothers, would learn to realise the brotherhood of humanity through the practical community of interests that holds them together.

I asked Professor Luzzatti to tell me what, according to him, should be the English point of view of the great design that he has suggested. The great statesman and

economist replied that business men, bankers and financiers alike have recognized that the gold basis in England is too restricted, and that it is necessary to enlarge it. An examination made in common by experts of the banks of emission and of the treasuries of all the principal states of the world would show how it would be well to modify the means and methods of circulation, and of the Treasury, and the relations of the banks of emission with the State Treasury, and how it would be possible to facilitate loans between banks of emission in order to moderate crises, in so far as they are the consequence of faulty banking arrangements. The conference would initiate a species of divisions of labor; for example, England would be most suited to assist America; and France, Italy, Austria-Hungary, and Russia, could, with their gold, assist the banks of England and Germany.

"When Minister of Treasury," added Professor Luzzatti, "I, with great advantage to my country, which has all foreign exchanges in its favor, increased the investment abroad of superfluous Treasury gold, and of a portion of the gold reserves of the Bank of Italy. When I was minister I invested no less than 30 millions of Italian gold in English Treasury bonds. A conference such as I desire would bring to light these and many other facts, and through the utility of common interests would be a great step towards the financial peace of the world." When I asked Signor Luzzatti whether he considered that the adherence of the United States to his proposed conference would be easily obtained, the ex-Minister replied that America was of all nations the most interested in discussing and examining the question, and that the relations between their State treasury and the banks of emission, and their technical arrangements with the latter, were the most apt to bring on crises, and to embitter them after they have arisen. In conclusion, Signor Luzzatti said: "The States of the world realize every day more and more that they can support one another in good as well as evil. The monetary evils of the United States or of some other great countries disturb the economic life of the wiser and more prudent nations, therefore so much the more necessary are economic misunderstandings and agreements for preventive remedies."

Queen Wilhelmina of Holland is one of the busiest monarchs of Europe, and is never happier than when attending the affairs of state. Even as a child she was fond of asserting her authority. One day she sent for a certain minister and announced that she had quarreled with and dismissed her governess. The minister gravely asked: "When does your majesty wish her to be beheaded? You know it is the custom in Holland to behead all those who are officially disgraced. It will be necessary for your majesty to be present at the execution, and—" Here the child queen abruptly left the apartment and the governess was reinstated at once.

Butterin—Why have you been studying those rules so hard for the last three days? Fuser—Don't bother me. I'm taking a girl to the game.—Harvard Lampoon.

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