

equalled in war annals, bombs filled with poisoned gas and barbarous missiles of every kind threatened the ships and sailors from air and sea and land; beyond all this the honourable conventions and rules of sea-warfare, which had evolved in centuries of British fighting and been accepted by all civilized nations, were swept out of existence by Germany and replaced by unforeseen and cruel yet clever methods of destruction.

The seas, owing to domination by the peace-compelling Navy of our Empire, had so long been kept clear of buccaneers, filibusters, pirates, slave-dealers, and marauders of every description, who, in other ages, had infested the seas and shores of the world, that many had forgotten the beneficent influence and force of British sea-power, and it was not until the great war came and the old-time conditions were renewed for a season, that they began in a dim way to appreciate what the Royal Navy really meant. In Canada, however, so little was heard of its efforts, and of its sleepless watchfulness, of its mighty struggles with the submarine, that it is only now, after the War is over, that people are waking up to the vital value of its services. May they come to realize it in full! Meanwhile the Navy and its rulers did not stand still in construction during the World-War; the record of increased ships and men and guns was absolutely marvelous. Despite the loss of shipping from submarines the British fleet and its auxiliary craft grew from a total of 2,500,000 tons, costing, probably, 2,500 million dollars, to a total of 8,000,000 tons, costing an estimated 10,000 millions of dollars; its personnel, or sailors and operatives, grew from 146,000 to 450,000.

During the progress of the War British construction was steady. Four secret ships were built, of which no details were allowed to become public until the struggle was over but afterwards known to be 800 feet in length, with a displacement of 30,000 tons, a speed of 32 knots an hour and an armament of 15-inch guns. The *Empress of India* and *Benbow* of the *Iron Duke* class (25,000 tons) were built; five battleships of the *Queen Elizabeth* class (27,500 tons) were constructed and five others of 25,750 tons each were completed; four other battleships were purchased. All down the line of warships this progress continued, with also the construction of 4,000,000 tons of merchant shipping during the four and a half years of war.

While the losses of ships from mines or submarines were going on, the North Sea and English Channel, as the centre of existing sea-power, formed the scene of a naval activity almost inconceivable in its vast and ceaseless effort. There were long lanes of swift destroyers, great units of varied nature, fleets of myriad motor-boats and small shipping for