

If during the years of peaceful dalliance and fearful anticipation it had been suggested that, in face of an unconquered German fleet, we could throw an immense body of men on the Continent, and complete the operation within ten days or so from the declaration of war, the statement would have been regarded as a gross exaggeration. This was the amazing achievement. It reflected credit on the military machinery; but let it not be forgotten that all the labours of the General Staff at the War Office would have been of no avail unless, on the day before the declaration of war, the whole mobilised Navy had been able to take the sea in defence of British interests afloat.

We do well not to ignore these obvious facts, because they are fundamental. The Navy must always be the lifeline of the Expeditionary Force, ensuring to it reinforcements, stores, and everything necessary to enable it to carry out its high purpose. That the Admiralty, with the approval of Admiral Sir John Jellicoe, felt itself justified in giving the military authorities a certificate of safe transport before the command of the sea had been secured indicated high confidence that when the German fleet did come forth to accept battle the issue would be in no doubt, though victory might have to be purchased at a high price.

Nor was this all. Thanks to the ubiquitous operations of the British Navy, the Government was able to move two divisions of troops from India, and to accept all the offers of military aid which were immediately made by the Dominions;