

FROM THE DREADNOUGHT TO SCAPA FLOW

VOLUME I
THE ROAD TO WAR 1904–1914



ARTHUR J MARDER
INTRODUCTION BY BARRY GOUGH

ARTHUR J MARDER was a meticulous researcher, teacher and writer who, born in 1910, was to become perhaps the most distinguished historian of the modern Royal Navy. He held a number of teaching posts in American universities and was to receive countless honours, as well as publish some fifteen major works on British naval history. He died in 1980.

BARRY GOUGH, the distinguished Canadian maritime and naval historian, is the author of *Historical Dreadnoughts: Arthur Marder, Stephen Roskill and the Battles for Naval History*, recently published by Seaforth Publishing.



ADMIRAL OF THE FLEET SIR JOHN FISHER
First Sea Lord, 21 October 1904–25 January 1910

[photograph by Beresford, London, in National Portrait Gallery]

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The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era 1904–1919

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To Jan

Teacher, tender comrade, wife . . .

Introduction

IN 1961, Volume I of a work of naval history and indeed international affairs appeared that was to change the way that the Royal Navy's experience in the run-up to the First World War was viewed by the reading public. In its depth of research, thoroughness of analysis and clarity of exposition, that volume set a new standard in naval history and attracted widespread attention in and out of the Royal Navy. It became a matter of curiosity, even amazement, that the author was an American based in far-off Honolulu. But truth to tell, that author, Arthur Jacob Marder, was already a well-known force among those writing modern history. Not only had he written the stellar *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: a History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era* – all about the years 1880–1905 and published precisely at Britain's most perilous moment, 1940 – he had also edited the private, even secret, journal of the admiral and historian Sir Herbert Richmond, one of the brightest, if iconoclastic, scholars and naval thinkers of his time. To this growing corpus of solid work Marder had contributed a three-volume compendium *Fear God and Dread Nought*, a combined biography and edition of letters of 'Jacky' Fisher (as well as various smaller studies in Japanese naval history and biographical accounts of Winston Churchill as First Lord of the Admiralty, 1911–15, and Fisher). Marder had advanced through time from one appreciably difficult subject to another, always keeping the Royal Navy squarely in his sights. Thus when the initial volume of *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* appeared it was the continuation of a long arc that began in a much earlier time and place, indeed to his undergraduate student days at Harvard.

Even until his death from cancer on Christmas Day 1980, and indeed down to our own times, it is still interesting to think that an American should have been the champion of the Royal Navy's history in some of its darkest hours. It was his immense skills as a researcher and brilliance as a writer – the essential combined capacities of an historian – that made for such compelling contributions to historical literature. He was gifted with inquisitiveness to a degree that was matched by his tenacity

in uncovering secrets and tracking down motivations. And given the essential requirements of the reading public of that age – that good history have broad appeal – Marder's talents were given free rein. To this day his *magnum opus* is read with wide appreciation and much benefit, for it was the first time that a comprehensive account was given of the trials and tribulations of Great Britain fighting for its life at the centre of a maritime war waged on near and distant seas, the outcome of which was by no means certain for the statesmen and sailors who were holding the trident of Neptune.

Not only did readers then as now wonder why it was that some of the greatest writers of English naval affairs were American, it was still a matter of puzzle (though quite a matter of chance) that their surnames all ended in 'M' – Alfred Thayer Mahan, who had in his *Influence of Sea Power upon History* books and his biography of Lord Nelson explained to the world the role of British mastery of the seas, Garrett Mattingly, who had written that undeniable favourite *The Armada*, which is still in print, and now Marder, doyen of the mid-twentieth century's naval historians, the most thorough researcher and the most vital of writers. Modesty was a personal characteristic that Marder exhibited. He was fond of pointing out that chance often knocked at his door, directing his affairs in ways that he was to find unexpected though, in the end, congenial.

He was born in Boston on 8 March 1910, the oldest of five children born to Russian Jewish immigrants Maxwell and Ida Marder. Hard work and dedication, plus undoubted intellectual capacities, drove him to top place in his high school, Boston English, and then admission to Harvard, perhaps despite the quota system that limited Jewish entry. He had the benefit of an outstanding undergraduate education, including sitting at the feet of William Langer, the highly regarded professor of international affairs and imperialism. Marder loved to tell the story of how, when running down the broad stairs of the Widener Library of Harvard to keep a lunch date, he ran headlong into the august Langer, who gathered his professorial composure to ask the youngster what his graduating thesis was to be. Marder blurted out in reply something about German generals in the late war. Langer dissuaded him. He pointed out that Lord Haldane's failed mission to Berlin at a critical time in Anglo-German naval rivalry was a subject in which documents had recently become available in print. Marder took up Langer's recommendation, and he never left naval subjects thereafter – right down to his last book, published posthumously in two volumes,

INTRODUCTION

Old Friends, New Enemies, all about the Royal Navy and the Imperial Japanese Navy. A second event that had chance as a feature was finally getting to see in the late 1930s hitherto unavailable Admiralty papers, held in the Admiralty Archives, a story I have told at length in *Historical Dreadnoughts: Arthur Marder, Stephen Roskill and Battles for Naval History* (Seaforth, 2010). Marder's persistence, coupled with an agreeable change of circumstances, allowed him to get access to Admiralty papers and to use them in his work, provided they were not cited directly, thereby protecting confidentiality and the names of living persons and their families. Reputations and privacy had to be protected, and the Official Secrets Act was not the only requirement that those in authority exercised. The third beneficial chance came when a senior admiral intervened, having heard that Marder had been given access to privileged documents that he needed to complete his work for *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow*: he knew the man in Whitehall to speak to and this he did, to Marder's undying gratitude. Getting access to the documents was the first challenge; using them in his texts was the second. Readers of this book must remember that Marder always lived under the watch of censors including those at the Admiralty, the War Office, and sometimes the Air Ministry plus the Cabinet, and that from the beginning to the end of his work on the Royal Navy his work had to be passed through official hands for the necessary clearance. Publishers required this, too, and they often guided Marder through the difficult minefields, giving reassurance and calling for patience and restraint.

In 1944, after many unsuccessful attempts to obtain permanent employment as a working historian and as a university teacher (always his lifetime ambition from about the age of 13), Marder was appointed Associate Professor at the University of Hawaii. He had previously worked in Colonel William Donovan's office of Coordinator of Information (later part of Central Intelligence Agency) in Washington, DC, taken an intensive course in Japanese, and become an instructor in university-level preparation for Army officer trainees. Attempts to join the United States Navy, the Royal Navy and the Royal Canadian Navy so that he could do his part in what he regarded as 'Marder's war' failed him. He had earlier watched Hitler's rapid rise to power from afar, and then he saw Italy and Japan join in the war against Great Britain that, with the British Empire, stood alone until Pearl Harbor. A sound basis in French, German and Russian history, particularly diplomatic aspects, gave him a broad knowledge. His reading in East Asian as well as Mediterranean history was extensive.

FROM THE DREADNOUGHT TO SCAPA FLOW

In the testing circumstances of those times, the old order was collapsing quickly around Marder. Privately he must have fought the isolationist tendencies that existed in American public opinion.

The study of British history and the years spent in Britain on research infused an anglophilia in Marder, one that he did not shy away from though he was as critical as was possible in treating the foibles and shortcomings of his historical subjects. He was fond of British admirals. He found in admirals' wives sources of support and ways of networking that he had not previously imagined. Some of them wore more gold braid than their husbands; they often made contacts and documents available to Marder that speeded his inquiries. He found the companionship of admirals entirely agreeable, and he liked to say that it was a good thing that Langer had dissuaded him from studying German generals, whom Marder thought a most uncongenial bunch and who were, in any event, not very good at making war. Marder necessarily built up a vast network of correspondents, many of them officers in the Royal Navy. He would draw up a list of questions, some general, some specific, and his correspondent would reply. Some very full replies are to be found in his papers at the University of California, Irvine. Added to those files are letters sent in appreciation or comment about his books. At the same time he was active in the historical profession in the United States, more particularly the American Historical Association, and this, too, gave him a broad scholarly network in his own country. British naval history was not a common subject to study in American academe. Naval history was not a normal course in History at American universities. Hence Marder was regarded as a specialist in his chosen field. He never taught naval history as such. His burning passion was to teach undergraduates about historical method – selection of documents, the study of historiography, the roles of chance and fate, the role of psychoanalysis and personality study, the interplay of character and circumstance, counteracting bias, and the illusions of scientific history. Narrative history was to Marder the essential thing, and to be able to tell a good story that was based on as full a basis of historical detail as possible was his aim.

* * *

Those who read his *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* today and in the future will be amazed at the long arc of narrative that takes the story from 1904 to 1919. Marder had enough sense of European literature

INTRODUCTION

to realise that he was writing dispassionately about triumph and tragedy, and in the end, when he brought his narrative to a close with the internment of the German High Seas Fleet, the battle that the diplomats were waging in Paris regarding the surrendered enemy naval assets, the scuttling of the German ships at Scapa Flow, and, with a view to the future, the disputation exhibited by British and American statesmen and admirals about who would dominate the naval affairs of the future, we sense that he was pointing the way to a new and even darker world.

That world was, of course, the one he inhabited. But there is yet one other feature of Marder's work that needs mention here by way of preface or introduction: Marder got behind the scenes in British naval thinking for the first time. This, to him, was the war behind the war. He was interested in personal motivation. He was interested in policy formation, essential to the ascribing of success or, conversely, failure. The interplay of the First Lord of the Admiralty, the political head of the Service with a seat in Cabinet, and the First Sea Lord, the professional head of the Service and in effect the chief naval officer, fascinated him. His study of Fisher had sharpened his interest, and beginning with the first and continuing right through the five volumes we see this interaction at work. We sense the shifts of positions as circumstances change. We see that some personalities cannot work with their opposites. We follow the demands by press and Parliament for changes of command. Throughout we see how Marder had mastered the personnel files, how he made firm judgements of his subjects, and how he never shied away from playing the role of an all-seeing judge, one with temperate positions, one who makes sober judgements. That having been said, a charge might be made against Marder for being soft on Jacky Fisher. Marder subtitled the book *The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era*, that era beginning in 1904, when Fisher came to the Admiralty for the first time as First Sea Lord, and ending in Fisher's fading days. Marder's attraction to Fisher was fuelled by his own reforming zeal and his impatience with old ways. Marder did not shy away from discussing Fisher's faults (which were many), nor did he ignore the quarrels in the Service that arose from these, but he was prepared to see in Fisher the man who prepared the Navy for its great struggle, a struggle carried through against all perils and astounding difficulties ashore and afloat to victory. The command of the sea had never been lost. Great Britain and the British Empire remained intact.

FROM THE DREADNOUGHT TO SCAPA FLOW

At the beginning of his first of five volumes Marder introduces the opening scene of this long saga with Fisher's arrival at the Admiralty. The era was already fraught with concerns about Germany's increasing naval power. The Fisher revolution begins, aided and even nurtured by First Lord of the Admiralty Earl Selborne's naval reforms, many of which are impossible to implement because of the class-consciousness of the Senior Service at that time. Engineers and Lower Deck presented intractable problems that Fisher could not solve. Fisher's reforms also require the scrapping of smaller and slower warships on distant stations, the reorganisation of fleet units, and the redistribution of the fleet, meaning essentially the gathering of units for a potential action in the North Sea. Onto this scene comes the revolutionary all-big-gun, fast and heavily armoured battleship *Dreadnought*, itself enough to stir up all sorts of difficulties even without Fisher's fight with Admiral Charles Beresford, which Fisher does not win to his satisfaction, the Prime Minister, Asquith, already having seen in the First Sea Lord a difficult and divisive force. Thus having given a summary of the British naval scene in the first decade of the century, Marder turned to the Germans and their naval challenge. We follow with interest the role of Tirpitz, we see the calculations about British naval supremacy on paper, and we examine first German naval attempts to get a place in the sun in Morocco. Fisher retires in 1910 and is made a peer, and the Admiralty settles in under less firm hands.

Already the battle lines have been drawn, for Marder has portrayed the darkening horizon as British statesmen fail to placate the Germans by negotiations and missions. He explains Parliamentary response to public agitation by the voting for more dreadnoughts so as to insure British naval supremacy. Fisher's sternly defended Two Power Standard has now long since vanished. Winston Churchill arrives as First Lord of the Admiralty in 1911, soon to become the champion of the superdreadnoughts, and so carries through the 1913 naval estimates with thoroughness and decision. This adroit piece of statecraft made him the doyen of the Navy in later years for it gave the Navy some of its biggest ships, many of which saw service in the subsequent war. Right to the end of this first volume we are treated to an explanation and examination of such vital topics (each of which alone could deserve an historical monograph) as: the problems of the Mediterranean (France, Italy and Turkey), the Committee of Imperial Defence's work and gallant attempts at inter-service

INTRODUCTION

cooperation and planning, the prevailing strategies and tactics of the era, defensive and offensive strategies in fleet actions, commerce warfare, and combined operations. The development of tactical thought exposes the weakness in British thinking as the war looms ever closer. And finally, the grand examination of British and German fleets, men and material, on the eve of the First World War – the paucity of top-notch admirals, the over-reliance on great guns at sea, naval deficiencies in bases in the North Sea, and the role of naval rivalry in the coming of the Anglo-German war. All of these and much more Marder had considered as well as explained. The appendix lists British and German dreadnoughts and battlecruisers as of August 1914. For the first time a portrait had been given of the Royal Navy, its men and materiel, its preoccupations and expectations and its challenges and responses in the lead up to the eve of the First World War. The high praise rightly granted it by press and readers of the era was coupled with the hope that the next volume, expected to be the second and last of the work, would soon appear.

Before closing, the story of the trials and tragedies of this volume and its successors needs to be told, if by way of reminder of how dreadful accidents can beset a working writer. Marder had intended a longer volume than the one that is reprinted here (note the preface is dated June 1960). On 12 May, at the University of Hawaii, Marder had finished his term's teaching. He had marked the final examinations and placed them in two boxes in his university office so that janitors, according to instructions he gave the senior janitor (who subsequently was off work the next week), could clear them away and incinerate them. Through one foul-up or another, the duty janitor disposed of two boxes of Marder's research notes, his raw materials for the June 1915 to June 1919 chapters. It was a tragedy in the literary line such as Thomas Carlyle had faced with the manuscript of his *French Revolution* or T E Lawrence with his text about Arabia.

Heartbroken, Marder thought about abandoning the rest of the project. He rewrote his preface into the one that is included in this reprint. His publisher, Oxford University Press, agreed to make the work into more than one volume, imagining that two would suffice to bring the story to the close of the war. From Marder's point of view, in the end, and for subsequent topics of the longer work, he was obliged to redo much of his research. He faced difficulties in getting satisfactory damages from his university and a court action ensued. The university admitted that it had a vested interest in Marder's

FROM THE DREADNOUGHT TO SCAPA FLOW

research project, and release time was granted so that distant travel could be undertaken by him, and copying expenses allowed for and covered. Difficulties ensued, however. Painstaking work in British periodicals and newspapers could not be replicated as thoroughly as he hoped. Some of the manuscript materials could not be retraced. His naval friends in England, notably Vice Admiral Sir Peter Gretton, himself an historian of note, gave appreciative and indeed heroic support, believing as they did that Marder was the only working scholar who could write a balanced and unbiased history of the Royal Navy in the First World War, the matter of Jutland being that of greatest lack of clarity and explanation. Captain John Creswell, a noted authority on tactics and sea warfare, came forward to offer all sorts of advice that a sailor might know and a land-based author would not. Captain Stephen Roskill, author of the Cabinet Office official history *The War at Sea*, gave Marder much help, though he was hard-pressed to get his own books completed and cleared for release. But more urgently, for its part, the Admiralty made sure that they eased Marder's research work on his early return to London (and assisting in microfilming and copying). Speed was of the essence, for playing catch-up was now of vital concern if Marder and his publisher were to keep to their intended fast pace. This behind the scenes story of this first volume of *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* is one for the ages, and with generous spirit in the preface to the second volume he paid tribute to the three janitors of the University of Hawaii who had inadvertently proved a boon to the project. That was the measure of the man. Happy warrior that he was in the history line he had moved from one field of battle to another.

When the first volume of *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow* appeared to such acclaim and satisfaction, its successor was eagerly awaited. That not one but four additional volumes were to appear before the whole reached completion is a story for other times and other places in this reprint series. Marder undoubtedly was wildly optimistic in thinking that the whole epic, warts and all, could be completed in a comprehensive compass of a volume or two. The story is also told in *Historical Dreadnoughts*. His indulgent publisher, realising that their prize historian was writing great history, gave him all the freedom of movement and the space he needed. What other historian had this privilege? History nowadays is not written on such a noble scale, and more's the pity, for the remarkably thorough coverage of such a vast subject is Marder's gift to the annals of civilisation. No historian of our

INTRODUCTION

own times would attempt such a thing, for tastes and requirements have changed and contemporary naval historians have moved on to other topics and concerns (and rightly so). Marder is not imperishable, but he left to the corpus of historical literature a work for the ages, now happily reprinted for the very first time.

BARRY GOUGH,
Victoria, BC, Canada

Preface

In 1940 there was published my *Anatomy of British Sea Power: a History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880–1905*. Its sequel has been long delayed because of the war and the unavailability of certain crucial source material. It is, like its predecessor, based on a mass of unpublished material, virtually all published works of any value to the subject, Parliamentary papers, *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, the leading newspapers, periodicals, and professional journals, and correspondence and interviews with officers and civilians having first-hand knowledge of the subject. Owing to a dreadful accident reminiscent of what happened to the manuscript of Carlyle's *French Revolution*, most of my material for the 1915–19 years was destroyed in May 1959. I am re-doing the lost work and hope to complete the volume on the naval aspects of the war and its immediate aftermath before too long. Meanwhile, there seems little point in withholding publication of the completed portion of the manuscript.

Although I have in the present volume been concerned with many facets of the history of the Royal Navy during the pre-war decade, I have kept my eyes fixed on Ariadne's thread—the *British* aspects of the Anglo-German naval rivalry. Its terminal points are indicated by the revolutionary battleship type, the dreadnought, whose introduction ushered in the most intensive phase of the rivalry, and Scapa Flow, the wartime base of the Grand Fleet and the site of the climactic scuttling of the Kaiser's Fleet on 21 June 1919. The same years mark the 'Fisher Era' in the Royal Navy. From October 1904 to January 1910 the redoubtable 'Jacky' Fisher dominated the Navy as it has never been dominated by a single individual. Thereafter, until his restoration in October 1914, he exerted a powerful influence on naval policy behind the scenes. Mounting wartime differences with Churchill, the First Lord, resulted in his abdication, for such it was, in May 1915. He was never again prominent in the war councils of the nation, but the Admiralty (Sea Lords and Naval Staff) and the Navy were run for the balance of the war and for better or worse by his disciples and former assistants, Jellicoe, Jackson, Wemyss, Oliver, *et al.* The entire period was also one in which *matériel*

PREFACE

considerations bulked somewhat larger than the more 'sublime' aspects of naval warfare, strategy and tactics. Fisher was the father of the *matériel* school. It is, then, hardly a misnomer to call the 1904-19 period the Fisher Era in the Royal Navy.

The dictum of Sir Charles Firth that 'the art of telling a story is [an] essential qualification for writing history' has guided my efforts, however unsuccessfully. One way I have attempted to achieve this result has been to eliminate the impedimenta of scholarship like the meticulous acknowledgment for every word that has been borrowed. Another way has been to stress the people who made the naval history of the period. A point that strikes the historian forcibly is the amount that personality affects history. I have also attempted to go beyond a mere description of events. A knowledge of the motivations of individuals and groups is both interesting and essential; likewise the relating of public opinion, both professional and lay, to the formation of naval policy, since naval policy was never formed in a vacuum. For purposes of this study it is an academic point whether newspapers, periodicals, and organizations voice public opinion or make it—whether they lead or follow. The important fact is that the makers of British naval policy were influenced by public opinion as reflected, accurately or not, in Parliament, newspapers, periodicals, and the activities of organizations.

The preparation of this volume and of the one to follow has put me under an immense debt of gratitude to a myriad of people and institutions who have given most graciously of financial aid, time, and material. I must begin with the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (with an affectionate bow towards that great friend of scholars, Dr. Henry Allen Moe, the Secretary-General), the American Philosophical Society, and the Social Science Research Council, which admirable organizations made possible extended periods of research in England. The University of Hawaii lightened my labours considerably through granting me reductions in teaching load, a semester of freedom from all regular duties, secretarial assistance, and funds for the purchase of photographed material. My warmest thanks go to President Laurence H. Snyder, Provost Willard Wilson, and Dean Robert W. Hiatt for making all this possible.

I am profoundly grateful to the following individuals, libraries, and government departments for the use of invaluable unpublished

material: Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, Sir Owen Morshead, one-time Librarian at Windsor Castle, and his able successor, Mr. R. C. Mackworth-Young: the *Royal Archives* at Windsor Castle; the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty (among whom I simply must single out the First Lord of the Admiralty, the sixth Baron Carrington, his immediate predecessor, the tenth Earl of Selkirk, and Sir John Lang, the Secretary): the *Admiralty Record Office archives*, the *German Ministry of Marine archives*, the (Rear-Admiral Roger M.) *Bellairs Papers*, the (Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry) *Jackson Papers*, and the Naval Staff monographs on the First World War and miscellaneous papers of interest in the Admiralty Library and the Historical Section; the Public Record Office: the *War Office archives* (used only for General Staff war plans); the Trustees of the British Museum: the *Balfour, Campbell-Bannerman*, and *Jellicoe Papers*; the Dowager Countess Jellicoe: some important *Jellicoe Papers* apparently not included with the main collection at the British Museum; the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C.: *United States Navy Department Records*; the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich: the papers of Sir W. Graham Greene (Secretary of the Admiralty, 1911-17) and of various admirals of importance in the Fisher Era—May, Richmond, Madden, Milne, Howard Kelly, but particularly the (Sir Alexander) *Duff*, (Sir Sydney) *Fremantle*, and (Sir Frederick) *Hamilton Papers*; Lady Duff: supplementary material pertaining to her husband's career during the war; Balliol College, Oxford: the *Asquith Papers* at the Bodleian; the second Earl Beatty: the *Beatty Papers*; Lady Carson and the Hon. Edward Carson: the *Carson Papers*; Commander T. C. Crease: the *Crease Papers* (Captain Thomas E. Crease was Fisher's Naval Assistant); the third Viscount Esher and the Hon. Lionel Brett: the *Esher Papers* (the second Viscount Esher); the late Nina, Dowager Duchess of Hamilton, the late first Viscount Lambert, and the fourteenth Duke of Hamilton: the *Fisher Papers* at Lennoxlove; the second and third Barons Fisher: the *Fisher Papers* at Kilverstone Hall; the eighth Marquess of Lansdowne: the *Lansdowne Papers* (the fifth Marquess of Lansdowne); Mr. David McKenna: the *McKenna Papers*; Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Oliver and Vice-Admiral R. D. Oliver: the *Oliver Papers* (recollections of the former); Mrs. Margaret Staveley and Lieutenant-Commander W. D. M. Staveley: the *Sturdee Papers*; Vice-Admiral Sir St. John Tyrwhitt,

PREFACE

second Baronet: the *Tyrwhitt Papers*; the Hon. Mrs. F. Cunnack: the *Wester Wemyss Papers*. Certain of these private collections, notably the Jellicoe, Beatty, Asquith and Lennoxlove MSS., have copies of some of the Admiralty material, including Cabinet papers like the C.I.D. minutes and papers. I have made no attempt to indicate duplication of material in the unpublished sources.

The manuscript profited greatly from a constructive reading by Sir John Lang, Rear-Admiral P. W. Gretton, of the Imperial Defence College, Lieutenant-Commander P. K. Kemp, the Admiralty Librarian and Head of the Historical Section (who was helpful in many other ways), and Commander M. G. Saunders, of the Historical Section. Admiral the Hon. Sir Reginald Plunkett-Erle-Erle-Drax, Rear-Admiral W. S. Chalmers, and Captain S. W. Roskill, the Official Naval Historian, furnished valuable critiques of the last three chapters. Admiral Drax also provided some useful papers. These gentlemen must not be held responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation in this volume. They are all my own!

Of aid to the project in various ways were the third Earl of Balfour, the first Baron Hankey, Admirals of the Fleet Viscount Cunningham of Hyndhope, Lord Chatfield, Sir Charles Forbes, and the late Sir Osmond de B. Brock, Admirals Sir William James, Sir Barry Domville, H. M. Edwards, and J. H. Godfrey, the late Admirals Sir Reginald Bacon, Sir Frederic Dreyer, and Sir Sydney Fremantle, Vice-Admirals Sir Geoffrey Barnard and K. G. B. Dewar, Rear-Admiral H. G. Thursfield, Lieutenant-Commander Peter Troubridge, Mr. C. V. Hill, Deputy Librarian of the Admiralty, Mr. H. R. Aldridge, Deputy Keeper of Manuscripts at the British Museum, Mr. D. H. Turner, of the Museum's Department of Manuscripts, Miss Katherine Lindsay-MacDougall, formerly Custodian of Manuscripts at the National Maritime Museum, Lieutenant-Commander D. W. Waters, Mr. G. P. B. Naish, and Miss S. L. Fisher, of the National Maritime Museum, the late Sir W. Graham Greene, Professor Michael A. Lewis, late of the Royal Naval College, Miss Enid Price Hill, of the Royal Archives, Professor Robin D. S. Higham, of the University of North Carolina, Mr. Peter M. Stanford, Mr. Everett T. Moore, Head of the Reference Library at the University of California, Los Angeles, and his staff, Mr. Henry J. Dubester,

PREFACE

Chief of the Reference and Bibliography Division, Library of Congress, and his staff, Mr. A. P. Young and Miss V. S. Heath, of the Admiralty Library, Professor Jacob Adler, Miss Joyce Wright, and Mrs. Judith Tokunaga (the perfect secretary), of the University of Hawaii, Mrs. Maria Hormann, formerly of the University of Hawaii, Miss M. B. Johnston, Curator of the Fisher Papers at Lennoxlove, Commander F. Barley and Mr. W. Pfeiffer, of the Historical Section, Admiralty, Mr. Guy H. Cholmeley, Mr. Vincent Quinn, Deputy Librarian of Balliol, Mr. H. H. Elmers, one-time Head of the Admiralty Record Office, Mr. P. D. Nairne, Principal Private Secretary to the First Lord of the Admiralty, Mr. F. H. Wilkinson, Departmental Records Officer at the Admiralty, Mr. A. E. Culley, of the Admiralty's Accommodations Section, Mr. A. Victor Hull, of the Department of Printed Books at the British Museum, Messrs. A. W. Mabbs, R. L. Anslow, and Peter Fellows, of the Public Record Office, Lady Allardyce, Mr. John R. B. Brett-Smith, President of the Oxford University Press, New York—and finally and indispensably, Mr. Geoffrey Cumberlege, one-time Publisher of the Oxford University Press, London, his worthy successor, Mr. John Brown, and his staff at Amen House, whose encouragement and extraordinary patience have been more than I have deserved.

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In conclusion, a few explanatory notes are in order. It has, unfortunately, not been possible to indicate the source of some of

PREFACE

the documents cited in footnotes. . . . The term 'navalist' is a coinage. It refers to those people, civilians and officers, who actively supported a big-navy policy. 'Navalism' is the big-navy movement. . . . I have made use of the many pertinent articles in the *Naval Review* (see below, p. 403), but, in accordance with the policy of this splendid journal, without citing it by name. . . . The volume on the war will include a full bibliography of the sources used for both volumes. . . . It may be helpful to note certain abbreviations used in the text which may not be intelligible to the uninitiated:*

C.I.D.	: Committee of Imperial Defence
C.O.S.	: Chief of the Admiralty War Staff†
D.N.C.	: Director of Naval Construction
D.N.I.	: Director of Naval Intelligence
D.N.O.	: Director of Naval Ordnance
N.I.D.	: Naval Intelligence Department

Honolulu, Hawaii
June 1960

ARTHUR J. MARDER

*I would not want any reader to make the kind of mistake related by Lady Murray in her biography of her husband, the one-time Secretary of the Admiralty, Sir Oswyn Murray: 'To save time initials were used for the Heads of Departments, D.N.I. for instance being used for the Director of Naval Intelligence, and these initials could be confusing for a new-comer. On one occasion a request for stationery was given to a girl to type and address. The mystic letters K. of S. & P. presented no difficulty to her, and she addressed the request to "the King of Spain and Portugal". This potentate not being known in the Admiralty, the error was quickly discovered, and the Keeper of Stationery and Printing duly delivered the goods.'

†'C.O.S.' is used nowadays for the Chiefs of Staff Committee set up in 1923.

Contents

page
vii

PREFACE

PART I. FISHER'S YEARS OF POWER, 1904-1910

CHAPTER I. PROLOGUE

1. THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE 3
 Attitude towards war—State of international relations—
 Mahan's influence—The *raison d'être* of British sea power—
 Britain's 'eternal interests'—The German threat—'Splendid
 isolation'.
2. THE ROYAL NAVY AT THE TURN OF THE 6
 CENTURY
 Pride in the Navy—Reforms of the eighties and nineties—
 Deficiencies—Reasons for the backward state of the Navy.
3. THE PROTO-NAVAL RENAISSANCE, 1899-1904 11
 Effects of German naval expansion and the South African War
 —Fisher's policies in the Mediterranean and afterwards—He
 becomes First Sea Lord.

CHAPTER II. FISHER AS FIRST SEA LORD

1. THE MAN 14
 Fisher's appearance—Personality—His religious conviction
 and knowledge of the Bible—Non-professional interests—
 Energy—Other assets as an administrator—Opinion of
 politicians—Attitude towards details—Paper controversies—
 Style of correspondence.
2. HIS FIRST LORDS 19
 Role of the First Lord—The other Board members—Quality
 of the First Lords—First Lord—First Sea Lord combinations—
 Fisher's First Lords and his relations with them.
3. GUIDING PURPOSES 23
 Imperative need for economies—Reductions in the navy
 estimates—The war readiness of the Fleet—Ideas on foreign
 policy—List of major reforms.

CHAPTER III. THE FISHER REVOLUTION

1. PERSONNEL REFORMS 28
 Fisher and the importance of the personnel—The 'Selborne
 Scheme' of 1902—Its motivations—Selection of com-
 missioned officers—Genesis of the Naval War College—
 Promotions policy—Training of the reserves and crew—The
 gunnery revolution—The Lower Deck.
2. THE NUCLEUS-CREW SYSTEM 36
 Fisher's opinion of it—The old Fleet Reserve and Dockyard
 Reserve—Nucleus crews—Significance of the system.
3. SCRAPPING OF OBSOLETE MEN-OF-WAR 38
 Reasons for the policy—Drastic nature of the reform—Sub-
 sidiary advantages.

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
4. REDISTRIBUTION OF THE FLEET	40
The situation in 1904—Redistribution—Concentration in home waters—The Channel, Atlantic, and Mediterranean Fleets.	
5. THE DREADNOUGHT AND THE INVINCIBLE	43
Launching of H.M.S. <i>Dreadnought</i> —Her novel features—H.M.S. <i>Invincible</i> —Reasons for the design—Fisher, the 'Oil Maniac' and submarine enthusiast.	
CHAPTER IV. DISSENSION IN THE NAVY: THE MAJOR REFORMS	
1. THE SELBORNE SCHEME	46
Objections of the critics—The Engineering branch—Early entry—The more thoughtful critics—Acceptance of the scheme—Alterations, pre-war—Alterations, post-war—The 1955-6 changes—Fisher's vindication.	
2. THE SCRAPPING POLICY	52
Arguments of the critics—Effects of the Hague Conference, Declaration of London, etc.—The Foreign Office view—The Admiralty's case.	
3. THE DREADNOUGHT CONTROVERSY	56
The strong opposition—Inevitability of the type: plans of other powers, technological, strategical, and tactical considerations—Importance of the Naval Attachés' reports—Technical objections to the dreadnought—The Admiralty rebuttal—A concession to the critics—Two myths on the genesis of the <i>Dreadnought</i> —Evaluation of the dreadnought policy—Technical criticisms of the battle cruiser—Commentary—Fisher's early reaction to the opposition.	
CHAPTER V. DISSENSION IN THE NAVY: THE FISHER-BERESFORD FEUD	
1. THE NEW HOME FLEET	71
The Admiralty memorandum of October 1906—The din of protest—Specific objections—Attitude of the Foreign Office—The Admiralty position—Development of the Home Fleet.	
2. FISHER'S 'PERSONAL RULE' AND METHODS	76
The 'Syndicate of Discontent'—The Fisher camp—Underlying causes of the unrest—The attack on Fisher's 'personal rule' and methods—Analysis of the charges—Did Fisher penalize his opponents?—Justification.	
3. FISHER AND BERESFORD	88
Beresford, the man and the admiral—Beginnings of the feud—Custance's role—Beresford's criticisms and demands—The conference of 5 July 1907—Beresford's complaint about the removal of Sturdee <i>et al.</i> —His apprehension over the cruiser and destroyer 'shortage'—His criticism of Bayly and the armoured cruiser—The paint-work incident—The split in the service—Fisher's feelings—The demand for an inquiry—The Academy dinner and other incidents—Arthur Lee's letter— <i>The Times</i> statement—The weakness of the Cabinet—Termination of Beresford's command—The deceptive calm.	

CONTENTS

Page

CHAPTER VI. THE GERMAN NAVAL CHALLENGE, 1900-1908

1. GENESIS 105
Deterioration in Anglo-German relations—The German Navy Laws of 1898 and 1900—Growing concern of the Admiralty and Government—Events of 1902-3—King Edward's visit to Kiel in 1904—Visit of a German squadron to Plymouth—Imaginary war stories.
2. THE MOROCCAN CRISIS 110
The Dogger Bank crisis—Sharpening of Anglo-German relations—The war scare in Germany—Fisher's ideas on war—His 'plans' for a preventive war—German jitteriness—The German diplomatic offensive—The Admiralty's apprehensions over Morocco—British naval-military commitments to the French—The naval conversations—Fisher and naval co-operation with France—Fisher and the generals.
3. MOTIVATIONS 119
The Liberal attitude towards the German Navy—The navalist position—German motives for naval expansion—English forebodings—Feeling of the inevitability of war—Significance of the political factor.
4. THE TWO-POWER STANDARD 123
Origin of the standard—Balfour's modification in 1904—Elaboration—Fisher's defence of the two-power standard—British superiority in battleship strength.
5. THE CAWDOR PROGRAMME 125
Its content—Liberal changes in the programme—The minor navy scare of 1906—Reports from the Naval Attaché in Berlin—Reception of the 1907-8 estimates.
6. THE HAGUE CONFERENCE 130
The problem of arms limitation—The Cronberg meeting of King Edward and the Emperor William—The Germans question British sincerity—The Admiralty's views on limitation of naval armaments—Arms limitation at the Conference—Press reaction in England—Consequences of the Hague failure to check naval armaments.
7. THE DARKENING HORIZON 135
Fisher's speech at the Lord Mayor's banquet in 1907—The amended German Navy Law—The response in Britain—The shipbuilding programme for 1908-9—The Cabinet crisis—Public reception of the estimates—The Navy debate of 9 March 1908—The Tweedmouth Letter—Cabinet reconstruction—The Lloyd George-Churchill campaign—King Edward's visit to Cronberg in 1908—Press warnings of German invasion—The Emperor's *Daily Telegraph* interview—Mounting navalist agitation—Asquith clarifies the two-power standard—The agitation continues—Dumas's reports from Berlin—The Military Attaché's dispatch—Impressions of the new Naval Attaché—The Casablanca crisis—The danger of war.

CHAPTER VII. THE NAVY SCARE OF 1909

1. PROLOGUE 151
The 1909-10 shipbuilding programme—German capital ship strength—Evidence of German acceleration—The German

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
explanation—The Sea Lords' estimate of German capital ships in 1912—The revised building programme—The depression in shipbuilding and engineering.	
2. THE MULLINER AFFAIR	156
Mulliner's disclosures—His motivations—The pressure of armament firms—Evaluation of Mulliner's role in the scare.	
3. PEAK OF THE CRISIS	159
The schism in the Cabinet—Personalities—McKenna and Lloyd George—Deadlock—Feelings run high—The compromise—Wrangling over its wording—Uneasiness of the Sea Lords—Metternich's assurances—The 1909-10 estimates—The navy debate of 16 March 1909—Tirpitz's statement of 17 March—'We want eight, and we won't wait'—The debate on the vote of censure, 29 March—Cabinet friction—The Austrian and Italian dreadnought plans—Their impact on British naval policy.	
4. FUTILE NEGOTIATIONS	171
Bülow and Tirpitz disagree on the cause of English hostility—The possibility of a preventive war—German feelers for an agreement—The negotiations of October–November 1909—Why they failed.	
5. EPILOGUE	177
Had Tirpitz been telling the truth?—German and British capital ships in 1912—Churchill's conclusions—Beginnings of an Imperial Fleet—Hardening of the feeling of the inevitability of war—Imaginary war novels, spies, the air danger, fairy stories—Loss of faith in naval limitation by agreement—Scrapping of the two-power standard.	
CHAPTER VIII. FISHER'S RETIREMENT	
1. THE NAVAL INQUIRY	186
Intensification of the anti-Fisher campaign—Beresford hauls down his flag—He consults with Balfour and Asquith—Appointment of a C.I.D. sub-committee to investigate Beresford's charges—Fisher's exasperation—Public revelation of the Bacon Letters—McKenna's defence of Fisher—The Prince of Wales takes sides—The sub-committee hearings—Résumé of the proceedings—The sub-committee's report—Beresford's and Fisher's opinions—The Beresford-Asquith aftermath.	
2. RESIGNATION AND RETROSPECT	204
Fisher decides to go—Grant of a peerage—Why it was well that he retired—Evaluation of his tenure as First Sea Lord.	
PART II. PRELUDE TO WAR, 1910-1914	
CHAPTER IX. THE McKENNA-WILSON RÉGIME, 1910-1911	
1. THE NEW ORDER AT WHITEHALL	211
A. K. Wilson becomes First Sea Lord—His background—Wilson, the man—His shortcomings as a First Sea Lord.	
2. DREADNOUGHTS AND POLITICS	214
The Cabinet crisis over the 1910-11 navy estimates—Compromise—Foreign Office and navalist objections—Liberal	

CONTENTS

Page

press—Churchill objections—The navy debates—Agitation over bases—and for a national defence loan—A 'recrudescence of scare', September–October 1910—Radical pressure against 'bloated' armaments—McKenna's admissions in Commons, 8 February 1911—Lloyd George v. McKenna—Public reception of the 1911–12 estimates—McKenna and Grey in the House—Restiveness of Radical and Labour M.P.s—Rumours of an amended German Navy Law.

3. THE NAVAL CONVERSATIONS 221
Foreign Office suspicions—The new British position—1910–11 negotiations for political and exchange of naval information agreements—Influence of the Agadir Crisis—Resumption of negotiations, January 1912—Why agreement was not possible.

4. RENEWAL OF THE JAPANESE ALLIANCE 233
How the naval arrangements under the Alliance had worked—The naval conference of May 1907—Continuing friction in naval relations—Advantages to Britain of the Alliance—C.I.D. discussion of its renewal, 1911—Grey's speech at the C.I.D., 26 May 1911—Renewal of the Alliance.

5. THE AGADIR CRISIS 239
German objectives—Perplexity over German aims—Possibility of a German base at Agadir—Lloyd George's Mansion House speech, 21 July 1911—Apparent imminence of war—Unreadiness of the Fleet—Belated precautions—Absence of a war plan at the Admiralty—The C.I.D. meeting of 23 August 1911—Effect of the crisis on German naval plans.

6. THE RESHUFFLE AT WHITEHALL 246
Haldane's demand of the Prime Minister—Admiralty opposition to a naval staff—The anaemic Navy War Council—The Archerfield House conference, September 1911—McKenna is shifted to the Home Office—The McKenna-Asquith discussion of strategy—McKenna and Churchill exchange offices.

CHAPTER X. THE CHURCHILL PERIOD, 1911–1914: PREPARATION FOR WAR

1. CHURCHILL AS FIRST LORD 252
Public appraisal of the new First Lord—Churchill, the man—His absorption in the Navy—Visits to the Fleet and yards—Interference in technical matters—A. K. Wilson and a naval staff—Bridgeman replaces Wilson—The Bridgeman affair—The quarrel between Churchill and the Sea Lords—King George V and Churchill—Churchill's acceptance by the Navy.

2. AN ERA OF REFORM 264
Churchill-Fisher relations—Fisher's influence—Establishment of an Admiralty War Staff—Its growing pains—Its pre-war achievements—Alleviation of Lower Deck dissatisfaction—Merit, the passport to achievement—The 'Queen Elizabeth' dreadnoughts—The oil problem—The flaw in Churchill's oil policy.

CHAPTER XI. THE CHURCHILL PERIOD, 1911–1914: ON THE EVE OF ARMAGEDDON

1. THE HALDANE MISSION 272
German naval plans after Agadir—The mediation of Cassel and Ballin—The German supplementary Navy Law

(*Novelle*)—Prospects of Haldane's mission—His conversations in Berlin, February 1912—The text of the *Novelle* and its impact in London—The political and naval negotiations—The 'Willy' to 'Georgy' letter—Stalemate—Churchill presents the navy estimates, 18 March 1912—The response in England and Germany—Metternich is replaced—Why the Mission had failed—The beneficial results.

2. THE MEDITERRANEAN PROBLEM :

FIRST PHASE

287

Formation of the Home Fleets—Foreign capital-ship strength in the Mediterranean—The Government's alternatives—The fight against the 'abandonment' of the Mediterranean—The views of the General Staff and the Foreign Office—The Malta discussions—The crucial C.I.D. meeting of 4 July 1912—The Cabinet debates the Admiralty's proposals, 15-16 July—Grey's statements—Churchill's review of the naval position at the C.I.D., 11 July—He appeals for three ships above the programmes—The policy of the Canadian Government.

3. THE MEDITERRANEAN PROBLEM :

SECOND PHASE

298

Churchill outlines the situation in the North Sea, 22 July 1912—The Parliamentary and press reaction—Strategic results of the Italo-Turkish War—The Admiralty's concern over new Italian bases—Establishment of a German Mediterranean squadron—The Turkish Navy—British naval missions in Turkey—Admiral Limpus's proposals—The renaissance of the French Navy—The French press for naval conversations—They concentrate their Fleet in the Mediterranean—What did it mean?—The Government's dread of too close naval and political links—The proposed naval convention—The Grey-Cambon notes of 22-23 November 1912—The naval agreement of 10 February 1913—The Admiralty and the Government try to keep their hands free—The Russian attempt to start naval conversations—The Russian Fleet—The British lack of interest in closer naval relations.

4. THE 1913 AND 1914 ESTIMATES

311

Tirpitz accepts a 16:10 standard in dreadnoughts—E. L. Woodward's analysis—Attitude of Sir Edward Grey—The 1913-14 estimates—Churchill's 'naval holiday' speech in the Commons, 26 March 1913—Criticisms in England and Germany—The acceleration of three capital ships—Churchill reiterates his 'naval holiday' offer, 18 October—Repetition of the earlier criticisms—Renewal of the Radical campaign against 'bloated' estimates—The navalist programme—Lloyd George's interview, 1 January 1914—The Cabinet deadlock over the estimates—The Admiralty's arguments—The near break-up of the Cabinet—A compromise is reached—Churchill introduces the estimates, 17 March 1914—The widespread dissatisfaction.

CHAPTER XII. EVOLUTION OF PRE-WAR STRATEGY AND TACTICS

I. THE REVOLUTION IN *MATÉRIEL*

328

Mines—The development of the torpedo—Destroyers—Submarines—Conflicting opinions on their value—Percy Scott's

CONTENTS

Page

letter in *The Times* of 5 June 1914—The submarine and close blockade—Anti-submarine measures—Airships—Aeroplanes, seaplanes, and their uses—The German airship menace—The C.I.D. airship discussions of 6 December 1912 and 6 February 1913—British airships at the outbreak of war.

2. THE COMMITTEE OF IMPERIAL DEFENCE 341

Establishment and functions—Early ineffectuality and reasons thereof—The Otley régime—The Hankey régime—The role of the C.I.D. in the last pre-war years.

3. DEFENSIVE STRATEGY: THE INVASION BOGEY 344

Preparation against a surprise attack—Debate on the invasion problem: 'Blue-Water' School v. The 'Bolt-from-the-Blue' School—The Defence Committee invasion inquiry of 1903—Agitation of Roberts, Repington & Co.—Proceedings of the C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Invasion, 1907-8—The Sub-Committee's conclusions—A. K. Wilson's opinion on invasion, 1910—The moral of Italy's invasion of Tripoli—The results of the 1912 and 1913 manoeuvres—The C.I.D. Sub-Committee on Invasion, 1913-14: new factors, conclusions—Churchill's restatement of the Admiralty position, 1914—The Germans and the invasion of Great Britain.

4. DEFENSIVE STRATEGY: THE *GUERRE DE COURSE* BOGEY 358

The danger of an enemy strategy of commerce destruction—Mahan's opinion—Consequences of the Hague Conference and the Declaration of London—The Admiralty conference of 30 April 1905—Rejection of convoy—The accepted principles of commerce protection—Under-estimation of the *guerre de course*—Fisher's prediction of the submarine as a commerce-destroyer—Opposite views—Churchill reiterates the Admiralty's position on trade protection in war—The defensive arming of merchant ships—The question of a national guarantee of shipping during war—Experience of the war.

5. OFFENSIVE STRATEGY: FLEET ACTIONS AND BLOCKADE 367

Primacy of decisive naval action—The expectation that the High Seas Fleet would fight—Ups and downs of the close blockade policy—The 'observational blockade' of 1912-14—Its replacement by distant blockade in 1914—Churchill's ideas of a more aggressive strategy—Critiques by the War Staff.

6. OFFENSIVE STRATEGY: COMMERCE WARFARE 377

German and British thought on an economic blockade of Germany—The right to capture private property at sea—Its value—The War College war plans of 1907—The deterrent effect of the right of capture—British opinion favouring the abolition of the right—The question at the Hague Conference—The views of Admirals Wilson and May—Commerce warfare and the war plans—Summary.

7. OFFENSIVE STRATEGY: COMBINED OPERATIONS 383

Inability of the Admiralty and War Office to work out joint plans—Reasons—Amphibious warfare: Fisher's ideas—His contempt for the General Staff's schemes—His Baltic scheme—Admiralty-War Office disagreement over joint operations in 1905—The C.I.D.-Cabinet meeting of

CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
3 December 1908—The advent of General Sir Henry Wilson at the War Office—The historic C.I.D. meeting of 23 August 1911—The Admiralty proposal for military co-operation in amphibious undertakings—Improved Admiralty—War Office relations in the Churchill period.	
8. THE DEVELOPMENT OF TACTICAL THOUGHT	395
Fisher and naval tactics—The Fighting Instructions and rigid-line tactics—Pre-war exceptions to the doctrine—Deployment of the Fleet for battle—Over-centralized command v. decentralization—Night firing—Tactical instruction—The lack of uniformity of thought on tactics—Crossing the 'T'—The strategical and tactical instruction at the Naval War College—The failure to co-ordinate tactics and gunnery—The ascendancy of the <i>matériel</i> school—The 'historical' school—Why there was no serious study of strategy and tactics—The low opinion of naval history—H. W. Richmond, a case history—Esher, Churchill, and naval history.	
CHAPTER XIII. THE BRITISH AND GERMAN FLEETS IN 1914	
1. THE PERSONNEL	405
The paucity of top-notch admirals in 1914—Prince Louis of Battenberg—Callaghan, Henry Jackson—Other senior admirals—The rear-admirals and the captains—Beatty—Jellicoe—The decisive advantage held by the officers—Appraisal of the German naval officers—Other advantages of the British officers—Summary.	
2. THE MATÉRIEL	413
The 'fallacy of the dominant weapon': the big gun—Comparison of British and German guns—Percy Scott and director firing—The <i>Thunderer</i> v. the <i>Orion</i> test—The excellence of German gunnery—Comparison of British and German capital-ship armour—Ineffective shells—Anti-flash arrangements—Underwater protection of British and German capital ships—Torpedoes and mines—Summary—Numerical comparisons in capital ships.	
3. NAVAL BASES	420
The situation in the North Sea—The development of Rosyth—Scapa Flow and Cromarty—Scapa Flow's inadequate defences—Summary—The German bases—An observation on British naval deficiencies.	
CHAPTER XIV. THE COMING OF THE WAR	429
Anglo-German naval relations in the last pre-war months—Tirpitz as a strategist—The role of the naval rivalry in Anglo-German relations—The test mobilization of July 1914—Fleet movements—Jellicoe replaces Callaghan as C.-in-C., Grand Fleet—'Commence hostilities against Germany'—Churchill's relief and confidence—Confidence of the Fleet—The German sense of inferiority.	
APPENDIX. BRITISH AND GERMAN DREADNOUGHTS AND BATTLE CRUISERS IN AUGUST 1914	437
INDEX	443

List of Illustrations

PLATES

Admiral of the Fleet Sir John Fisher, First Sea Lord,
21 October 1904–25 January 1910 *Frontispiece*
(*Photograph by Beresford, London, in the National Portrait Gallery*)

Facing page

I–IV: First Lords of the Admiralty, 1900–15—

- | | | |
|------|--|----|
| I. | 1. The Earl of Selborne, First Lord, October 1900–February 1905 | 10 |
| | (<i>Photograph: Radio Times Hulton Picture Library</i>) | |
| | 2. The Earl of Cawdor, First Lord, February–December 1905 | 10 |
| | (<i>From a drawing by Frank Dicksee, R.A.</i>) | |
| II. | 1. Lord Tweedmouth, First Lord, December 1905–April 1908 | 11 |
| | (<i>Photograph: Radio Times Hulton Picture Library</i>) | |
| | 2. The Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna, First Lord, April 1908–October 1911 | 11 |
| | (<i>From a photograph at the Admiralty</i>) | |
| III. | The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill, First Lord, October 1911–May 1915 | 26 |
| | (<i>Photograph by Dinham, London</i>) | |
| IV. | 1. The Rt. Hon. Reginald McKenna: caricature by Max Beerbohm, 1913 | 27 |
| | (<i>From Fifty Caricatures, by permission of William Heinemann Ltd.</i>) | |
| | 2. The Rt. Hon. Winston Churchill: caricature by ‘Nibs’ | 27 |
| | (<i>From Vanity Fair, 8 March 1911, by permission of the National Magazine Company Ltd.</i>) | |

V–VIII: Admirals of the Period

- | | | |
|----|---|-----|
| V. | 1. Admiral Lord Charles Beresford, C.-in-C. Mediterranean, 1905–7, C.-in-C. Channel, 1907–9 | 202 |
| | (<i>From the portrait by C. W. Furze, by permission of the trustees of the National Portrait Gallery</i>) | |

ILLUSTRATIONS

2.	Admiral Sir Percy Scott <i>(Photograph from his Fifty Years in the Royal Navy, John Murray, 1919)</i>	202
VI.	1. Admiral Lord Charles Beresford: caricature by Max Beerbohm <i>(From Fifty Caricatures, by permission of William Heinemann Ltd.)</i>	203
	2. Admiral Sir Percy Scott: cartoon by 'Spy' <i>(From Vanity Fair, 17 September 1903, by permission of the National Magazine Co.)</i>	203
VII.	1. Admiral of the Fleet Sir Arthur K. Wilson, First Sea Lord, January 1910–December 1911 <i>(Photograph at the Admiralty)</i>	218
	2. Admiral Sir Francis Bridgeman, First Sea Lord, December 1911–December 1912 <i>(From the portrait by Ernest Moore)</i>	218
VIII.	1. Admiral Prince Louis of Battenberg, First Sea Lord, December 1912–October 1914 <i>(From the portrait-sketch by Philip de Laszlo, by permission of Admiral of the Fleet Earl Mountbatten)</i>	219
	2. Admiral Sir George Callaghan, C.-in-C. Home Fleets, 1912–14 <i>(Photograph by J. Russell & Sons, London)</i>	219

Map

British and German North Sea bases in 1914	422–3
--	-------

PART I

Fisher's Years of Power,
1904–1910

I

Prologue

What shall we do to be saved in this world? There is no other answer but this, Look to your moat. The first article of an Englishman's political creed must be that he believeth in the sea.

MARQUESS OF HALIFAX, 1694.

Were you to run your business on the same lines as the army and navy are run, you would be bankrupt in three months.

REAR-ADMIRAL LORD CHARLES BERESFORD, 1898.

I. THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

IN THE latter part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century war was not generally regarded in the western world with dread and as a confession that civilization had failed. The pacifists were beginning to emerge and there was much public discussion of the horrors and injustice of war. But this was not the prevalent feeling. A hundred years without a major war had made many people inclined to forget the horrors of war. Moreover, to the pre-1914 generation war was the law of the civilized world as much as of the uncivilized. Clashes between nations were certain to take place periodically. Universal peace was a mere will-o'-the-wisp. Not only were wars inevitable, but it was desirable that this should be so. 'War represents motion and life, whereas a too prolonged peace heralds in stagnation, decay, and death . . . it has only been by war that from these humble beginnings it has been possible by evolution and natural selection to develop so comparatively perfect a creature as man.'¹ Again, it was held that the relentless extermination of 'inferior individuals and nations' was a natural means of improvement of the race. 'War remains the means by which, as between nations or races, the universal law that the higher shall supersede the lower continues to work.'² These quotations could be multiplied *ad infinitum*.

The state of international relations in the last pre-war decades made war seem likely. Aggressive imperialism—the mania for

¹ Lieutenant-General Sir Reginald C. Hart, 'A Vindication of War', *Nineteenth Century*, Aug. 1911.

² Harold F. Wyatt, 'God's Test by War', *ibid.*, Apr. 1914.

annexing or otherwise controlling territory—was piling up the fuel for Armageddon. Contributing their share were the violent press campaigns and the hectic armament races, the latter intensified by the unending contest in military development between the menace and the antidote.

In such a tinderbox age it was believed that no government and no people would respect vacillation or weakness. The 'big stick' was the most eloquent argument of diplomacy and the best guarantee of national security. For Britain the Navy was the big stick that really mattered. The British faith in this weapon was tremendously fortified by *The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660–1783*, published in 1890 by an unknown American naval captain, Alfred Thayer Mahan. A companion volume, *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and the Empire*, appeared in 1892. These works effected a revolution in the study of naval history 'similar in kind to that effected by Copernicus in the domain of astronomy.' Mahan's main purpose was to wake his countrymen up to the supreme importance of sea power. The books attracted world attention and were especially influential in England, where eyes were only half-opened to the meaning of the command of the sea. Mahan did not discover anything new; but whereas historians had treated naval history for the most part as a series of external episodes, subsidiary and subordinate to contemporary military enterprises, Mahan showed, almost for the first time, what sea power really was and what its influence had been in history. He proved by a wealth of concrete example that sea power was silent and far-reaching in its operations, affecting the national well-being in peace and the national strength for war in many directions. He reminded the British of their special stake in naval supremacy.

'There are two ways in which England may be afflicted. The one by invasion . . . the other by impeachment of our Trades . . .' In these words of Sir Walter Raleigh we have the *raison d'être* of British sea power throughout the ages. Trade protection and security from invasion both depended on sea power. The former became a pressing matter in the late nineteenth century, when most of British foodstuffs and the industrial raw materials needed for industry were coming from abroad. Deprived of her trade, Britain could not possibly have maintained her industries, fed her rapidly growing population, or equipped her armies.

The humanitarian and beneficent influence exercised by the Royal Navy was commonly introduced to buttress Britain's claims to naval supremacy. British sea power, it was pointed out, had been used as the servant of mankind by destroying the slave trade and piracy and by safeguarding law and order throughout the world. Also, as *The Observer* put it (18 July 1909), 'Without the supremacy of the British Navy the best security for the world's peace and advancement would be gone. Nothing would be so likely as the passing of sea-power from our hands to bring about another of those long ages of conflict and returning barbarism which have thrown back civilisation before and wasted nations.'

As Lord Palmerston used to say, England had no eternal friendships and no eternal enmities, but only 'eternal interests'. These were three in number and closely related—broad concerns of British policy for three hundred years: (1) the maintenance of a stronger navy than that possessed by any likely combination of powers—that is to say, no power or combination of powers should deprive Britain of control of the seas, particularly the seas which wash the British Isles; (2) the independence of the Low Countries—no hostile power should control the European shores of the English Channel; (3) the maintenance of the balance of power in Europe—no single power should dominate the continent of Europe.

At the turn of the century these vital interests, these means of securing Great Britain and the British Empire, began to be seriously threatened for the first time since Napoleon's heyday. The German Navy Laws of 1898 and 1900 heralded the advent of a potentially formidable naval competitor—a navy that was to be so powerful that, to use the official formula (1900), 'if the strongest naval power engaged it, it would endanger its own supremacy'. Ominous was the fact that this coincided with a growing deep and widespread distrust of German aims in England. The villain here was the German government's adoption of a *Weltpolitik* which made friction with the leading colonial power inevitable. The Kruger Telegram (1896) first revealed to the British the hostile character of official German policy. Deeply resented was the German government's policy of profiting from Britain's predicament in South Africa. The agreements providing for the eventual partition of the Portuguese colonies (1898) and partitioning Samoa (1899) were among the concessions and

compromises wrested from Britain. The British regarded these agreements as blackmail. The virulence of German Anglophobia during the South African War removed any doubts about the essential unfriendliness of German public opinion. And all the while, poisoning relations, was the programme of the Pan-German movement, which envisaged German control of the Low Countries and much else in Europe. These ambitions would not have been taken too seriously in England but for one factor: the Pan-Germans were never officially and whole-heartedly disavowed by the German government.

At the turn of the century, Britain stood in not-so-splendid isolation. France and Russia, allies since 1894, appeared incurably hostile; relations with the United States had been strained by the Venezuelan boundary dispute, but were improving; Germany, rejecting British overtures in 1898 and 1899 for a rapprochement, was dead set on using Britain's ticklish world position to wrest advantages for herself; Austria and Italy were friendly, but as Germany's allies could not be relied on.

The spirit of the age, the state of Anglo-German relations, and Britain's isolation pointed up the pressing need for a powerful and efficient Fleet. There was some question whether the Royal Navy could meet these specifications.

2. THE ROYAL NAVY AT THE TURN OF THE CENTURY

The Key to an understanding of the 'Fisher Era' proper (1904-1910) lies in a consideration of the naval milieu at the turn of the century and in the work of Admiral Sir John Fisher in the years 1899-1904. The great Jubilee naval review of 1897 had instilled in Englishmen a spirit of bursting pride and confidence in their Navy, and a year later the Fashoda crisis confirmed the English in the belief that theirs was just about the finest fleet that had ever sailed the seas. Pride in the Navy, the saviour of peace with honour, overflowed into unlimited confidence. 'Of really powerful, formidable navies,' puffed one British service periodical, 'there does not exist at the present moment one in the world except our own.' In reality, the British Navy at the end of the nineteenth century had run in a rut for nearly a century. Though numerically a very imposing force, it was in certain respects a drowsy, inefficient, moth-eaten organism.

The Navy scares of 1884 and 1888, in exposing the backward state of the Navy, had stimulated reforms, particularly during the régime as First Sea Lord of that silent, stubborn, brilliant administrator, Admiral Sir Frederick Richards (1893-9). The huge ship-building programmes of 1894 and after had given the Navy numerical superiority over the Franco-Russian Alliance. Gone were the hodge-podge battleship designs of the 1880's. The 'Royal Sovereigns' and their successors, the creations of Sir William White, the Director of Naval Construction (1885-1902), were the envy of the Continent. Notable advances in the nineties were a vast programme of naval works and a scheme for manning the Fleet. The Naval Intelligence Department was developed into a very useful tool. Annual partial mobilizations of the Navy were started in 1888. This, too, was an era of magnificent seamanship. Yes, much had been accomplished since 1884, but much more remained to be done before the Navy was a thoroughly efficient, battle-ready force.

Successive naval administrations had shrunk from the changes which science and its application to warfare had rendered inevitable. Officers and men were still being trained in the elements of sail seamanship, though sails had all but disappeared by the 1890's, and the steam engine, hydraulics, and electricity were supreme.

The higher training of officers was neglected. The officers had a scanty knowledge of the tactics and strategy of the new era, although the introduction of the iron-clad warship, the steam engine, long-range ordnance, the torpedo, the submarine, mine, wireless, and high-explosive shell had profoundly modified the tactics of the sailing-ship era and the application of the principles of strategy. There was no staff or war college for the study of these subjects, nor was there much encouragement for young officers to learn the principles of strategy and tactics by reading naval history.

Lord Charles Beresford, the probable Commander-in-Chief in a naval war of the near future, was reported to have stated in 1902 that 'he was now 56 years old, with one foot in the grave, and he had only tactically handled three ships for five hours in his life, and that was a great deal more than some of his brother admirals'. Recalls one admiral: 'Fleet drills took the form of quadrille-like movements carried out at equal speed in accordance with geometrical diagrams in the signal book. These corybantic

exercises, which entirely ignored all questions of gun and torpedo fire, laid tremendous stress on accuracy and precision of movement.’³ Apparently these drills and evolutions were devised less for their war value than for their competitive value, with ship pitted against ship.

Naval strategy was equally neglected. Owing to the First Sea Lord having neither the time nor the organization for the purpose, detailed war plans were lacking in the 1890’s. During the Mediterranean tension in the middle of 1893, the British Commander-in-Chief more than once complained that he had not been given any war plans. The first reasonably detailed plan of war in the event of conflict with France and Russia was drawn up only in the midst of the Fashoda crisis of 1898. Complete plans began to be developed only after this time.

When Fisher joined the Board of Admiralty as Second Sea Lord in 1902, he remarked that the ideas of warfare of his colleagues were of the bow-and-arrow epoch. In fact, it was still the ‘spit and polish’ era. As in the opening scene of *H.M.S. Pinafore*, the sailors in 1900 were still polishing the brasswork. The pride of the naval profession was to a considerable extent centred in the smartness of the men-of-war. Therein lay the road to promotion.

The torpedo was generally regarded as unworthy of serious attention, and even gunnery was not taken too seriously. Admiral of the Fleet Sir Reginald Tyrwhitt has written of his midshipman days in the Mediterranean Fleet in the late 1880’s: ‘Gunnery was merely a necessary evil. Target practice *had* to be carried out once in each quarter of the year . . . no one except the Gunnery Lieutenant took much interest in the results. Polo and pony-racing and amusements were more important than gun drill, not that midshipmen took any part in the polo or racing, but we were all very proud of the exploits of our Senior Officers.’⁴ Indeed, as late as the nineties, gunnery practice was considered a nuisance, and instances of ammunition being thrown overboard were not uncommon. Gunnery practice was limited to 2,000 yards, little greater than the range in Nelson’s time, because no system of controlling fire at long range had been evolved. Since it dirtied the paint-work of a ship, it was hurried through as quickly as possible. One admiral used to judge the efficiency of a ship, after an in-

³ Vice-Admiral K. G. B. Dewar, *The Navy from Within* (London, 1939), pp. 25–6.

⁴ Tyrwhitt’s uncompleted, unpublished memoirs; Tyrwhitt MSS.

spection tour, by the condition of his white kid gloves after he had concluded his visit! When flagships were engaged in shooting drills, admirals often remained on shore to escape the din. It is not, therefore, surprising that the annual prize-firing resulted in only a small percentage of hits. In 1902, British warships missed the target more than twice out of three rounds.

The faulty, obsolete system of education, with its stress on out-moded subjects and discouragement of independent thought, produced few admirals of conspicuous ability. Fisher was constantly occupied with the problem of the paucity of 'first-class intellects' among the senior officers.

As regards the seamen, lower-deck life was uncomfortable, to put it mildly. The Navy fare was still 'hard tack', hard labour, harsh discipline, and poor pay. Discipline was based on the St. Vincent principle that it must rest on fear and that fear was to be instilled by severe punishment. Navy victualling was a disgrace. Giving the seaman a knife and fork with which to eat his dinner, instead of using his fingers, was regarded as somehow subversive of discipline and pandering to undue luxury. By the first years of the twentieth century the issue of hard biscuits, the unappetizing and coarsely-prepared meals served to the sailor, and the absence of table cutlery were legitimate subjects of public comment. Nevertheless, considering the conditions under which they lived, the morale of the seamen was surprisingly high.

Mahan, the English naval Mohammed, held, with universal approval, that one of the important elements of naval power consisted in the concentration of strength. There was little concentration in 1900, British sea power being scattered over the whole world. The newest and most powerful ships, it is true, were stationed in the Mediterranean and in home waters; but, generally speaking, outside European waters there was an odd assortment of ships ('bug traps') able neither to fight nor to run away. Furthermore, for nearly two-thirds of the year, while the Channel Squadron (renamed Channel Fleet in 1903) cruised in Irish and Spanish waters, there was no organized naval force in home waters. During these long absences of the Channel Squadron British waters were left denuded of a regular fleet, since the Reserve Squadron (renamed Home Squadron, then Fleet, in 1902-3) was in a chaotic state. It consisted of nine older battle-ships. Manned with but two-thirds of their complements, they

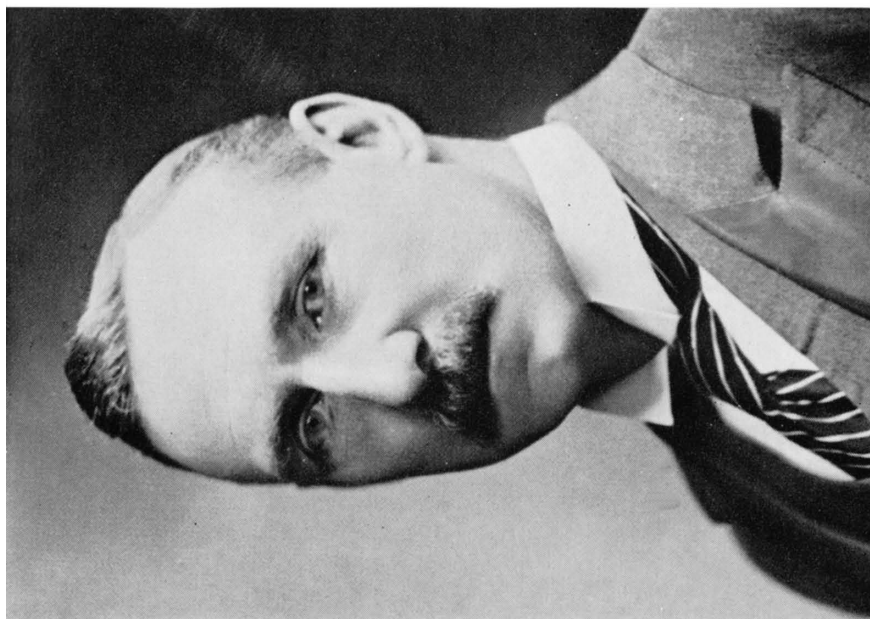
were strung round the coast of the United Kingdom, safely secured and swinging round buoys in harbour. Once a year, for ten or twelve days, these ageing tubs took on increased complements for a little cruising. Fred T. Jane, the naval expert, justly called the Reserve Squadron 'an absolute disgrace to a naval Power'. This was proven in the 1901 home manœuvres, when a far smaller squadron administered a crushing defeat to it. There were, in addition, the entirely unmanned ships of the Fleet Reserve and the Dockyard Reserve.

Such, in brief, was the state of the Fleet in 1900. In its peacetime functions—suppressing native risings, rescuing slaves and ships in distress, exterminating pirates, trapping smugglers, aiding the victims of earthquakes and other disasters, charting the seas, and 'showing the flag'—the Navy was efficient. What was so desperately wrong was that it had its priorities so upside down. Spit and polish and seamanship were more important than preparation for war. Beresford could well complain that 'the Fleet is not ready to fight, or nearly ready to fight . . . our want of preparation in many ways is WORSE than the Army before South Africa exposed necessities that were wanting.'⁵

Fundamentally, the backward state of the Navy stemmed from the fact that it had for nearly a century enjoyed a peace routine and that Britain's title of Mistress of the Seas had not been seriously challenged. For the heirs of Nelson warlike ventures were disappointingly few. The last time the Navy had fired a shot in anger against a great power was off the Crimean coast in 1855-6. Except for times of diplomatic crisis and other extraordinary occasions, naval life had indeed become one long holiday, as the autobiographies of nineteenth-century admirals abundantly illustrate. Moreover, serious naval rivals had been lacking. The French Navy, the Royal Navy's leading competitor in the nineteenth century, was much below it in *matériel* strength and personnel. The Russian Navy, Europe's third-ranking fleet at the end of the century, was notoriously inefficient, and its strongest units were locked up in the Black Sea. The fact that no nation apparently wished seriously to challenge British naval supremacy bred a fatal lethargy and a 'Two skinny Frenchmen and one Portugee, one jolly Englishman could lick all three' frame of mind.

The innate conservatism of the Navy is the second great factor

⁵ Beresford to Balfour, 8 Apr. 1900; Balfour MSS.



1. THE EARL OF SELBORNE

First Lord, October 1900–February 1905

[*Radio Times Hulton Picture Library*]

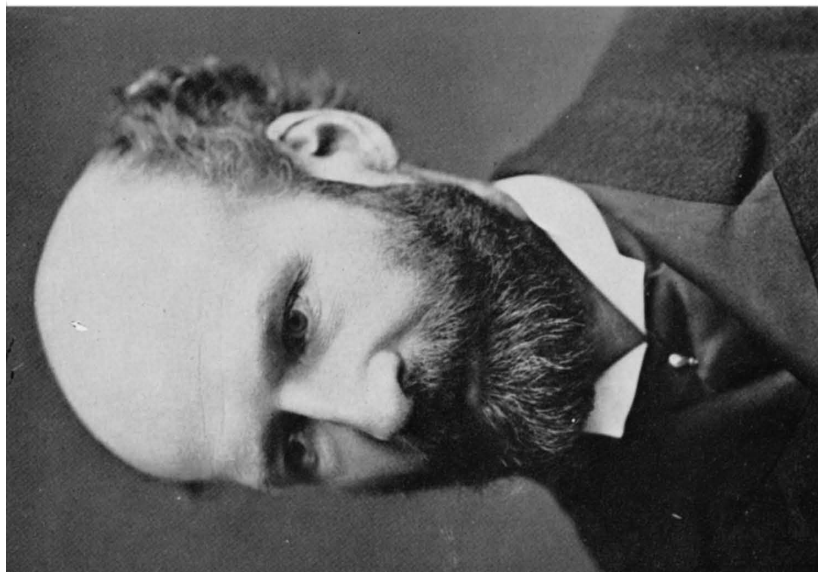


2. THE EARL OF CAWDOR

First Lord, February–December 1905

[*From a drawing by Frank Dicksee, R.A.*]

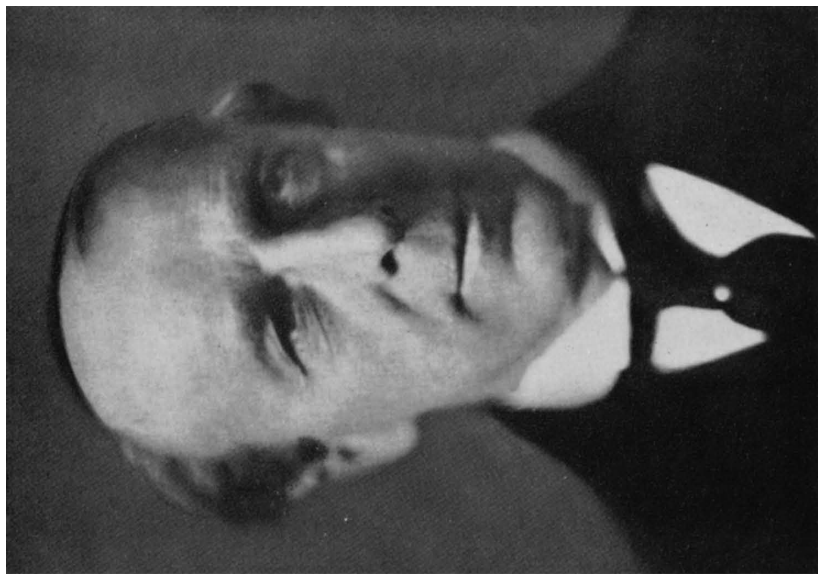
PLATE II



1. LORD TWEEDMOUTH

First Lord, December 1905–April 1908

[*Radio Times Hulton Picture Library*]



2. THE RT. HON. REGINALD MCKENNA

First Lord, April 1908–October 1911

[*photograph at the Admiralty*]

explaining the condition of the service, and is to some extent a derivative of the first. Declared *The Times* (20 April 1906), 'The Navy is a very conservative service, tenacious of tradition, deeply and rightly imbued with the sentiment of its glorious past, and very suspicious of any innovations which seem to ignore that tradition.' No less a personage than Sir Frederick Richards could object in 1900 to the abolition of the system of masted-ship training. 'You have got an established system and a time-honoured one, so why alter it?' The Admiralty and senior officers generally were not receptive to new ideas and looked upon the ideas of junior officers with impatience. On one occasion a sea lord wrote across a practical suggestion by a lieutenant, 'On what authority does this *lieutenant* put forward such a proposal?' The Lieutenant, by the way, became Admiral of the Fleet Sir Doveton Sturdee, Bt. The ablest minds in the Navy lived in the day before yesterday. Officers, even when awake to the weakness of existing arrangements, did not trouble to challenge them, for capacity to think and an independent and critical mind were apt to be handicaps.

3. THE PROTO-NAVAL RENAISSANCE, 1899-1904

The Navy went right on living on its old tradition and enjoying its state of quiescence until the close of the century. The rise of potent American and Japanese fleets in the last years of the nineteenth and first years of the new century scarcely ruffled British calm, even if they were undermining Britain's strategic dominance in non-European waters. These were the fleets of friendly powers, with whom Britain had no serious points of conflict. A far more ominous threat was Germany, an unfriendly and aggressive European power which was seeking to add naval to military supremacy. Her Navy was one to be respected and feared. The dead weight of tradition which hampered the Royal Navy was never felt in the Emperor William's new Fleet, which had no heroic past and outworn traditions behind it to obscure modern realities in a sentimental haze. Young, alert, and ambitious, the German Navy placed a premium on initiative and new ideas. Its potential size and its concentration in home waters, and especially its high quality and readiness for battle, impressed professional observers in Britain. With the passage of the German Navy Acts of 1898 and 1900 there began the awakening of the Royal Navy. An influence

in the same direction was the South African War. The Army's bitter experiences gave Britain a terrific psychological jolt. It was realized by every thinker in the service that a naval war might find the Fleet as unprepared as the Army had been.

Beginning in 1899-1900, a little band of ardent reformers with no reverence for the past, younger officers with ideas, vision and energy, began to crystallize around Admiral Sir John Fisher, Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean Fleet, 1899-1902. In season and out of season they worked to sweep out the cobwebs—to awaken the naval profession and the country to what was meant by efficient naval administration and naval preparedness for war. Indeed, 'the efficiency of the Fleet and its instant readiness for war' became the virtual slogan of the Fisherites. Their system was set on foot in the Mediterranean, where the administrative and organizing genius of Fisher, supported and stimulated by a galaxy of fine younger minds, vastly improved the efficiency of the Fleet in less than three years.

There was no wasting of time by officers and men over sail-drill and other obsolete things. Fisher encouraged the officers to study the problems of modern warfare by offering cups for essays on battle formations and strategical dispositions, by inviting officers to formulate their opinions on cruising and battle formations (contrary to the tradition that the admiral alone, or with the flag captain, worked out the fleet's operations), and by giving witty, inspiring lectures on the principles of war. He carried out long-distance, high-speed steaming trials over the protests of engineer officers and despite the misgivings of the First Lord. As Beresford wrote in his *Memoirs*: 'From a 12-knot Fleet with numerous breakdowns, he made a 15-knot Fleet without breakdowns.' The Admiral realized a pet ambition in 1901: joint operations between the Mediterranean and Channel Fleets, which would act together in war. No great tactician himself, he started tactical and strategical exercises based on the probabilities of war in place of the traditional routine cruises and steam tactics. He insisted on the need for constant gunnery practice and introduced long-range target practice. It was begun in the battleship *Caesar* (1899) at 6,000 yards. He encouraged the competitive spirit in gunnery by instituting the Challenge Cup for heavy-gun shooting. As a result of such methods naval gunnery advanced by leaps and bounds. It must, however, be noted that Fisher was building on foundations

laid by Captain Percy Scott since 1897, of which more elsewhere. In addition, many of Fisher's future reforms, such as the concentration of the Fleet, the reform of naval education, and the wholesale introduction of oil fuel, were germinating.

The naval revolution began in earnest during Fisher's tenure as Second Sea Lord (June 1902-August 1903) with the significant personnel reforms announced in December 1902—the 'Selborne Scheme', which we will examine in Chapter III. On 31 August 1903 Fisher hoisted his flag as Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth, a post which would enable him to superintend the establishment of the new college at Osborne, while affording time for maturing fresh schemes of naval reform. It was at Portsmouth that the ideas of a dreadnought (conceived in the Mediterranean period) and of a battle cruiser took concrete form.⁶ At Portsmouth, too, he worked out the substance of the nucleus-crew reform, and became aware of the tremendous potentialities of the submarine.

The Fisher system was introduced, bag and baggage, when the Admiral became First Sea Lord on 21 October 1904—Trafalgar Day, the day of his patron saint. Although some Englishmen have never been quite sure of it, the verdict of history is that in Fisher the Navy and the nation had found their man—a strong man ready to face the tremendous responsibility and personal risk of carrying out a constructive revolution in a service rendered by the very pride of its traditions one of the most conservative in the world.

⁶ In the 1903 Jane's *Fighting Ships* there appeared an article by Colonel Cuniberti, the Italian naval constructor, on 'An Ideal Warship for the British Navy'. His design foreshadowed the main features of the dreadnought type: the all-big-gun armament and a speed superior to that of all battleships afloat. It is very likely that Fisher read this article, which was widely commented on in the service press, and that it strongly influenced his thinking.

II

Fisher as First Sea Lord

I have known personally a dozen men who have been in my time among the most remarkable and famous men in the world. Lord Fisher was the most fascinating of them all and the least like any other man.

J. L. GARVIN in an unpublished letter of ca. 1928.

He was a mixture of Machiavelli and a child, which must have been extraordinarily baffling to politicians and men of the world.

ESTHER MEYNELL, *A Woman Talking*.

I. THE MAN

WHEN he returned to Whitehall in 1904, Fisher was a man of 63, 'but still the youngest man of the Navy in brain and heart and energy'. He was 'of medium height and square of build, with very round, wide-open [light grey] eyes, which fixed the gaze and compelled attention. His general expression was slightly supercilious, which, however, was constantly changing during conversation to a flickering smile, for an under-current of humour always pervaded his general talk.' His was an intensely pugnacious face. 'The full eye, with its curiously small pupil, the wide, full-lipped mouth, drooping mercilessly at the corners, the jaw jutting out a good-humoured challenge to the world, all proclaim a man who neither asks nor gives quarter.'¹ His hair was grey-white, with a wiry tuft that fell across the upper reaches of his forehead. To complete the picture, there was something about his face that suggested the East. His enemies caused rumours to be spread that he was a Malay, the son of a Cingalese princess, the inference being that this was the origin of his 'Oriental' cunning and duplicity! And not only his domestic enemies. Captain Widenmann, the German Naval Attaché in London (1907-12), referred to him in his reports as the 'unscrupulous (or cunning) half-Asiatic'. Fisher was alternately amused and annoyed by the persistence of this legend.

¹ Admiral Sir Reginald H. S. Bacon, *The Life of Lord Fisher of Kilverstone* (London, 1929, 2 vols.), i. 246-7; A. G. Gardiner, *Pillars of Society* (London, 1913), p. 348.

In effect, if not in fact, he was the Board of Admiralty between 21 October 1904 and 25 January 1910. He was at the same time one of the most interesting personalities of the twentieth century. He owed nothing to influence, wealth, or social position, but everything to sheer ability, character, and perseverance. As he said, 'I entered the Navy penniless, friendless and forlorn. I have had to fight like hell, and fighting like hell has made me what I am.' He was idolized by the man in the street for his rise to the top of his profession through ability, as well as for his personification of the typical sea-dog. He was noted for his sense of humour, story-telling ability, sparkling wit, gaiety, charm, and boyish enthusiasm. He was one of the great conversationalists of his time. 'His talk was racy, original, full of mother wit, and irradiated by a humour which was bracing and pungent as the salt of the sea itself.' He kept the heart of a child, and this was no doubt the secret of his amazing vitality and freshness. 'His spirits were unquenchable: when we asked him to dinner, it was as likely as not that he would come into the room dancing a hornpipe, and there seemed to be no company in which he was not absolutely at home. In all this he was absolutely unaffected and simple, without a trace of pose or affectation.'²

In his official capacity Fisher could be arrogant, stern, unrelenting, and, when serious mistakes were made, even cruel. 'None of us on his staff could be certain we would still have the job next day,' Admiral of the Fleet Sir Henry Oliver recalls. And yet he could be tender-hearted, affectionate, and rather sentimental. He was very appreciative of anything done for him, and he never failed to respond to the smallest sign of affection, admiration, or gratitude. His 'cruel mouth' needed little provocation to smile, a smile that completely altered his expression. Children, those wise critics, loved him. He was enchanting to them, whether playing with them or letting them try on his admiral's coat blazing with stars.

At bottom he was a humble human being, with a humility born of deep religious conviction. 'He had a firm belief in Divine intervention in the affairs of this life; if he had doubts about justice in this world, he had none about matters being evened out in the next!' The early service saw him, when at the Admiralty, in almost daily attendance at Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's.

² J. A. Spender, *Life, Journalism and Politics* (London, 1927, 2 vols.), ii. 67.

Three sermons a day were not unusual for him. The Dean of Westminster, hearing that the Admiral had been to four sermons in one day, warned him against contracting 'spiritual indigestion'! But even more than attending services, he loved to sit in a church and meditate.

His knowledge of the Bible was extraordinary, and he could quote Scripture like a Puritan divine. 'Often he felled an opponent to earth with a text' or capped an argument with an apt quotation from the Old or the New Testament. When the Battle of Tsushima was fought, the Prime Minister, Balfour, was in Scotland. Fisher wanted to let him know that the Japanese had won, Admiral Togo concentrating on, and putting out of action, the Russian flagship. Instead of entering into a long explanation, the First Sea Lord merely announced the fact of the victory, adding, 'See 1 Kings 22 . 31.' Reference to the Bible revealed Togo's tactics: 'The King of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule of his chariots, saying, "Fight neither with small nor great save only with the King of Israel."' While declaring that the teachings of history had no value, that 'history is a record of exploded ideas', he never failed to use Biblical history to point an argument or clinch a conclusion. Nor did he hesitate to use naval history either *when it would help his cause*!

Fisher had neither knowledge of nor, excepting inter-ship football and cricket matches, interest in sports and games. He drank and smoked in moderation and for long periods did without them. A walk up and down a ship or garden, conversation with old friends, an insatiable reading of newspapers after dinner, a novel between dinner and bedtime, and, above all, sermons and dancing—these were virtually his only relaxations. Outside sermons, dancing, and his family, the Navy was his only love, his whole life.

Few men have worked harder at their calling. So long as age permitted, his vigour was remarkable, and he was able to do what would have exhausted most men. He retired very early, at 9.30 p.m., and was up, ready for work, at 5 or 5.30 a.m., though very often as early as 4 a.m. Much of the day's work was done in these morning hours before breakfast. At the Admiralty he was an indefatigable worker, with Sunday morning work not unusual. His private secretary when he was Second Sea Lord 'never met anyone who could dispose of papers at the rate he could. . . . His