

Sunday Divisions on board a British Aircraft Carrier

HE SHIPS AND SEAMEN OF BRITAIN

BY

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THE SHIPS AND SEAMEN OF BRITAIN

I. BRITAIN AND THE SEA

1. HEREDITY AND ENVIRONMENT

[illegible] world-wide in its currency and hoary in its age, that [illegible] of the British Isles is intimately connected with, and usually [illegible] upon the sea. This view, however, while enshrining much that is [illegible] modification. He has probably seen and smelt salt water of [illegible] for the simple geographical reason that he cannot live more than some [illegible] from it. And most Britons, if they can afford it, try, often [illegible] discomfort and overcrowding to themselves, to spend their [illegible] beside it, and in it: but not necessarily *on* it. The patriotic [illegible] writers have perhaps given a false impression here. Britain's

> March is o'er the mountain waves,
> Her home is on the deep,

[illegible] Campbell in what has become almost a national song.

[illegible] is only a generalisation, applicable to the country as a whole and [illegible] of her population. It would be dangerous to apply it indis- [illegible] to individuals. A great majority of Britons, no doubt, are thankful [illegible] is not so situated. They would in fact be acutely unhappy if [illegible] only in their more expansive and imaginative moments that [illegible] with such a notion. In fact this particular fiction is more current [illegible] than it is at home. It has been repeated again and again, in all ages and [illegible]. Thus Jomini, the great Russo-Swiss soldier and historian, [illegible] text-book, call the Britons "a nation of twelve million [illegible] island, *and therefore born seamen every one of them*". [illegible] as a *non sequitur*. Other factors must be taken into [illegible] other possibilities the island holds, for instance, and its size. [illegible] of the Scillies or St. Kilda or of the Orkneys will very likely be [illegible] because these islands are small, and any means of livelihood [illegible] the use of the sea would be hard to find. But the [illegible] of Borneo or Madagascar is by no means necessarily a seaman. Nor [illegible] of Britain. There are too many other things to do there, and [illegible] it too large.

[illegible] smoke without fire, and such generalisations enshrine [illegible] truths. First, though it is too large for a numerical majority [illegible] to be active seamen, it is probably true that no other country of

comparable size has ever held a higher percentage of people who are at he
ships, and in few has the percentage been so high.

Then again the island is, compared with continents, *small*—too sm
allow the sea to be a real stranger to its people. In the broad continenta
there must still be millions of people who go from cradle to grave with
much as catching a glimpse of it, who only "hear tell of it", and wh
does not greatly interest because it never enters at first hand into their
But that is not so with the British people. The sea has been close to them
always, from cradle to grave. It is not far off physically, and it is so
reach that there can be very few of them who have never seen it. But it is
nearer to them in spirit, in song and tradition, in sentiment and educatio
the stories they hear at their mothers' knees and in the little history book
read at school. It is even deep-woven in the homelier metaphors and pl
of their native tongue. They may not be seafarers, but they are certainl
sea haters, nor—more fatal still—sea *fearers*: rather potential sea lovers, w
chance or circumstance may turn at any time into sea users.

The cause of this is geographical no less than historical. Nature has
more than ordinarily generous to the British Isles. When she was desig
that part of the earth which we now call Europe, she built it upon a steep
which plunges down into the Atlantic deeps where the Iberian Peninsula
the Western Ocean. Follow that line of deeps from south to north on the
and we find the 1000-fathom line[1] bending sharply towards the coast of Fra
in the Bay of Biscay; but it bends back again before it reaches Ushant,
thence continues due north, passing outside Ireland, until it has cleared the lati
of Scotland, when it swings away towards Greenland. The 100-fathom
is more striking still. Following the one already described, close on its landw
side as far as the north of Scotland, it then swings sharply east for the Skagen
and the entrance to the Baltic. Now Nature might have built upon the no
western corner of this "continental shelf" a solid mass of land as she did
south-west Europe and down the whole western face of Africa. Instead,
set in it the British Isles, separated at all points from the continental mass,
nowhere quite overlooking the deeps. The benefit to Britain was—and
enormous. The shallow "shelf" which surrounds her on every side not o
confers upon her the obvious advantage of being an island, but also is the ho
of all manner of fish (not the least of which is "King Herring") where
English can, and could from the earliest times, reap a rich harvest of food.
order to obtain some idea of the importance of that harvest, even today wh
mankind relies less than it did upon the consumption of fish, the visitor m
view the amazing markets at Yarmouth, Grimsby, or Aberdeen, and he
never again belittle the "harvest of the sea". And yet, when he was schoo

[1] 1000 fathoms is nearly two kilometres of depth.

it, the great deep Ocean—Nature's own World-Highway—lay everywhere
a stone's throw of the Englishman's door, inviting him westward to the
World, as soon as the courage and vision of man had found it.

The other great gift of Nature to Britain was—and is—the character of the
line she gave her. There are everywhere well-marked indentations,
ding deep water for sheltered harbours, washed and kept clean by the
daily scourings of the tides: everywhere, or almost everywhere, behind
harbours, a fertile hinterland, formed by the rivers whose action has
ed the harbours, giving easy access both from the coast to the interior, and
versa.

wonder the recipients of these most fortunate gifts took to the sea in
large numbers. Indeed, for those who lived near it, it was inevitable.
circumstance of geography played into their hands. Sea-fishing is the
and most natural school of seamanship: yet primitive fishermen, where
art of shipbuilding is still in its infancy, must have a plentiful supply of fish,
ming and feeding in land-girt, storm-protected waters, before they can
forth to catch them in their skin-covered coracles. But, given the
itions necessary for the start, one thing follows the other in relentless logic.
experience gained in their tiny craft leads to improvements therein: these soon
the more enterprising spirits to venture further afield, to find, first, new
-grounds, but soon new markets in which to sell their greater catches.
so, before he is quite conscious of what is happening, the fortunate
finds fishing, seamanship, shipbuilding, and trade all steadily developing
ther, and leading him on to new enterprises, new markets, and a new
ority.

We must not imagine that these things happened quickly, as time goes.
evolution from the skin-covered coracle to the ocean-going ship, from the
-shore" fisherman to the deep-sea mariner, must be measured in centuries
than in years. The beginnings of Britain's seafaring career were very
, and are already visible in what is almost the first authentic view of her
we have. Julius Caesar, the first great figure from the Mediterranean to
personal contact with England, has left it on record that the Britons'
utation as skilled and handy boatmen was even then established in north-west
rope. The curious visitor may still watch their direct descendants in Wales
Ireland giving just such an exhibition of skilful handling as Caesar saw:
, however fast men progress, old things die hard in these islands. A further
cession of seafaring blood came with the arrival of the Danes, and Norsemen
"Viking" breed, a thousand years ago. Yet it is hardly true, as is often said,
thence comes the Briton's love of the sea, for Caesar wrote a thousand years
lier still; and, when at length the great days of English expansion began to
lawn, half a thousand years later, it was from the estuaries of the western shires,

and from flourishing western ports like Bristol, Dartmouth and Plymou the main impetus came. And all of these were about as far removed fr old eastern "Danelagh" as the narrow limits of England allowed. The probably less Viking blood in Devon and Cornwall than in any other England.

A truer way of looking at England, as she stood on the brink of he expansion, would be to regard her as a country whose "uplanders" ever were farmers—corn-growers and producers of cattle, especially sheep, wool-growing as their main industry and wheat their second string; a of them landsmen by habit and upbringing. Yet, all round her excepti long coast-line there dwelt, in very considerable numbers, from Berw Penzance and from Yarmouth to Pembroke, men to whom the sea was a nu a home, and often a grave. And that picture, as far as the peace-time concerned, is still true today. The inland inhabitants have, indeed, g changed, and tend machines where formerly they tended sheep. The improvements, too, in education, the spreading of news, and, above all, tra and communication have broken down many of the barriers which onc the farm labourer to his plough, the weaver to his loom, and the shore-dw to the sea; so that, nowadays, it is a much more frequent occurrence to fi son of a Sheffield cutler hearing the call of the sea and signing on in a merc ship, or a Nottingham miner's son joining the Royal Navy. Yet, for all changes, it is still substantially true that there are certain parts of the co where the sea makes little appeal, and others again where its tradition re particularly strong, and where a high percentage of all the inhabitants have links with it. And it is still quite extraordinary—until we remember t lessons of history and geography—how the sea profession still "runs in famili Figures are not easy to come by, but no enquirer can fail to be struck by enormous number of men, whether in the Fisheries, the Merchant Navy, or Royal Navy, whose fathers, uncles, or grandfathers were in those profess before them.

It *is* striking, this maritime heredity, and it is a very important factor to in mind when we are discussing British seamen, because it serves to explain so of their strengths and weaknesses, and because it gives us the clue to certain their characteristics which, to this day, differentiate them both from the sea of other lands and from the rest of their own countrymen. The effects of heredity were revealed more clearly, perhaps, a century ago than they are no for in those days such ordinary amenities of civilisation as were even then wit the reach of landsmen were almost totally denied to the seamen. The sailor old seemed to belong to another world altogether, and he was rather proud it: he was rough, uncouth and secretive, opening his heart only to his fello seamen, and tending to regard with suspicion all the rest, whom he dismiss

the contemptuous term of "landlubbers". Yet at the same time reality lived in him that natural and almost passionate love of his job made him put up with incredible hardships in carrying it out, and distinctive ability in it which made him the best seaman in the world. twentieth-century descendant, far better educated and leading a far less life, has lost most of those weaknesses, but few, if any of those for his calling, though far less isolated, is little less hereditary. so, when they say in English that "So-and-so has the sea in his ", they are voicing no idle or meaningless phrase, but a simple

those in authority in Britain have always realised these things, and have in (including the present) done what they could to encourage the sailor's follow in his father's footsteps. Thus, to give but one example, there to this day—and flourishes exceedingly—the Royal Hospital School at brook in Suffolk, where up to one thousand boys are received and trained, of charge, for the Naval Service, the only vital qualification for their entry that their fathers were "seafaring persons". The State is evidently wise such encouragement. Through the centuries, its fishermen, merchant , and naval ratings have not only served it well: they have shown selves, by the acid test of success, to be pre-eminent in their professions hout the world. Can anyone wonder, then, that Britain is normally ent to rely on that selfsame stock which above any other single group of community has brought her to her present position? Can she hope to man fishing, merchant, and naval ships better than with the men whose fathers—almost as often whose mothers—have had "the sea in their blood"? She cannot better the best.

But we shall see before we are through with this subject a yet stranger thing, which seems to show that old Jomini was perhaps more right than he knew. Apparently the sea is somewhere in the body of the uplander too, even if conscious acquaintance with it is confined to his annual trip to a seaside holiday resort, Blackpool or Southend, or an occasional week-end at Brighton. it is latent in his case, having no free access to his arteries in normal es, and only the sudden shock of some grand emergency releases it into blood-stream. How does this metamorphosis occur? Is it by any chance cumulative effect of that moisture-laden sou'wester which drives so often t across the island, or is it just the result of that constant proximity of which we have tried to describe? Who shall say? Yet sea-change re is, because there must be *some* reason why those Sheffield cutlers and se Nottinghamshire mining lads can convert themselves so swiftly, so mpletely, "as to the manner born", into prime seamen. For they can, d, in emergency, they do.

II. "PAX BRITANNICA"

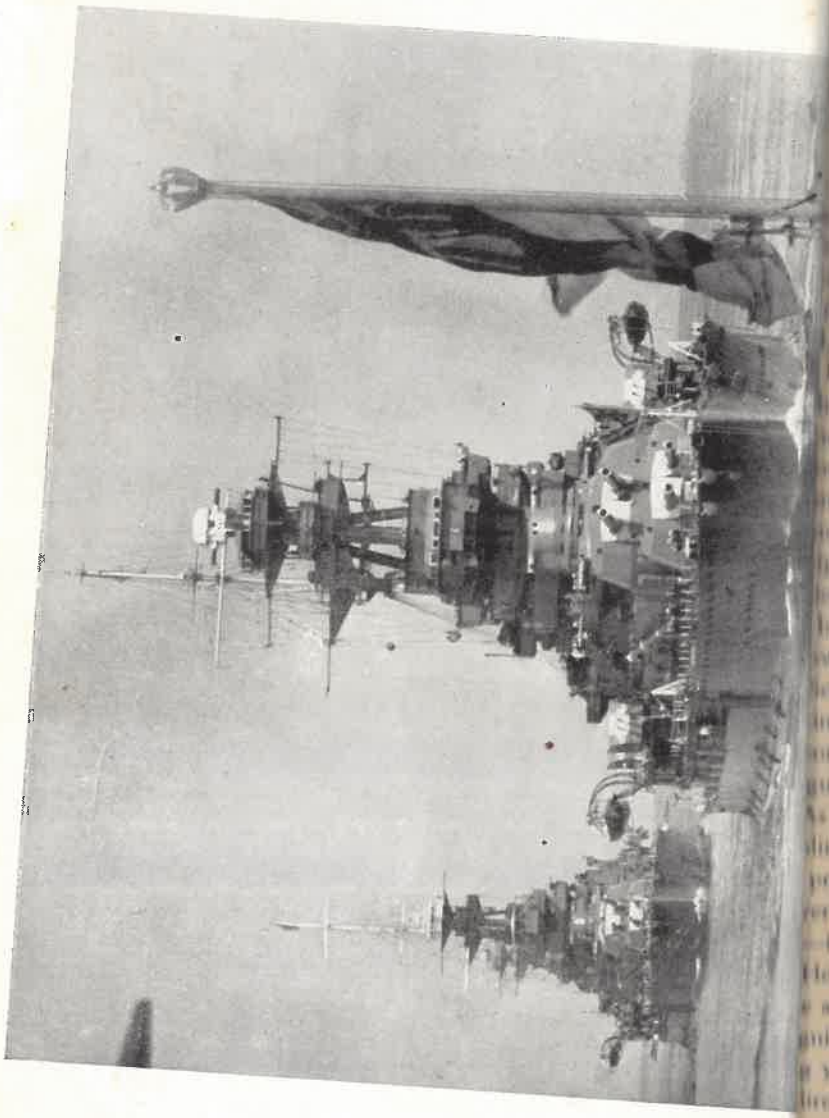
Britons make good traders. Napoleon, of course, was trying to
when he called them "a nation of shopkeepers": and he was delib
exaggerating. But there is a certain substratum of truth in his remark.
do make good traders, and are not ashamed of the fact. But good trade
upon good trade routes, and the secret of the latter is to have a satisfacto
of operations at each end, as well as a few intermediate posts in the
And these were just the things which the roaming, homing Briton was
to provide. Give him his little adventure, let him take his home with hi
he would settle down happily enough, almost anywhere where a whit
could live, whether in the vast backwoods of Canada or on the restricte
of St. Helena. And he could—and did—prosper in both. The British
has even added largely to the Empire in the ordinary course of his tradi
in all periods of the Empire's growth. The early seventeenth-century
ments in the Western Isles—for instance, the Bermudas and Barbados—
simply trading ventures. It was, too, a purely trading concern, the grea
India Company, which, after a century and a half of ordinary trading,
itself one day, much to its surprise, and with considerable misgiving, admi
ing a large part of India. It is often said that the British Government *con*
India. Such a statement misses the whole point. The *Government* had no
whatever to do with it until long after the first and all-important steps had
taken. All they did was—finally—to take over the enormous, and sh
anomalous, *political* powers of a concern which, to the last, was a char
trading company. And as in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries
even in the late nineteenth, it was a trading company which acquired
developed the two Rhodesias.

Now all these trading companies—except perhaps the last-named—
maritime concerns, and that fact brings us to yet another fortunate quality—
"seafaring" ability already mentioned. Its possessors, whose consider
numbers were always, as we have seen, a great feature of British life, formed
heaven-sent link which bound the whole fabric together. It was they who
the colonist across the seas, sometimes remaining themselves and so plantin
each new settlement a seafaring population of its own.

Now all this shows very clearly what is the true corner-stone of the Bri
Commonwealth. It is Trade. And this is the fact which makes the Bri
Empire unique in the history of the world. There have been many o
Empires, but all of them were based on something very different—usually C
quest. Of such a sort was Alexander's short-lived Empire; of such a sort,
were Charlemagne's, the Ottoman Empire, and Napoleon's. Conquest bre
feuds which cannot end, so that an Empire based on conquest cannot last.



Mediæval Fighting Ships of South and North Europe. *Above:* A Fifteenth-Century "Long Ship". *Below:* A Fifteenth-Century "Round Ship"



Trade can breed ill passions too, especially that old conception of which once prevailed, whereby it was believed that only one party in a could make a profit : that in every transaction there must be a gainer loser, and that the gainer, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, was the Britons, like everyone else, once believed in this " Mercantile Theory ", was an endless source of friction and bloodshed. To it, directly or ly, must be attributed the long-drawn-out series of Anglo-Dutch and French wars. These the English won, and emerged in the unique n of being complete masters of the seas. Yet even these, let us remember, rade wars, the prizes being the markets and the unoccupied spaces of the not the political domination and enslavement of neighbouring peoples. left no lasting heritage of hate behind them.

he weapons which gave Britain the prizes were her vigorous Mercantile e and her invincible Navy : and by the time she had won them, she was n the road to a great economic discovery—the greatest, perhaps, that man ade in that sphere. It may be summarised in two words—" Free Trade " : nthesis of the old Mercantile System. Britain's adoption of the new gle affected the world profoundly in many ways. But only maritime e concern us here, and the maritime aspect of her adoption of Free Trade e called the " Pax Britannica ", whereby the seas which she had won for wn use were flung wide open for the use of all. Britain, the Mistress of eas, became the champion of the Freedom of the Seas : and the great ing Service which had won them for her in the battle against all comers nverted to a more peaceful and more liberal use. The British ship became guardian of the peace : the fighting man became the policeman.

As every visitor to England will very soon discover, there is nothing litical " about the British policeman. He exists simply and solely to help protect the public. They both know it, and both know the strength of the er behind him. And so it happens that no one—unless he is breaking the is in the least afraid of him.

He is usually a big, good-tempered man, and he spends very little of his arresting evil-doers. Rather more is spent in preventing evil deeds, and nificently he does it, with a judicious blend of firmness and tact born of years of practice. A still larger part is spent in such amiable occupations directing the traffic, putting people on their right road, and helping the very ng and the very old to cross it in safety. But the largest part of all—by far—evoted to *just being there*, doing apparently nothing but walk the streets with hurried tread. This is by no means wasting time nor squandering the tax-yers' money. It is much better to stop a man from committing a crime n to catch him when he has committed it ; to prevent a riot with tact than quell it with a truncheon. Indeed, in the ideal state the policeman would

spend all his time in helping the citizen, for there would be no male
arrest and no malcontents to riot. But that perfection is not yet, so
still has a little thief-taking to do, and a little riot-prevention. And,
occasions—let the evil-doer make no mistake—this gentle giant turns
into a swift and thoroughly efficient avenger of outraged law, not easily
by no means readily hoodwinked, and impervious to bribery.

Now Britain's particular brand of police officer has been described
length because, in the wider world of the Ocean, the British warship is
ably like him in its character and work. Every habitual user of the se
ever his nationality, will have no difficulty in recognising the points o
blance. Thus no seafarer is afraid of the British warship, so long as his co
tells him that he is bound on his lawful occasions.

Among continental peoples, as among the British, no large propor
the population will have had any first-hand experience of these things.
anyone who would test the assertions here set down obtain independen
mony from trustworthy seafarers among his own people. Let them say w
they have ever known the power of a British warship used in a manner
petty-minded, hectoring, or deliberately unjust—in a manner that w
good-tempered, tactful, and strictly impartial. There can be little doubt
answer he will obtain—unless, of course, his informant happened, when
the policeman, to have been acting contrary to the established law and
of the sea : then he will doubtless have met him in that other mood, an
probably have been more impressed by his efficiency. Yet the chances
are small nowadays, for, like the policeman, the warship spends by far the g
part of its time in " just being there " : and, simply because of this fa
seas in peace time have, for a good many years now, been largely free
highwaymen and footpads.

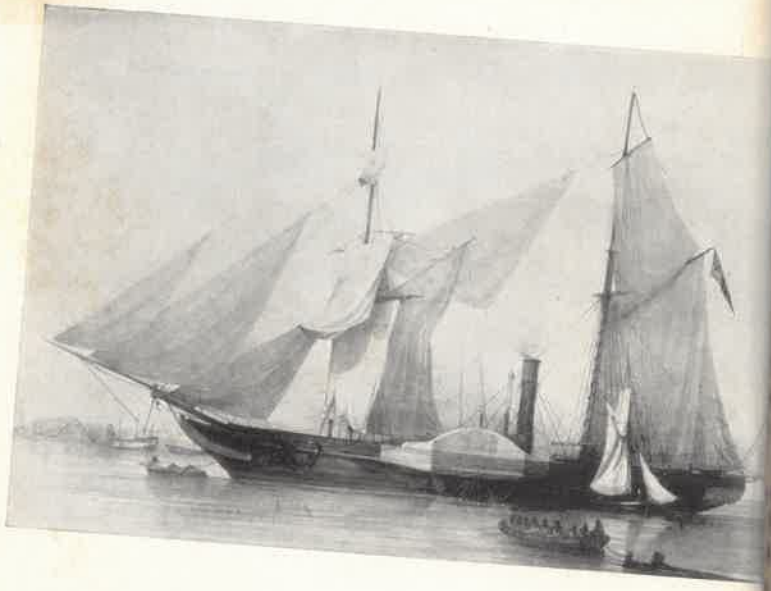
" Now why ", it may be asked, " does Great Britain play this trouble
and expensive role ? We are not, surely, going to be asked to believe th
is altogether altruistic in this important matter, and that it is just for the lo
her fellow men that she thus polices the seas ? "

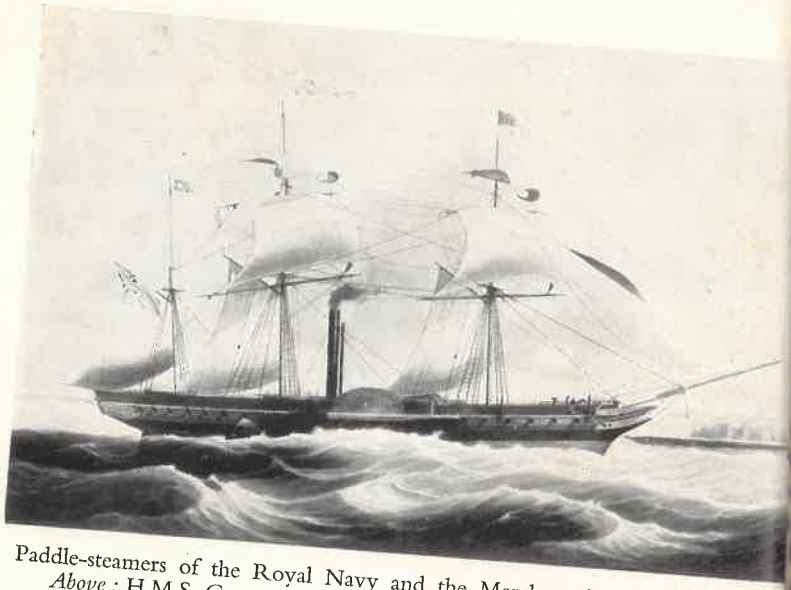
No, we propose to ask no such thing, even though it be in part the t
Britain, whose people have been for so long free themselves, *does* belie
Freedom, in itself, in all forms, and in all places—in social liberty, in po
self-determination, and in economic freedom everywhere. But we will h
to affirm that her attitude is *not* primarily altruistic. She has had one very g
reason for her policy—one which everybody will understand. It *paid*
And, having admitted this much, we may hope for a fair hearing on the o
half of her case : which is that it paid every other sea-user as well.

The thing is simply a matter of history. England, as we have seen,
grown rich and powerful by reaping the fruits of her sea-borne trade. By



A British Merchantman : East Indiaman *Pitt*, 1780





Paddle-steamers of the Royal Navy and the Merchant Service in the 1830's
Above : H.M.S. *Gorgon*, 1837. *Below* : Paddle-steamer *British Queen*, 1838

the eighteenth century her commerce, her fisheries, and her Navy had grown great together ; for her wealth, acquired from the first two, had led her to build effective fleets to protect them both, which, in their turn, served as a result, enabling her to continue on that happy circle. But the point to grasp is that, all the time, her ships were using the sea more and more, merchantmen for trading and her warships for protecting her trade. And another form of sea trade must be mentioned here, since it was that more than any other which finally brought her to such a unique position among the powers of the world, the Carrying Trade. She had contrived to obtain something not very far short of a monopoly of carrying, not only her own goods, but also those of other folk, who, for one reason or another, found it inconvenient or impossible to use the sea themselves. And to this must be added one final factor of outstanding importance—not, this time, a sea factor. She was fortunate—or inventive—enough to have passed through the birth-throes of the industrial revolution a long time before her competitors, and thus for nearly half a century was producing cheaply by machinery what they were making dearly by hand ; by the thousand where they were producing the score ; metres and kilos where they were turning out centimetres and grammes.

Thus she came to produce far more than anyone else, and to carry even more still ; in short, to use the seas to an incomparably greater extent than anyone else. This phase she had reached by the end of the Napoleonic Wars.

Now up to this point in her history, there was little that distinguished Britain's sea policy from that of other countries. She was certainly making no considerable attempt to keep it "free" to anyone but her own merchants. In the endless clash of dynastic moves and counter-moves she was behaving like the rest—no better, but no worse. For, up till then, she still believed in the Mercantile Theory, described above, whereby it was regarded by all as far more important to sell than it was to buy. And, in common with all who held that view, she was continually trying to hamper her rivals in their attempts to sell, and to create for herself, as far as was humanly possible, a "corner" in selling. This theory, which now seems so short-sighted—for who can go on buying for long if he is not allowed to replenish his purse by selling ?—also embraced the carrying trade, since carrying brought its profits just as selling did. So Britain clung on to the age-old policy of Protective Tariff Walls, bolstered by a long and complicated series of Navigation Acts, designed to force all peoples, even her own Colonies, to have their goods carried by herself. In the seventeenth century there was, perhaps, something to be said for the method, since she was often competing with economic equals, and even superiors. But by the end of the eighteenth century it was—for Britain—quite obsolete ; worse, actually

harmful. It even, in the end, lost her her first—and potentially
Empire, since this was the true cause of the discontent in her American
which led to their breakaway in the 1770's.

It was this event, combined with the teachings of that great
Adam Smith, and the inevitable slump after the long-drawn-out w
Napoleon, which at length made her see the light. It dawned slowly
statesmen that Commerce was something quite different from the
business of the Mercantile System : that to Britain it was *volume* of tra
counted, both because she could produce, so fast, so many goods that sh
to sell, and because she had so many ships whose holds she wished to
other people's goods as well as her own. Things would not go right if
sold and never bought. It follows inevitably from this that any countr
would live by trading, as Britain does, simply cannot afford to possess
drain her customers dry. They too must be able to sell, for the more
so the more will they have with which to buy.

As soon as she had realised these things, Britain became a "Free
country, whose object was to promote trade whenever and wherever po
her own trade and other people's too. With this end in view, also, sh
away all the trammelling Navigation Acts, and it became forthwith he
concern to see that the oceans of the world, which are its highways, sh
made as free as possible—for her own trade, and for other people's too.
freer that trade was, and the freer the seas were, the better pleased she wo

We set out to show why Britain has undertaken to police the sea
are nearly there. "*Cui bono fuit ?*" asked the old Roman jurist. Wh
the gainer by the existence of seas safe to the merchant and free of p
The answer, of course, is : All who use the seas, but especially those w
them most, who have most at stake there—the British !

But though it is undeniable that Britain gained the most by this new
of affairs, and was therefore perfectly satisfied to maintain it at her own
there remains the other half of the answer. All other sea-users benefited
and, what is more, benefited without any appreciable cost to themselves. B
kept the seas, but she kept them in everybody's interests as well as her
We may even go a step further and say that it was to her own interest to

III. THE FREEDOM AND SAFETY OF THE SEAS

"But", once more it may be urged, "it is all very well to generalise o
subject and to affirm that Britain has benefited others besides herself.
exactly, during the last century, has she kept the seas free and safe for all ?
in what ways has she used her outstanding sea power to help her fellow men
necessarily seafarers, and to promote the freedom of all ?"

two main groups, and see first a
ways in which she has rendered the seas
; and, second, a few respects in which
even than the sea for the good and freedom of all.
the literal throwing open of the seas to all. The old
Spanish and Portuguese Empires of the sixteenth century,
Dutch, and even the English, of the seventeenth. Each power
individual stretches of water were its own exclusive pro-
, whose waves an outsider's keel could only plough
In such a spirit the Spaniards in the West Indies, and the
the East Indies, fell upon interlopers : in such a spirit the Dutch
murdered the traders of Amboyna, and the English themselves claimed
Strait of Dover—that all-important highway to the North—as their own
property. But with the coming of the "Pax Britannica", Britain,
power who could then enforce such claims, deliberately gave them
The Narrow Seas were opened to all, and, at the one moment above all
when she could most surely have closed them, she renounced all her
claims there, even abolishing for ever that old irritant the "Salute",
by which centuries she had exacted from all non-British ships the customary
dipping of the top-sail. The rich fishing-grounds of the North Sea were
open to all without a licence, her ports threw wide their gates in welcome,
even the width of territorial waters was fined down to an irreducible mini-
mum. Britain was, in a very literal sense, freeing the seas to all. And, as
if to finally renounced her "ownership" of any portion of the sea, on the
principle that, however the land may be owned, the sea is the common property
of all, she insisted that no others should "own" any part of it either (save,
of course, their territorial waters). And this has been her consistent peace-
time policy ever since, without any exception whatsoever.

Here comes, next, the suppression of the pirate, arch-enemy of legitimate
trade. In the comparative safety of our own day we are apt to forget that, in
the years immediately following the close of the Napoleonic wars, the problem
of piracy was still acute. There were, in fact, few seas outside the immediate
waters of the British Isles where the peaceful merchant skipper could hope
to avoid the formidably armed and utterly ruthless marauder who would attack
and plunder him irrespective of his nationality—the authentic *hostis sui generis*
of the legal definition, not just the quasi-legalised "privateer" of war time,
who at least *pretended* to be serving his country. Even in the Mediterranean,
the earliest home of European culture, no merchant was safe. Piracy flourished
exceedingly in the Levant, while all along the southern shores of the western
Mediterranean the Moorish corsairs continued to take their age-old toll on all
comers-by. Further afield things were even worse. In the West Indies, all

down the coast of South America, east and west, off the coast of Afr
and east, in the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf, the Indian Ocean, and all
Eastern Indies, off the China Coast, and right up to Japan, to sail unar
equivalent to suicide.

The first, and perhaps most spectacular, blow dealt by the British N
upon the Barbary pirates of North Africa, when, in 1816, Lord E
attacked and demolished the ships and the strong fortifications of
Such action had often been taken before, but it never had to be done o
scale again. Piracy in a small way continued indeed, for a time, but in
individualistic form, and was easily stamped out by the "Policeman
the bigger men, the rulers themselves of these lawless states, the lesson
was enough : they saw that the game was not worth while.

The 1820's saw the worst of these pests cleared from the Levant. I
is rather characteristic of the "Pax Britannica" that the British Na
engaged, at the same time, in helping the Greeks to independence on
hand, and in smashing Greek piracy on the other.

Further afield things took longer in proportion as distances grew,
tell the detailed story of the anti-piracy measures of the British ships wo
to narrate the greater part of their active history throughout the century
Navy remained very large, and it was provided in each decade with nu
small craft, designed and built solely for this task, who spent all their w
lives in it, to be replaced by others when they were worn out. Such s
indeed—each one so small and comparatively insignificant in itself—tend
forgotten by posterity, whose imagination is stirred by the noise and
times false glamour of the big naval battle, but cannot be bothered w
smaller—though often keenly exciting—experiences of those who hunted
the fierce enemies of mankind. Here, too, we have not the space to ch
such deeds, though not through lack of admiration for the doers. For
the reader is referred to such a monumental work as Sir William Laird Cl
History of the Royal Navy, where he will find not scores, but literally hu
of pages devoted to these things. No coast, no island however distant,
pirates still lurked, remained unvisited, uncombed. No report of their de
tions, were the locality never so remote, or the reporter never so humble
ignored by those who then ruled the proudest Navy in the world. Nor
we forget that even greater—and even less exciting—service which the
ships were performing all the time—the task of *preventing* piracy ; the kn
"just being there" *before* the piracy was committed, or of gradually persu
would-be pirates that they had better turn their hand to some more legit
form of livelihood. Such services even the biggest history book wil
record. Those who performed them must be content—if in their pr
abodes they have need for such consolation—to know that their efforts

with well-nigh universal success. Piracy is not dead : it is as immortal
other evil traits to which Man is heir. But it is almost universally
ed, and it is still the British Navy more than anything else which keeps
Herein the "Pax Britannica" justifies itself to this day.

ea was the greatest enemy of the peaceful merchant, but it was by no
the only one. The sea holds also for him perils which are not made by
but man, by science and hard work, may remove them, and thereby
ute in a very real way to the safety of sea-users.

st of these dangers is shipwreck, which may be caused either by
ng on to uncharted rocks or shoals, or by reason of a ship's unseaworthiness.
these spheres Britain has done noble work. One function of her Navy,
the nineteenth century, second only to anti-piracy in the time and labour
upon it, has been the systematic surveying of the world's oceans. She
not claim to be the sole country to undertake this task, so essential to the
of seafarers, nor does she claim any special merit in having done a very
share of it. For, after all, here too it was her ships that benefited the most
But none the less, the ships of all other nationals shared the advantage
The nature of the work voluntarily shouldered by Britain, and the modest
in which she undertook it, are clearly revealed in the 1848 *Report of Progress*
by the Hydrographic Department of the British Admiralty. There they
that they have completed perhaps one-third of the earth's survey : they
are to suggest that the eastern coast of North America be left for the United
to chart, and they congratulate France on her admirable work off Tunis
Algiers ; the rest of the world they assume, almost as a matter of course,
Britain's sphere. The long, exacting task is now all but accomplished,
British survey work is admittedly inferior to none. No man may gauge
number of seafarers, of all nationalities, who owe their lives to British
ralty charts, and no seafarer—for the sea *tends* to make a man generous—
fail to acknowledge its immensity.

In the more direct prevention of shipwreck, too, by the lighting of coasts and
buoying of shoals, etc., Britain has always shown the road. As early as the
enth century the famous body known as "Trinity House" was charged
the supervision of harbour buoys and lights, and gradually came to assume
sponsibility for all sea-marks and lights round the coasts of Britain. Some
centuries ago it began to take over the few existing lighthouses, and, during
last hundred years, it has done its work so well that it now has under its
ge a hundred lighthouses, fifty lightships, and nearly six hundred light-
ys. The safe navigation of the British coasts has long been a model to the
rld, and the example of Trinity House has been copied everywhere.
Efforts to improve the safety of ships at sea, and of their crews, are not so
luxively British. Yet here again Britain has unquestionably led the way.

The fierce international rivalries of the eighteenth and first half of the n
centuries had had, all over the world, their effect in rendering greedy
more callous than ever to the possible consequences of overloading th
or of sending unseaworthy ships to sea (sometimes having deliberate
insured them). The first man in public life to conduct a serious crusad
such " coffin-ships " was the Englishman Samuel Plimsoll, who by sp
by pen achieved, after years of patience, a resounding success when th
famed load-line which still bears his name was made compulsory in
That, too, has saved many a good life.

Now other Governments did not have to copy Britain by mak
load-line, or any similar one, compulsory in *their* ships ; but there already
in Britain an inducement which made it exceedingly likely that they
This was that famous institution known all over the world simply as " Ll
a name which for many years now has stood in the minds of seafare
countries for the best marine insurance in the world.

" Lloyd's ", two and a half centuries ago, was merely a coffee-h
which shipbrokers and men interested in marine insurance congrega
soon became a more definite association of such people, and either itsel
offshoots have performed many services of untold value to all shipping i
on earth. In 1734 the weekly " Lloyd's Lists " began : in 1760 ca
" Register of Shipping ", and in 1834 the most famous list of all—"
Register ". These were the first scientific attempts at classifying the
shipping. Thus the five vowels came to be used to indicate the state of th
itself, and the numbers " 1 ", " 2 ", or " 3 " to indicate the state of her
ment : so that " A1 at Lloyd's " came to mean—as, abbreviated to "
it still means today—" in perfect condition ".

Once more, no particular altruism is claimed for Lloyd's. Insurance
panics, in Britain as elsewhere, are not primarily philanthropists. It i
definitely to their interest to do their best in preserving the objects which
insure. Lloyd's Lists themselves were designed primarily to help the i
to assess premiums. But they also helped to achieve a much greater safety
for British and foreign ships, for the standards which they set gradually be
the standards required by all ship-insurers throughout the civilised world.
day finally came when an owner whose vessel failed to be " classed " b
insurer who based his standards on Lloyd's could not hope to secure any repu
insurance at all. And this is true today. Lloyd's, moreover, furnishes
has furnished for over a century—an unrivalled service of information vi
ship-owners, with agents stationed in all quarters of the globe. Also, in
suance of the purpose for which it was created, it has always taken a lea
part in forwarding any scheme which will safeguard shipping ; not merely
love, but because, like Britain herself, it *wants* all shipping to be as safe as poss

have space to mention but one other way in which Great Britain has
world towards greater safety at sea, and that is in the direct saving of life
of such contrivances as the lifeboat, the rocket apparatus, and the
fire-engine. All these safeguards to ships and seamen originated in
The lifeboat owed its beginnings to the efforts of men such as Henry
in the 1780's, the rocket apparatus to Henry Trengrouse and John
, and the earliest marine fire-engine to Lieutenant Jekyll of the British
But it was only in 1824 that there came into existence that life-saving
, the Royal National Lifeboat Institution, which is the parent of all
societies throughout the world. There is, to this day, one characteris-
British feature about this Institution : it has, and always has had, a purely
personnel. For though small payments are made to those who man
, and pensions awarded, when necessary, to their widows, they are all
dinary fishermen and " longshoremen " who at any time may—but
do—refuse to take the risks.

are but a few of the steps taken by Britain to establish and guard the
and security of the seas for all. We must leave them now, emphasising
they furnish no catalogue, but only bare examples of the sum-total of
's activities.

IV. THE GOOD AND THE FREEDOM OF ALL

he same reminder must be with us when we attempt to give examples of
's wider use of her sea-power in the interests of human freedom, for here
must content ourselves with two groups only, and discuss even these far
briefly than they deserve.

The first example is of a general nature and of wide international significance.
Britain who inaugurated, led, and finally triumphed in that great move-
towards the freedom of the individual, whoever he might be. It was
who secured the Abolition of Slavery throughout the world ; and the
ish Navy was, throughout, her main instrument. This was only natural
the principal source of slave supply was always Africa, while the principal
mand came from other continents : thus slave transport was always largely
maritime business. Moreover, it was a paying one—often *very* paying—so
it cannot be said, this time, that it was strictly to the material advantage of
greatest " carrying " country to stop the traffic. It was not. Here Britain's
interest was in direct conflict with her moral sense : and the latter won.
There was, it is true, a fight waged for nearly a quarter of a century between
philanthropists such as Wilberforce and Clarkson on the one hand, and the
vested interests " of Trade on the other. But in 1807 the carrying of slaves
British ships was forbidden ; and in 1807, with Britain in control of every

sea, that was an all-important step. But still slavery continued to exi
Empire, for slaves, if not regarded quite as men, were certainly anim
animals can keep up their numbers by breeding. So the further—
more decisive—Act of 1833 was necessary. Then the *status* of slav
abolished throughout the Empire.

The civilised races were not slow to follow Britain's lead, but th
backward peoples needed persuasion. There were not wanting, t
scrupulous folk in all parts of the world who found that there was goo
in this particular form of law-breaking, the illicit carrying of slaves. A
was an obvious task for the "Policeman".

He did not shirk it. The annals of the British Navy during the last h
years are filled with the story of the suppression of slave-running only l
of piracy: indeed, after 1824, when slave-dealing was declared to be a
they became the same thing. And success has crowned the "Police
efforts in the one no less than in the other.

The suppression of slavery came only just in time—only just, that is,
the opening up of the "Dark Continent". What that opening up
have meant, not only to the millions of coloured people who inhabit it, b
to world civilisation as a whole, had slavery remained the normal proced
the white pioneers, it is terrible to contemplate. A world economy ba
legitimised mass-slave labour would have spelt, at the least, the eventual
of world civilisation as we know it. But Britain saved the world from th
recognising the fellow-humanity of white and black. And it is very larg
the unrelenting efforts of British naval power that, in every quarter of the
the slave owes his individual liberty. If that power had done nothing
all to justify its pacific existence, this fact alone would go far to vindica
"Pax Britannica".

Last, there is the attitude of Britain, throughout the era under discu
to that very important subject, the political self-determination of peoples.
far as her own are concerned, there is little to be said. Britons themselve
self-government already, and to Canada, Australia, and New Zealand she
the same when they asked for it: to South Africa also, and to Ireland—th
after undue delays—she gave it in the end. But what of her attitude tow
other peoples?

Britain's normal foreign policy—the preservation of the Balance of Powe
Europe—concerns us only indirectly here. But one aspect of it—her opposi
to the aggression of any strong Continental Power upon its neighbours—n
needs be mentioned, since it is exactly parallel in its general effect to her atti
towards the Freedom of the Seas. Here, too, though undoubtedly she gain
preventing any one Power from dominating the mainland, she is also aiding
peoples whose freedom and self-determination are threatened by the would
dominator: and she has done so consistently for several centuries. Yet it

her policy not to interfere in the *internal* concerns of her neighbours,
never directly done so. But this could not prevent her from having
with one side or the other, and lending to that side her moral
, under well-defined circumstances, rendering them aid, usually
character, yet often all-important. And it was her vast sea-
the used—or more frequently, *refused* to use—for the purpose. It
to record each individual case, but one thing can and should be
This influence, whether moral or physical, positive or negative, was
favour of self-determination, and against aggression, every time that
themselves existed.

ordinary Briton—he who, in the bulk, creates the nation's "Public
"—usually led the way. Himself long since freed from a tyrannical
he inevitably extended his sympathy, and often his active assistance,
fortunate peoples, whether oppression arose from bad government
from the overbearing domination of one race by another. As early as
consistently in every revolutionary key-year of the nineteenth century,
of British Public Opinion at least *began* with open sympathy for those
for liberty, whether democratic or national; though sometimes,
later stages of the French Revolution, that sympathy was forfeited by
of Governments which, rising from the fires of Liberty, set up
upon its ashes. Often—more often, indeed, than not—public
was some way ahead of the Government in the furnishing of aid,
not necessarily in sympathy. This is but natural. In all ages the in-
, as being far less responsible than the Government, may contrive to
the object of his sympathy when his rulers must in prudence refrain. The
may, in fact, vent his feelings in direct action where the latter can only
representations" or "exert pressure".

was the case when, in the 1820's, the Greeks began their great bid to
the thraldom of the Ottoman Empire. Long before the Government
, volunteers and voluntary gifts were pouring out from England, and
was only one of many hundreds who gave his life for Greek liberty.
important, from our point of view, was the work done by that gallant and
naval officer, Thomas Cochrane, Lord Dundonald, who passed in
waters one phase of his astonishing career in the service of oppressed
The British Government followed, perforce, at a slower pace: yet,
, they too were openly helping the immortal cause of Greece, and it
British admiral, this time commanding the naval forces of Britain,
struck in Navarino Bay that resounding blow which, more than any other,
the issue, and gave Greece her liberty.

his same Dundonald, too, aided by scores of brother officers and men from
British Navy, had already been instrumental—indeed the main instrument—
ging freedom to the States of South America. Three of them—Chile,

Peru, and Brazil—know, and gratefully acknowledge, their debt to
man and his disinterested helpers, who gave not only victory and fr
those they served, but to the world an epic of courage and enterpr
should live for ever.

Nor must the share of the British Government in these events be ov
When her own allies insisted, as she thought unwarrantably, upon i
in the internal affairs of all European States, Britain first objected; then
the wishes of the rest by sending a fleet to the help of the Portugue
struggling against the reactionary and absolutist party ; and finally refus
blank when they demanded that she should use her immense naval f
suppress the South American rebels. Instead, through the mouthpie
liberty-loving Canning, she preferred to side with the American
Monroe when he enunciated his famous " Doctrine ", and to part
with all her Continental allies rather than consent to an action so pr
antagonistic to the inclinations of her people. So she recognised t
pendence of Mexico, Peru, and Chile, which ended the matter th
then, since now the British Navy stood between Europe and the n
States.

There was one memorable occasion, too, when Italy's champion
most critical hour of her making saw with a fierce joy two of Britain's
" standing by "—" just being there ", like a couple of policemen on
Day or at the Football Association Cup Final : yet reckoned by all—and
reckoned—as the arbiters of Right and Freedom. The date was 11t
1860, the place Marsala, and the occasion the arrival of Giuseppe Garibal
his immortal " Thousand ", to launch the glorious adventure on Sicily.

Of the two vessels containing the Liberator and his men, the *Piemo*
anchored safely inside the mole and quickly landed her contingent, but
Lombardo, of deeper draught, had grounded in the mouth of the harbou
came three Neapolitan warships. The *Lombardo*, crowded with men,
target they could not miss. The whole expedition was at their mer
seemed doomed to annihilation.

But the officer commanding them hesitated. Unaccountably ? Not
Off the harbour mouth, the nearest not a mile away, lay, motionless, the *I*
and the *Argus*, of the British Navy. What, he asked himself were they
there ? Why, wherever he or his colleagues went, did these infernally c
looking little craft happen to be on the spot ? And if he opened fire, no
he had the chance, what would they do ? Would they stand by and app
Somehow he doubted it ; for his name was Acton and he had British bl
his veins. Would they not, more likely, blow him there and then out
water ? Anyway, he was not going to take the risk. He must first mak
He tried, but it was some time before he could find the senior British c

time more before the latter had himself rowed to the Neapolitan
to hold a leisurely parley with Acton.
then it was too late. When at length the bombardment began, the
and were safely landed, and the expedition saved.
Italians know this story, and they should not forget it. Certainly
himself was not guilty of such ingratitude. His own account of the
characteristic of the man's generosity and scrupulous love of truth.
ish ships, he says, did not aid the disembarkation " directly "—and this
true. Without orders to that effect their captains were powerless. Yet
to affirm that their presence and attitude " influenced " the Neapolitan
to such a degree that he missed the golden opportunity. " And so ",
the Liberator, " the noble flag of England once more on this occasion
to prevent bloodshed, and I, the Benjamin of these lords of the Ocean,
hundredth time received their protection." [1]
the vital help rendered to Garibaldi at Palermo by the British Com-
in-Chief, Sir George Mundy, there is no space to record the details
suffice it to say that the Armistice which virtually secured the surrender
capital was arranged in the friendly atmosphere of the Admiral's cabin,
the capture of Palermo was the turning point of the whole campaign.
must it be forgotten that it was easily within the power of the British fleet
the Liberator's triumphant career to a dead stop at Messina, and that the
Government was even then urging such a course upon Britain. But
ised, on the characteristic ground that, if the Navy, Army, and Peoples
were attached to the King, Garibaldi would be defeated ; but, if they
disposed to welcome him, any intervention on her part would be an
ence with the internal affairs of the Neapolitan Kingdom. As the
policeman would not dream of interfering in the domestic economy of
ish home, so no British ship must be used to curtail a people's domestic
of self-determination.
is clear that the attitude of Britain towards the unification of Italy was
ted, not upon base self-interest, but upon genuine and spontaneous sym-
, and in that light the great makers of Italy viewed it. If we ask, once
" *Cui bono fuit ?* " we shall, this time, have to make an answer in which
emphasis is different. It is true that, on the long view, the existence of any
happy, and prosperous people is a potential advantage to Britain. But it
show a sad lack of realism to deny that the *main* advantage, in this case,
Italy's. And this particular story has been retold at some length because
emphasises as well the " Pax Britannica ", interpreted in its widest, most
l, and most generous sense. It shows, at their very best, the British ships
men who preserved that peace.

[1] *Autobiographical Memories* (Florence, 1902, 10th Edition), p. 343.

2. BRITISH SHIPS

All who sail the seas will be familiar with the Red Ensign of the Bri chantman and the White Ensign of the British warship. But, even a these distinctive colours, the ships themselves, their build and their would be distinctive enough. The ships' crews, too, would be distinguishable, both the officers and the men. In fact, the two Serv seem so different in every way as to make it impossible to combine the in one.

Yet that is what we intend to do, for those stories—in British seas too mixed to make them intelligible when separated. This may cause to some readers, especially those whose countries have assumed their shapes in comparatively recent times—that is to say, after the century differentiation took place which has now set so great a gulf the "fighting ship" and the "merchantman". Again, in other cou especially those bordering the Mediterranean Sea—there may have age-old distinction between the two types of ship and between the two individual who manned them.

But Britain is exceptional in this, as in other ways. The story of the Navy and the story of the Merchant Navy, during most of their cour one story.[1] Let us give some dates. It is, roughly, eleven centuri England was first united into a single kingdom. For approximately hundred years the "fighting" and the "merchant" ships were pra identical: for a century longer the distinction between the two remained and usually blurred: the very word "Navy", indeed, was used to c both types, the "Navy of England" being, in fact, the collection of shipping of England.[2] The term "Royal Navy" dates only from 16 than three centuries ago. For eight hundred years, too, the "fighting had no officers exclusively their own. They borrowed, for purpo fighting, from the soldiers; and, for the purposes of sailing, from the m seamen. Then they began to obtain officers, but not men. The st England was over a thousand years old before the regular "rating" Royal Navy came into existence. She was a thousand years old, too, there came to be any really radical difference between her warships a merchantmen.

[1] No attempt can be made here to give, even in briefest outline, a cons history of either the Royal Navy or the Merchant Navy. To such as desire but not too detailed, works on these very large subjects, the following books are r mended: *The Naval Side of British History*, by Geoffrey Callender (Christophers, and *The History of the Merchant Navy*, by H. Moyse-Bartlett (Harrap, 1937).

[2] England and Scotland remained entirely separate kingdoms until 1603.

though we may not divorce from each other two Services whose union ...ified by age and tradition, we may venture to divorce the seaman ...p, and, briefly, give them separate treatment.

1. THE COMMON STOCK

...throughout the Middle Ages in England it is roughly true to say that ...ant ships and warships were identical: or at most, warships were but ..., and often temporarily, modified merchant ships. They all belonged to ...family of craft which a logical Frenchman has called "*le Vaisseau Rond*"—...round ship: a short, tub-like affair, heavy and strong, and propelled ...solely by the wind. Not for northern seas the light, thin, vicious "long ... the galleys of Greece and Rome, and of mediaeval Mediterranean ... propelled by slaves sweating at their great oars. Such vessels did not ...readily to the sou'westerlies sweeping in from the Atlantic. They were ...unsuited here. The result was important, for it meant that the respec... maritime histories of the Mediterranean and of England took different ...from quite early times. The Mediterranean possessed, and developed, ...to expect, the "long" for war, and the "round" for trade. England had ...one, the "round"—and that she used as a general utility ship for both ... This fitted in well with her internal economy in another respect. ...ing of England had always relied largely, and often exclusively, upon his ...ships whenever he had any special naval need. This meant that he had ...upon "round ships" for his warlike purposes, since that was the only ...with which his ship-owning subjects could provide him. No merchant ...ever a galley because, having no hold—no cargo space—it would ...to him. Some mediaeval kings built ships of their own, but these ...were "round ships", partly because of the weather conditions just men... but also because of the use for which they intended them. They re... them not so much for mere fighting as for cargo-carrying, albeit of a ...kind: men, arms, horses, and all the accoutrements of war. For ...conditions were usually bounded by their desire to conquer France—or, ...themselves would doubtless have said, to *re*conquer it; and what ...needed for such a purpose was "armed transport" rather than ...ships".

...more often than not, the mediaeval king did not trouble to build his ..."armed transport" at all, since he could hire something just as suitable ...his subjects when he required it, and since, in any real emergency, such as a ...invasion, he could commandeer all or any of their ships to meet it. ...it was that the old Navy of England was all the shipping of England, and ...merchant sailing ships in form—even the king's own if he had any.

We must not imagine that there were many of these, nor that very big. Before Tudor times England's trade was small, and mainly It was largely the first Tudor, Henry VII, who made himself king in began to put her on to the sea, and he did that mainly by precept an He may be said to have "gone in for trade" himself, and, being business man, he made his fortune. Then he persuaded his somewhat subjects to follow in his footsteps, encouraging them by giving a bo who would build ships of sea-going size. But he did not go fa differentiating war from merchant ships. His own ships were big ones, as befitted both a good merchant and a king who wanted to example. But they were merchant ships still—the old "round ships

It was his son, the much-wedded Henry VIII, who began the diffe in the early sixteenth century, by building a big fleet of ships designed his shores from brother monarchs with whom he saw fit to quarrel— that is, for the first time, and all but exclusively, for *war*. More impo —and again for the first time—he introduced on board the round shi effective ship-killing weapon, the first it had ever possessed—the Gre

Everything followed from this. The galley had always possesse killing weapon in its ram, but that could be used only at touching while the old round ship, which could not even ram without hurting it as much as it hurt the enemy, had to approach to touching distance to it could get down to business, when its crew grappled and boarded, an what was nothing but a land fight on the enemy's deck. But now broadside that could batter the enemy at a distance, "off-fighting" star with it modern naval warfare. Moreover, spoilt as a cargo-carrier by its cargo decks cluttered up with guns, the new ship could be built on fi and so become a better sailer and more easy to manœuvre—great adv in a fighting ship. The process was slow, but it was certain, and there in the end that purely English invention, the most graceful thing whi sailed the seas—the broadside sailing-ship of the line.

But thereafter warships and merchant ships did not instantly draw far from it. For long the Crown continued to follow Henry VII's po using his ships, between whiles, for "trade". Elizabeth was a great b in the policy of making her ships pay: and the merchant, on his side, fou the good armament and the better speed of the Royal ship were worth im for the seas were still such lawless places that he readily appreciated the tage of a few good guns; and he was already learning the modern b man's maxim that "time is money".

In Cromwell's day, however, in the mid-seventeenth century, special really began, for then the *State* built a navy, for which the nation paid, declared purpose was to protect the nation's trade. Once more "war

but slowly even now, for still the ... in a still lawless world, found it necessary ... especially if he designed to go far afield. And still the "private ... ", that half-way house between War and Trade ... the two types. It was only by 1815, when the ... that the sea was safe enough to allow the merchantman ... per cent of its time in trade.[1]

II. THE DIVERGING OF TYPES

... the greatest of all shipbuilding revolutions was at hand—Sail to ... But it was not even these changes which caused the ... What brought that about more than anything else ... in guns and gunnery, the introduction of the disruptive and ... with the invention of the new slow-burning powders, ... Wood—even iron in ordinary thickness—soon ... against such weapons. Only one thing had a chance against ...

... changes in warship construction came thick and fast, and may be ... going on ever since, in a constant fight between attack and ... to penetrate and the power to resist. From this grim struggle ... modern capital ship—a miracle of complicated offensive mechanism ... in a hard defensive shell of steel. But the merchant ship was not so ... it could compete in that struggle only at the expense of sacrificing ... which it existed. The modern warship can carry only the wherewithal ... and hit the enemy, and to defend itself: it has no room over for ... cargo. But inability to carry cargo would be a manifestly absurd ... of merchant ship or liner, which has, therefore, to a great extent, ... on quite other lines, increasing where possible its size, its speed and ... carrying capacity, and leaving its defence, for the most part, to the ... naval ship.

... not only did merchant ships and warships diverge, and develop along ... different lines. The last half-century or so has seen another type of ... of merchant ship from merchant ship and of warship from warship. ... is rather a new thing in the history of ships. The process had started ... ages, but for long it went neither fast nor far. Throughout the days ... and sail, in fact, the main difference between ships of either kind was ... of size. A merchantman, if bound for rough or distant seas, was naturally

[1] For further information on the fascinating story of the wooden sailing-ship through ... the reader is referred to Romola and R. C. Anderson, *The Sailing Ship* (Harrap,

built bigger and stouter than, say, a coaster ; while a " ship of the li
far more powerful weapon of war than a frigate or a sloop ; and it ha
work to do. There were, of course, a hundred minor differences be
types, but none was essential or radical. Some were stronger, some fa
had three fighting decks, some two, some only one, yet all were p
the same, where modern ships emphatically are not. They look diff
they *are* different. We often hear, in olden times, of not only a mer
but even a frigate being mistaken on a misty day for a battleship.
nowadays, if he could see at all, would mistake the *Queen Mary* for a t
destroyer for an aircraft carrier ?

It is the all-prevailing modern tendency towards specialisation w
led to this great diversification of types, both in Merchant and Roya
But the motives behind these two trends are different. Merch
specialisation has a simple and obvious motive. " I want ", says the o
fine luxury ship which can carry immense numbers of people as swift
comfortably as possible from A to B." So the liner comes into exis
is developed along straightforward and healthy lines of competit
rivals who want to do just the same things. Another says, " I wa
to carry oil ; or bananas ; or frozen meat " : and the ship which
suited to each individual requirement emerges without much difficul
experience soon shows that the wealthy passenger will not obtain the
for which he pays in a frozen-meat ship, nor will it benefit frozen
travel in a luxury saloon : and a banana ship is not ideal for the ca
oil, and vice versa.

But the evolution of warship types is not so simple. It is not only—
not mainly—a matter of straightforward competition. " Germany ha
battleship with 11-inch guns : we must go one better and have one with
guns." This attitude accounts for part of it, but not all. Woven deep
whole story is the endless clash of " Attack " and " Defence ". Let us ta
examples : one comparatively simple, one rather more complex, and
very complex indeed. We shall not, when we have finished, have ac
for nearly all the types to be found in Britain's modern Navy, but we
least have indicated why so many have come into existence.

1. Someone invented the aeroplane. That discovery had, originally, n
to do with ships. It was purely a land invention. But then someo
perceived that it might be extraordinarily useful at sea, and instantly set a
or got someone else to set about—designing a ship to carry it. Hence
direct process of reasoning came the Aircraft Carrier—a new type with v
as yet quite unexhausted possibilities.

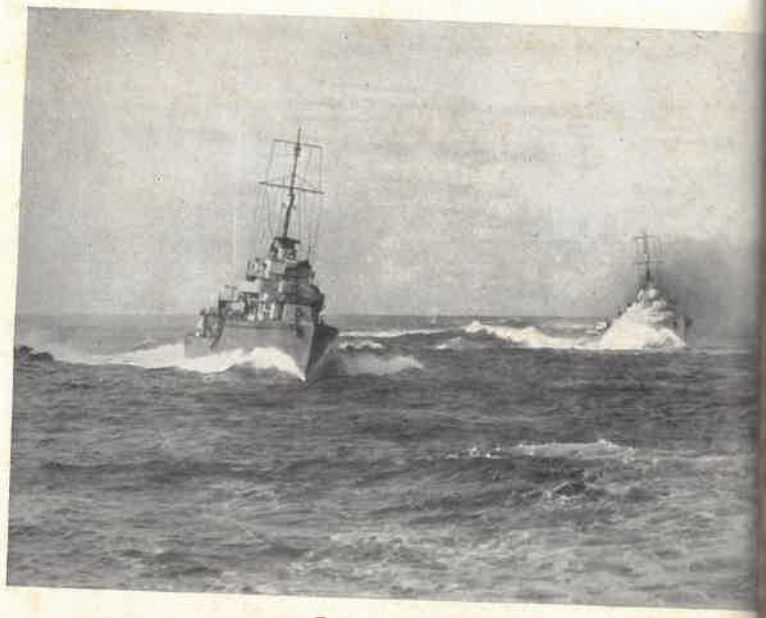
2. In all ages of ship development there has been something of a st
between the rival claims of " Strength " and " Speed ", and this strugg



H.M.S. *King George V*



H.M. Aircraft Carrier *Illustrious*



Destroyers at Speed



Mine-Sweepers

when armour came in: for in giving the "capital" ship sufficient protection to allow her to take her place in the "line of battle", the designer of the day had to sacrifice some of her speed. The result was, in- a whole set of compromises, ranging from the "Armoured Cruisers" strong enough "for the line", and singularly useful for detached of all kinds); through less heavily armoured, but faster ships called, to the classification of their day, "Second" or "Third-Class" or even just "Cruisers"; down to the almost unarmoured, but very "Light Cruisers". All naval powers interested themselves, of course, in nineteenth-century developments, but Britain more than any, because wider sea interests, and especially of the ever-increasing importance of "trade protection" function. Britain led the way, particularly, evolution of the lighter cruisers.

early in this century a great effort was made to solve the "strength- problem by producing a ship which, while very fast, was yet large enough heavily gunned enough to take its place, if necessary, "in the line"; or to be able to chase, catch, and by reason of its heavy shell-fire, to destroy biggest of the enemy's cruisers. Hence the Battle Cruiser—another invention. But, though as large and as well-armed as a Battleship, it weakness—its protection was inferior. It is probably obsolescent now, much because it did not pay as because the great advance in modern skill has enabled the constructor to design a well-protected battleship can travel as fast as a battle cruiser.

someone invented a sea-mine, to bump into which was, first, uncom- and, later, probably fatal. Something had to be done about it: it be fished for and removed. For this work there was a natural analogy trawler, out of which quickly developed the Mine-Sweeper—a type old but again quite new in war.

then someone else had the unfortunate idea of making his mine move instead of aiming it at his foe. Hence the Torpedo, profoundly affecting naval warfare both in "attack" and "defence". In "attack" three distinct were possible:

it might be launched from an existing type of ship—battleship or cruiser it sometimes was.

But these big and relatively slow vessels were obviously not ideal for purpose, and it soon occurred to somebody that quite a small craft, in no comparable with its quarry in strength, might be used as a torpedo-launcher nothing else, utilising its very smallness (and its accompanying speed) to unnoticed upon its mighty victim. Many such pawns, after all, would be worth the sacrifice could they but take a single queen. Hence the

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But this pest must at all costs be eradicated by the other side. T
little that the battleship itself could do beyond importing cumbrous torp
" blisters ", and double sides. The only real answer was to produce
larger, slightly faster ship which could hunt the hunter and destroy it.
the Destroyer, which, having come, came to stay, since it soon prove
kind of maid-of-all-work to the Fleet, performing many functions a
that for which it had been invented.

(*c*) But there remained to be developed a yet subtler form of attac
torpedo-boat relied on its relative elusiveness—the difficulty, for inst
spotting it on a dark night from the enemy's deck. Why not go a ste
and make it so elusive as to be positively invisible ? Instead of build
had been done, very low in the water, why not sink it right under ? H
course, the most deadly torpedo-launcher of them all—the Submarine.
so deadly was it that it bade fair to be a war-winning weapon all by its
someone discovered, in the nick of time, that, though it could escape
of man, it could not altogether baffle the ear of science.

This lethal weapon, it must be observed, though partly a British inv
was not mainly developed by Britain, for she had no great use fo
was more dangerous to her than to anyone else, and that for two main
First, on the surface of the sea, Britain had but little to fear, being in
strength there to any of her probable enemies : but the under-sea b
clearly a potential superiority-neutraliser, unless it could be countered
again, we *used* the sea more than our foe : we presented more targets,
when Germany turned the weapon on our merchant ships, were muc
vulnerable targets ; and more *important* targets, for Germany in 1914
not only more self-sufficing than England, but also could obtain overland
of the products which she did not herself possess. We were in the unfo
position of relying more and more upon sea-borne supplies which coul
be carried in cargo-boats unprotected (and, by hypothesis, unprotecta
armour. For all our surface strength, the U-boat came within an ace of b
us in 1917.

Britain *had* to find the counter-weapon, and—just in time—she fo
It was an endless and intricate series of anti-submarine devices and anti-sub
flotillas, of which the end is perhaps not even yet : for the U-boat w
revived in added fury in 1939, Germany and Britain striving day in, da
for months and years on end, in the old cold-blooded contest of " Attack
" Counter-attack "—hordes of mass-produced submarines rolled out
one, and swarms of " anti " craft of all shapes and sizes evolved by the

[1] Most of the early submarine experiments were made by the Americans a
French, but the development of the Hydroplane—key to the vessel's modern eff
—was mainly the work of the Englishman J. P. Holland.

magnetic and acoustic torpedoes, pack tactics, and Schnorkel
tubes " (the further perfecting of invisibility) on the German
depth-charges, listening, echoing, and directional radio devices on the
All that it is safe to say is that, at the moment, and at grievous cost,
" has defeated Submarine again.

British were quick to realise—they usually are—that the best form of
to Attack ; and all these anti-submarine devices were, during both wars,
in a vigorous counter-attack. But counter-offensive may, on
be too offensive, and, at first, the method of using such forces as were
were perhaps open to this criticism. In the first half of the first war, the
was Patrolling. The sea was divided into areas, and the anti-submarine
were them, attempting to locate and destroy the pests. The prin-
good enough if they could locate them. If the submarines can be
before they can attack, so much the better : the object is achieved by
and offensive methods. But in practice, patrolling proved a failure
the patrols could not find the submarines in the wide sea-spaces which
all " seas ". It was simply leading up to the U-boat's highest
invisibility. The hunter was seeking the hunted, and its detective
was not as yet good enough to find it. But the U-boats *could* find the
ships, which were bound, if they were ever to make or leave port, to
well-defined entries and exits. Thus, while pure counter-offensive
the merchant ship was not being adequately defended. The answer
discovered, somewhat belatedly, when the first war was more than
It was the principle of convoy. If the merchant ships were collected
groups, sailing together in station, and suitable warships, prepared for
counter-attack, were escorting them, then, if the U-boat wanted to
at all, it would have to do so under the eye, or at least in the neighbour-
of its chosen enemy. In attacking it would have to relinquish its strongest
its elusiveness. It would have to give away its whereabouts. Instead
destroyer having to come to the submarine, it was now the submarine
would have to come to the destroyer. It is a little surprising that Britain
slow in embracing the system, for there was nothing new in it. She had
accustomed to escort her merchant shipping in convoys ever since the days
Armed Merchantmen and the First Dutch War (1652–4), to protect them against the
not only surface attacks of surface men-of-war and privateers. Still, once more
it was taken just in time. It was probably the convoy system more than
any one thing which defeated the U-boat menace in 1917.

In the war of 1939–45 the convoy system was fortunately employed from
the start, and the detecting instruments of the escort were now greatly improved.
It seemed at first as though the U-boat menace was not destined to be quite
as grave. How, probably, would it have been but for several new factors

which emerged. The first was, of course, the Allied collapse on the
of Europe, which opened up for Germany a vastly extended coas
potential submarine activity. Instead of having to issue forth from port
the Danish-German border and Ostend, the marauder could now
upon, and steal out from, any point of the long stretch from the Arct
to the Pyrenees. Even the formidable array of anti-submarine cra
Britain possessed would have been totally inadequate to keep any sort
over those thousands of miles. Next, the German submarine was i
out of all knowledge in reliability, speed, and range. It could now
much farther afield, and could attack almost anywhere in the Atlanti
This meant that Britain must increase enormously the length of her
convoy routes—if she could find the ships to do it. Nor was she so we
strategically for such work, since in the period between the two wars
lost those all-important Southern Ireland bases upon which the easter
her anti-submarine activities had been hinged—for Eire remained neu
only part of the British Empire which decided to do so. And, lastly, th
of the long-range aeroplane gave to the U-boat just the one organ in
by nature, it was weak. The submarine is short-sighted, because the to
longest periscope cannot be far above the surface of the sea. But the
Wulf Condor gave it a pair of keen far-seeing eyes. The U-boat no lon
to expose itself looking for the convoy : it knew exactly where it was
was still well under the horizon.

In defending herself, her merchant ships and her vital supply lines,
had to evolve a great variety of types, many new and mostly small—
sloops, corvettes, and special auxiliary aircraft carriers (known colloq
"Woolworth carriers")—for more distant oceanic escort work ; and
launches, motor torpedo-boats, and motor gunboats for the narrowe
even special rescue-ships to follow the convoys and pick up survivors
possible. All had to be on the lookout, moreover, not only for enemy
beneath their keels, but for surface foes as well, and for the menace that sw
upon them from the air ; and they had to be armed accordingly, to cond
harassing new three-dimensional war. The merchant ships themselve
also armed, but mainly to discourage air attack : without conceding too
as cargo-carriers they could not hope, themselves, to repel surface and
water attacks. For that they had to rely upon their escorts. But they ha
successes against both aircraft and submarines, even sometimes carryi
wherewithal to catapult fighters into the sky. The pilots of these C.A.M.
(Catapult Aircraft Merchantmen) did much invaluable work against
Condors and U-boats, though they always had to face the certainty of cr
into the sea at the end of their flight ; the ships provided for no return
planes, though the airmen were frequently rescued.



H.M. Submarine *Triumph*



A Midget Submarine



North Africa Convoy



Arctic Convoy

...little there is no end to the tally of the little ships, the queer ships, per-... for where there is water there is almost always a use ... for something which will float. So did ships—odd-looking ships—... and elsewhere, operating on the Western Front, miles from ... or, emerging from their native element, waddle ashore in ... So, when invasion threatened, did scores of "mosquito ... on the lakes and lochs of the island, even on many of the artificial ... which supply water to the greater towns. Had a squadron of enemy ... alighted in the midst of any British inland water, it is likely that its ... would have been one of these humbler units of the Total British ... we may rest assured, would have been out of all proportion ...

... attacking defensive won in the end, in both wars, but at a ... In 1914–18 the British Empire lost nearly eight million tons of ... In the second world war over eleven and a third million ... of the material price of victory.

... dwelt thus long upon the submarine and the deadly conflict that ... because in fact there lay the crux of the whole naval war; nay, ... It was not only a battle which Britain had to win if she were ... the Battle of Britain shares with it that distinction. It was also ... the hardest, the grimmest, and the longest struggle of them all. ... Alamein was decided in a matter of days; the Battle of Britain ... of weeks, and so did that of Stalingrad; the great and decisive ... of France ran into months. But the Battle of the Atlantic lasted, with ... lulls but with no breaks, just five years, eight months and five days. ... the war in Europe.

III. THE CONVERGING OF FUNCTIONS

... contribution, then, have these twentieth-century experiences made ... long history of British ships? Surely this. Though the warship has ... far from the merchant ship in build, it would be manifestly ... to suppose that it has diverged in *function*—that it will do all the fighting ... the merchant ship does all the trading. In peace, it is true, the warship's ... is to protect the merchant ship, but in war this is not nearly the whole ... For now war is not what it was: it is *total*, and all must fight. ... must now fight in a general sense, because in total war all trade uncon- ... with war is eliminated, and what is left of trade becomes what we now ... "supply", which is, of course, an integral part of war: indeed, by universal ... supply is the *res ultima* of modern war. Yet few modern states are ... least of all Britain. Moreover to her—an island—all supply

lines are sea lines and a cutting of them spells death. Thus in Britain *all* activities in war time become front-line activities—become war. T shipping strength of the community, distinguished erstwhile under th "war" and "trade", is now dragged instantly into the vortex and there until the last shot is fired, the last torpedo launched, the last bomb

But is this really new? In detail, perhaps it is: but not in princip modern blending of functions—the division of the merchant ships' time war and trade—might surprise the Victorian seaman, in whose halcy looked as though the differentiation was complete: but it would su seaman of no other era. Nelson, for instance, must have heard, in before he shattered Napoleon's naval power at Trafalgar, of that spirit in which a fleet of East India merchantmen made a French battle squad away, and doubtless knew many a bold skipper who had gamely r "stand to" when so commanded by a French privateer. It would not have surprised Blake, who led a fleet which was half composed of ships against the great Dutch admiral Tromp himself. And, far from su it would have seemed positively natural to Howard and Drake, who Spain's "Invincible Armada" out of the English Channel in 1588 with which over 80 per cent had been built as traders. So close are, and always have been, the ships of the Royal and Merchant Navies that missible to label the Victorian era in which they drifted apart as the ex and all other eras as the rule. Today things are evidently back wh started: once more the Navy of Britain is in fact all the shipping of Br

3. BRITISH SEAMEN

The traditions of warships and merchant ships in Britain have always been [illegible] than their differences, the same is even more true of the people who man [illegible]

1. ANCESTORS

[illegible] in mediæval times, the king wanted to requisition his subjects' ships [illegible] purposes of temporary war, he would send down to the ports where [illegible] to be found, and a "stay", known as an "embargo", was placed [illegible] all the shipping there while his officers made their choice. Those selected [illegible] dispersed, then and there, to a prearranged rendezvous, sailed thither [illegible] their ordinary crews. These men—both officers and "hands"—were, [illegible] the seamen of their day, members of an ancient, honourable, and [illegible] whole-time calling, the "mystery" or the "craft" (as they then [illegible] of apprenticeship. They were a respectable, if rough, section of the [illegible] and all always free men, though not very high up in the social [illegible] of the times. The principal officer among them was the Master, [illegible] to his owner for the safety and navigation of the ship, as he still is: [illegible] has been little or no change here. The next most important man, then, [illegible] Boatswain, with, perhaps, wider duties than his modern namesake, for [illegible] responsible for the masts, sails, yards, rope, etc., and for working them: [illegible] for "making her go". His successor in these dingier days of steam is [illegible] the Chief Engineer. There were also, among the officers, the Carpenter [illegible] whose duties need no description. Finally, there were the [illegible] "hands", a little rougher than their officers, perhaps, but equally free [illegible] "whole-time". And the exclusive duty of all of these, from first [illegible] was to sail the ship: nothing else.

[illegible] When the rendezvous was reached—it would be the Tower of London if [illegible] a few temporary alterations might be made to the ship; and [illegible] all was ready there would appear on the scene the fighting contingent—[illegible] at this stage, it must be emphasised, seamen were not fighters, and fighters [illegible] seamen. They were indeed very different people, drawn from quite [illegible] strata of society. There would be officers and men among the [illegible] but the officers were the ones who counted by far the most. [illegible] was called the Captain—the Capitanus, the "Caput" or "Head" [illegible] if he had an underling with him, he would be the Lieutenant—the [illegible] the "Locum Tenens"—the man who "took his place" if [illegible] happened to the leader. In every feudal society these men came from

the privileged order of landowners whose feudal service to the Crown, in return for the land they held of it, was military service. They were its natural "Fighting Leaders", upon whatever element the fighting might take place. By virtue of being "King's men" they took command of the ship, now a temporary ship of war: but they were in no sense seamen, and knew it; would, in fact, be insulted, in all probability, were they accused of knowing anything about so humble a "mystery". So they confined themselves exclusively to the "fighting" side, and did not interfere at all with the "seamanship". The men whom they led on board, however, were of no great social account, being as a rule the folk drawn from plough and anvil on their officer's land, performing their service afloat both as part of the service which their lord owed to the King and as part of the service which they owed to their lord. They were not, of course, soldiers in the modern sense, nor even by profession "fighters". They were the "ordinary men" of their day, and their sojourn on board, like that of their officers, was quite ephemeral.

Now these four groups—fighting officers, fighting men, seamen officers, and seamen "hands"—are interesting people when we come to understand who they were. For they are the ancestors of all those Britons of our own day who go down to the sea in ships, whether in peace or in war. There is no category in that vast and heterogeneous "personnel" which defeated Germany so decisively in the twentieth-century wars which cannot trace its ancestry direct to one or more of these four.

How can we subdivide this modern personnel? Most simply, perhaps, into four big groupings, known today as "Royal Navy" (R.N.), "Royal Naval Reserve" (R.N.R.), "Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve" (R.N.V.R.), and "Hostilities Only" (H.O.).

The latest of them in time is, oddly enough at first sight, the first named. The Royal Navy man, whether officer or rating, differs from the others, of course, in being a whole-time specialist, making a career out of the naval profession. He is one result of the specialisation, in build and in use, of warships. And this fact will serve to give a clue as to when to begin looking for him. He could not very well emerge until there was a permanent and state-owned collection of ships for him to run: and that only came into existence, as we have seen, in the middle of the seventeenth century under the hand of the Protector Cromwell. But once the state-owned Navy is established, it will not be long before the professional seaman fighter appears to serve it. And so it is that the R.N. Officer begins his somewhat slow emergence from the time of Charles II—say, the 1670's. But, for various reasons, of which perhaps the chief is economy, the R.N. Rating lags far behind, and only emerges at length in the middle of the last century. The R.N. Officer's ancestors are sometimes one, sometimes another of our original four: in some cases the Seaman Officer who

ed on in the fighting ships after the emergency was over, and made a career of it; in others the Fighting Officer who did the same thing.[1] The R.N. ting's ancestry, however, was the old seaman hand. Gradually, as he began have more practice, he learnt to fight the ship as well as to sail it.

Who, then, upheld England's naval interests before these "specialists" me—for we certainly had naval interests long before Cromwell's time? e answer is very simple, though often overlooked. When the Government the day had need of naval personnel, yet had none permanently there to w upon, it simply had to fall back upon its "natural reserves", which always e there—that is, what we should now call its R.N.R., its R.N.V.R., and its O. Ratings. These particular names of course are modern, but the groups y stand for are far from new. They were all there always, ever since England an to have maritime and naval interests. Let us examine each briefly.

The R.N.R. man is—and always was—the professional merchant seaman fisherman who responds to the Crown's call for aid in emergency, and, while aining basically of the seaman's profession, comes forward for the duration the trouble to fight on the sea as well as to sail on it. That is exactly what Master of the mediaeval ship described above was doing, and it is exactly at the R.N.R. officer of 1939–45 did. To take but one example, if we mine the career of a man like Francis Drake we shall find that he was doing that. He was bred to the sea, but not as a fighter. He was *basically* a rchant seaman. In his case, it is true, he "switched over" to fighting ships often and with such success that he became, long ere his death, a magnificent hting seaman. But history in no way warrants our calling him a Royal val Officer, in the modern sense—a professional servant of the Crown, serving his time in the Crown's fighting ships. He spent his life oscillating between a aman's" and a "fighter's" career, and he adorned many professions other n that of Naval Officer, and for very much longer periods. The whole wkins clan was like him, as were Martin Frobisher, Cross, the Fenner brothers, many other Elizabethan sea-dogs. They are not, of course, the *prototypes* the R.N.R. They are just fairly early and very well-known examples of the ed: types of one of Britain's "natural reserves". They descend direct from old seaman officers, and are in their turn the forebears of the R.N.R.

Next comes the R.N.V.R. Officer. He is—and always has been—a man o was, professionally, *not* a seaman, though often an enthusiastic amateur of manship. In the earlier days his basic profession was that fighting-land-ning one, described above, which had always furnished the Crown, in emer-cy, with a reserve of fighting leadership. He was, indeed, usually called a Gentleman Volunteer" or, quaintly enough, a "Voluntary Gentleman":

[1] The curious story of this unique—and typically English—development is told the present writer in his *England's Sea Officers* (Allen & Unwin, 1939).

which really described him very well—a " gentleman " (i.e., in Tudor da one of the land-owning class) who " volunteered " to serve the Crown, te porarily, afloat. In later times, as the feudal world which produced him g place to the more modern world which we know, he ceased to be necessa either of the fighting or the land-owning professions : he might, indeed, of almost any profession *except* that of seaman. But he is—and always has be —a man not basically a seaman who responds to the Crown's call for aid emergency, and, while remaining a non-seaman, comes forward for the durati of the trouble to help to fight in ships and, incidentally, to learn to sail th That is exactly what the R.N.V.R. Officer of today is doing, and it is exac what such great Elizabethan figures as Grenville, Raleigh, Cumberland, a Thomas Howard did. None of these men was seaman born and bred, thou all learnt something of the " craft " before they had done. But also none them was anything like a modern R.N. Officer, for all came and went, spendi far more of their working lives outside the Queen's naval service than inside They too, of course, are not the *prototypes* of the R.N.V.R. They are just ea and very well-known examples of the breed : types of another of Britai " natural reserves ". They descend direct from the old Fighting Officers, a are in their turn the forebears of the R.N.V.R.

The last of these " natural reserves " is the " Hostilities Only " man. He was whom we called just now the " Ordinary Man " ; he was basically neith soldier nor sailor, though we chanced to meet him when he was serving in t former capacity. The real point about him is that, though by no means alwa there, he always turns up when he is required—sometimes of his own free w no doubt, but normally because he has to. The feudal " man " of the la owning captain in the mediaeval ship which we examined was seldom ask we suspect, whether he wanted to serve or not. But there was an emergen on : so he came with, no doubt, the best grace he could, but very satisfied, a rule, to return when all was over to his plough or his anvil. But, save f the fact that in our day the range of his basic jobs is far wider than plough anvil, the Hostilities Only is evidently that selfsame man, brought on board f the same fundamental reason, and apt to revert at the end of the war to h original avocation. Nor, in our own day, is he " asked " to come : rath he is " directed ", though he may often " opt " as between Service and Servi He is in fact and always was—the nation's " ultimate reserve ". For the nu bers in which he appears afloat depend upon the degree of the emergen Often, for long periods on end, the fighting Navy can be manned adequat from its other reserves without calling for his services. But when the big em gency of Total War comes—as, for instance, it has come twice in this century then his numbers rise exactly in proportion to the total work to be done, a begin to become astronomical.

II. THE ROYAL NAVY AND ITS RESERVES

The immediate effect of the R.N. Officer's arrival in the latter half of the enteenth century was to lessen greatly the part played in the Navy by the N.R. and the R.N.V.R. elements, in so far as officers were concerned. As a ofessional whole-timer he was more experienced than the others, and so ded to be more efficient ; so he was, naturally, given the most responsible the jobs that were going : and he still is. Drake and Grenville could com- nd fleets in Elizabeth's reign because there were no R.N. officers to compete th them. Men with their qualifications, however, have not commanded ets since early in the eighteenth century because there have always, since then, en Nelsons, Jellicoes, and Cunninghams trained from their boyhood for that ry task. Moreover, in all lesser wars, the new professionals have been merous enough, as a rule, to do all the officering. But up till 1853, though e officers were R.N., the men remained R.N.R., or sometimes H.O., the st majority being a kind of mixture—seaman by profession but " directed ", ry forcibly and unfairly, into the Navy " for the duration ". In 1853, how- er, the men too became R.N., surprisingly late in the day. It is often for- tten that the Empire was won for Britain by those dual-purpose men who re merchant seamen in peace and men-o'-warmen in war : it is as well to call, for instance, that something like three-quarters of the *Victory's* crew on t famous day of Trafalgar were, basically, merchant seamen. What at last owed her the luxury of " Long-Service Men " was Britain's greatly increased alth, combined with that growth of specialisation which was already turning e Able Seaman into a highly skilled artisan who needed years of training.

In 1853, then, it must have looked to an outsider as though the personnel the Royal Navy, like its *matériel*, was about to break away entirely from that the Merchant Navy. But it did not do so, because far-sighted statesmen resaw a grave danger. What would happen, they asked, in a major war if e R.N. could no longer draw, as it always had done, upon the whole pool of e nation's seamen ? In a small emergency, when a mild naval expansion as necessary, the new Long-Service scheme could meet it from its own Fleet eserve, composed of ex-Long-Service men retired on pension—admirable in ality and experience : and this it still does. But they would not do for a big ergency, for they were not great enough in *quantity*, and were, by the very ture of the case, " not so young as they had been ". Nor could the requisite mbers be obtained any longer by the old crude process of dragging in— pressing "—merchant seamen, since the new Naval Rating was already coming too skilled a man to be created at a moment's notice.

The answer was a very wise one. It was the modern R.N.R., in which olunteers from the old " pool ", while still remaining, basically, merchant

seamen, could receive in peace time a part at least of the fighting training whi war on a big scale would necessitate. And the scheme was so pronounced success that when the threat of a great naval war with Germany was beginni to loom up, the principle was extended to cover that portion of the commun which we have called the R.N.V.R.

This body, as it emerged in 1903, was not, however, what it has since becom All its members were, professionally, non-seamen, but a large proportion them were sea-amateurs in a wide sense. They might be great city magnat who raced at Cowes, or near-millionaires with luxury steam yachts ; or small business or professional men who loved sailing for its own sake ; or mechanicall minded people of any sort who loved tinkering with motor-boat engines or even humbler folk still who just enjoyed pottering about in a boat durin their holidays. But they had a common factor, and it was love of the wate There were not very many of these at first : not, that is, compared with th Navy men and the Naval Reservists. But from the first they were good stuff and especially suited to one particular duty soon to come their way—the handlin of small craft.

Now let us make no mistake about one thing. The text-books will ofte tell us—and they are right in the letter—that the R.N.R. was founded in 18 and the R.N.V.R. in 1903. This statement may satisfy the man who is stickler for names, but it ignores the reality which lies behind. The truth is fa otherwise : these foundations do not *start* the story of our naval reserves : th are, in spirit, the beginnings of its latest chapter. The bulk of the story lies f back in Britain's naval past.

At the turn of the century, then, when the British Navy, blissfully uncon scious, was already hovering on the brink of Total War, her naval personne situation was this : The Royal Navy loomed very large. Its officers and me formed the hard core of the whole Service, and were always maintained at th highest pitch of training and preparedness. During the whole period since 18 they had conducted practically the whole of the Navy's work, including, o course, all high executive commands, and all staff appointments. But—just in case—there existed a respectable body of expert sailors from the Merchan Service who for a few weeks in every year trained with the Fleet and learn something of the fighting equipment in the warships of the day ; and, afte 1903, there was also a still smaller reserve of enthusiastic amateurs who did th same.

Then—in 1914—came Total War, and the necessity for that sudden great expansion which, mercifully, was not quite unforeseen. Instantly it becam obvious that the whole strength of the maritime " Reserves " would have to b thrown in to reinforce the Royal Navy in such a struggle. But very soon i became equally clear that even this would not be enough. The personnel of th



A Cargo Liner



A Depth Charge



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Destroyer Men



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Lifeboat Men

rchant Navy was numerically strong, as ever, but it could not be called upon furnish an unlimited stream of men, via the R.N.R., to the R.N. itself. Britain's Trade must not only continue to function to the full ; it must also, ing that " Trade " now spelt " Supply " as well, expand enormously. Few ny Merchant Service men could be spared, therefore, beyond those already tly trained in fighting by virtue of their R.N.R. experience. Nor did it n that the Sea-Amateur category could furnish many more. Yet more st be raised ; and whence were they to come ?

There was only one answer to that question, and it was far from being a v one. The Ultimate Reserve must be brought in again—our old friend, the dinary Man. He was little heard of afloat in ordinary times, yet he had ays been in the habit of turning up unobtrusively in a crisis. He had appeared he seventeenth century when the great Dutch Wars were on, and disappeared in afterwards. He had been brought in to the Fleet—usually illegally and shockingly bad, unfair, and uneconomic methods—during the Seven Years' r and the War of American Independence. In the Revolutionary and poleonic Wars—which, let us recall, older generations than ours were brought to call " the Great War "—all the maritime reserves had dried up, and he ne along again, in some, though not yet in great, numbers. Nor did thority manage things well, for it failed, on the whole, to obtain the right t of Ordinary Man, drawing in poor specimens by means of fantastic ounties " used as bribes, and by obtaining as " Quota Men " and " My Lord yor's Men " the ne'er-do-wells of the country and the dregs of the towns. t such people were the Ultimate Reserves of their day, neither professional men nor sea lovers, brought on board " for the duration " in order to fill a perate need, and thrown out after it was over. Such men furnished about last quarter of the *Victory's* complement at Trafalgar. But thereafter a tury was to elapse before they were required again.

This time the problem was tackled infinitely more wisely. The old methods Press, Quota, and Bounty would evidently not do in democratic Britain, l no one dreamed of trying them.

In 1914 it was left purely to their patriotism ; and that faith in them did not ve vain. Volunteering had been the one and only principle of recruitment, h in Army and Navy, for the last eighty years, and the First World War's ruitment began on that principle. But as the vast size of it was gradually ealed to a still groping world, the principle of Conscription was introduced o the land-service in the middle of it. The Military Service Acts of 1916 and 18 did not include the Navy, but in practice they limited volunteering in its est sense even there, since the only way thereafter in which a man of military could avoid being conscripted into the Army was by joining the Navy. It ot possible now to gauge how many naval entrants were constrained by this

indirect form of compulsion. But the numbers cannot have been great, f the whole category of " R.N. Hostilities Only ", then introduced for the fi time, contained only 74,000 out of a total naval complement, of all ranks, 407,000 ; or some 18 per cent. This is the maximum possible figure of " direct conscripts ", and would only be the correct percentage figure had " H.O.s " who joined after January 1916 done so to avoid military service. fact an overwhelming majority of them would have volunteered for the Na in any case.

A few figures, reduced to percentage form, will show four things clearly first, the overwhelming reliance placed upon the Royal Navy at the outbre of war ; second, the still very considerable reliance placed upon it at the en third, the limited (numerical) use that was made (and could be made) of t R.N.R. ; and, last, the limited use made of the R.N.V.R. :

	Aug. 1914	*Nov.* 1918
R.N. . . .	90.5	54.0
H.O. . . .	Nil	18.0
R.N.R. . .	8.5	15.0
R.N.V.R. . .	1.0	12.5
Colonial Reserve .	Nil	0.5

The " R.N." percentage includes Royal Marines, Retired Officers a pensioners, and Fleet Reservists, all of whom were, or had been, regular R.N personnel. The " H.O.s ", though not *regular* R.N. personnel, were nominall such. The R.N.R. figures include its " Trawler Section ", recruited main from the fishermen of Britain.

These figures reveal, too, that in another important respect, this time main in the war-time officering of the Navy, the best way of manning a fleet for To War was not discovered in the first upheaval. A conscripted rating must entered as R.N. (Hostilities Only) because he cannot very well be called " Reserve ", having been brought straight in ; nor can he very aptly be describe as a " Volunteer ". But every officer can be so described, for no officer is, theory, a Conscript, seeing that he need not become one unless he desires. Y in the 1914–18 war the authorities entered a tremendous number of offic straight into the Royal Navy, even though envisaging that a great number them would prove to be temporary. Some indeed were given only tempora commissions, but many were brought into the Service by the regular channels Dartmouth and the Public Schools for instance. This was done because it w realised that the great expansion could not (as we have seen) come through t R.N.R., nor via the R.N.V.R., so long as that body was confined to Se Amateurs. But the result was hard upon that class of person who was mo

y to be hit hardest—the Royal Navy Officer who had decided to make that ice his whole-time profession. When the war ended and the inevitable traction began, the artificially swollen R.N. lists had to be reduced severely, the " Geddes Axe " cut deep into it, spoiling many a cherished career. This a painful operation, carefully and humanely performed though it was ; subsequent experience has shown that it was not necessary. The best lium, it was found, to take the shock of a great war-expansion followed an almost equally great peace-contraction, was not the R.N., but the .V.R.

In many ways the potentialities of the Volunteer Reservist was the great rsonnel " discovery of the First World War. For, with the coming of oats and U-boat hunting, of mine-laying and mine-lifting, of M.L.s and .B.s, the Little Ship came into its own : and the volunteer was, by nature upbringing, a little-ship man. The sailing, the tinkering and the pottering he loved had given him just the right sea-touch or water-sense for the new in hand, and he took to it—if a metaphor may be allowed which is as accurate t is banal—like a duck to the water. Before the first war was over his nbers had swollen from 2,345 in August 1914 to 50,218 in November 1918. But on the outbreak of the Second World War, Authority decided upon a procedure for the finding of officers. Since it wished to avoid the 1914–18 dships inflicted upon the R.N., it decided not to expand that force appreciably he start, in order not to have to contract it at the finish. And as it could still secure its expansion through the R.N.R., for the same reasons as before, of two courses remained open to it. It might utilise the other " natural rve ", already to hand, and already well-proven in battle—the R.N.V.R.— it might create a completely new war-time officer reserve, to correspond, ng officers, to the new " Hostilities Only " category among the men. But did the latter, it would be classing the officers, who were Volunteers, with men who were conscripts. So the first alternative was adopted, and it was ided that almost all the war-time officer-expansion should be achieved by immense enlargement of the R.N.V.R. It was evidently the best way to it, since an R.N.V.R. commission could be—and was—given to the new cer on the understanding that (as ever) it applied to " the duration " only. might, of course, *want* to stay on afterwards, and facilities might be found him to do so. But there was no promise of such retention inferable from his mission, and he could not claim hardship were he not retained. Moreover, most cases, no doubt, he did not want to be retained—a characteristic of unteers at all periods of their story.

Yet one aspect of the old R.N.V.R. officer was lost as a result of this new icy. It was evident that the supply of true Sea-Amateurs would run out g before expansion was complete. And this happened. It would be quite

unrealistic to pretend that every man who donned the wavy stripes of R.N.V.R. in the Second World War was of the old sea-lover, waterm fraternity. Many were not.

But—here, at first sight, is the strange thing—it did not seem to mak great deal of difference ! It was to be expected, of course, that the Sea-Amat section of the new and enlarged R.N.V.R. would " pull its weight ", beca it had already done so in the last war. But why should the others, who l spent their leisure hours, for aught one knew, on the golf-links or tennis-cou or shooting, or watching football matches ? Why did they, too, take to water like ducks and, after the briefest of training, show themselves the equ or near it, of the old hands ? There seems to be only one answer : they, t must have had " the sea in their blood ", though it is quite possible that they not know it themselves.

Then, too, coming from the same source, were the pilots and the observ of the Fleet Air Arm ; a comparatively new force—it was only initiated 1938—yet one which the trend of the times swelled to immense proportions the Air and the Aircraft Carrier assumed an ever more important place in na warfare. Here, too, nearly all the expansion was effected through the R.N.V. and here, too, the policy was crowned with conspicuous success.

Although full statistics are not yet available, some very rough figures w serve to show the extent to which this new system of procuring officers pushed. Towards the close of the European War, out of every hundred co missioned, executive officers, some 14 were regular members of the Ro Navy, about 12 were from the Royal Naval Reserve, and some 74—nea three-quarters of the whole—were Royal Naval Volunteer Reservists.

But the great mass of those who manned Britain's infinite variety of fighti ships during the late war were the " H.O.s ". There was conscription from t first this time, so that it is no longer possible to think in terms of volunteers a non-volunteers : for conscription, though in a vast majority of cases it d not imply " coercion " but " direction ", is yet not the same as the old vol teering. Moreover, from the outbreak of war, *all* new ratings were entered H.O.s, even if it was the expressed intention of some of them—as it was— make the Navy their career. So, as a group, they are hard to analyse : some, but for the war, would have been Long-Service ratings from the fi others R.N. Reservists, and others R.N.V. Reservists. But they were numerous, running as they did into hundreds of thousands, that it is safe assume that the majority of them—the very great majority—was drawn fr none of these seafaring and sea-loving classes. They were mostly, without a doubt, our old friends the Ordinary Men, turning up as usual in the emerge to give that good account of themselves which any real student of naval histo knew they would give. They were men who have never yet let Britain do

he Ultimate Reserve. They were the men who came to do their share from plough and from the anvil, but also from the factory, the shop, the office, the garage, which have nowadays somewhat displaced those older occupa- s. And, like the new kind of R.N.V.R. who so largely officered them, they must have had the sea somewhere in their blood. There is no other theory ich can explain the secret of their inborn efficiency.

So much for the Ordinary Man. But still there was room—nay, a pressing d—for more. What then ? Were Britain's sea reserves exhausted at last ? course not ; for in that island, as elsewhere in the wide world, the Ordinary n had his natural counterpart—the Ordinary Woman.

Some kinds of work, even in these emancipated days, are not designed by ure for woman ; but a surprisingly large number of vital duties, in peace dertaken as a matter of course by men, can be performed at least as well by the called) weaker sex. Indeed, the number and diversity of such duties was tainly not fully realised until the experiment was tried. And each job, thus ed, spares a man for one of the tasks to which he *is* more suited by nature. re in truth was the chance for a wise division of labour, for a true economy force ; and Total War, which knows no limits, demanded that the chance taken. Instantly thousands of hands stretched forth to grasp it—hands which grandparents would have labelled " fair ", but which we (secure in their ners' approval) will simply call " capable ". The First World War produced Woman's Royal Naval Service, universally named, by a lucky accident initials or a superb stroke of genius, after those neat, efficient, and most lovable birds, the Wrens.

Their success was instantaneous, and their indispensability so generally ognised that they began the Second World War where they left off the first, rose in numbers, and in indispensability, to new and undreamed-of heights. ce more, where conscription is concerned—it covered women as well as n—it is profitless to think in terms of pure volunteering. But the Sea Service ved so attractive to the girls of Britain—and will that surprise us now ?— t the applications to join the W.R.N.S. always outnumbered the vacancies. ere were, to the last, enough and to spare : this reserve never ran dry. Even lists for service overseas, for long purely voluntary, were always over- scribed.

No wise man would try to assess the value of the Women's Royal Naval vice by any known standard of measurement. Let it suffice to say that re were, first and last, some scores of thousands of Wrens performing an azing variety of essential jobs with the skill, courage, endurance, and cheer- ness which—well, which every careful student of British maritime history uld expect from the women-folk of a people so peculiarly qualified to ollow the sea ". Evidently the sea does not confine itself to the veins of

British *men*. But neither does Total War take its victims only from the Strong; the Fair must pay—have paid—their toll as well.

We can now see, perhaps, into the heart of Britain's modern manning system. In peace the whole-time professionals run her Navy by themselves, save for a sprinkling of seafarers and sea lovers who come aboard from time to time to learn the rudiments of the game. When war comes, the whole-timers continue to be the framework of the greatly enlarged Navy, solidly backed by the seafarers and the sea lovers, already far advanced in their training: and this nucleus, already strong both in experience and numbers, are now added innumerable ordinary folk of both sexes, mostly young and all keen (for many of them, even now, have "opted" for the Sea Service). Numerically they outweigh all the rest put together: but as to the relative values of their respective contributions it is not the way of the Silent Service to institute ungenerous and invidious comparisons. Yet every sailor from Admiral of the Fleet to H.D. knows the true answer—the absence of any one of these groups would be fatal to the whole.

III. THE MERCHANT NAVY IN WAR

Yet let us never forget that maxim which we ourselves have so deliberately emphasised—that, in Total War, all must fight. That was true of the ship: it is evidently just as true of the men. And so it follows that no catalogue of Britain's war-time naval personnel would be complete if it omitted the British Merchant Seaman. He is a front-line man if ever there was one, and, like his ship, he faces the enemy continually from the first shot to the last. And though he may not figure very prominently in the Battle of Cape Matapan or in the action with the *Bismarck*—it is his duty to keep as clear as possible from affairs of that kind—he is yet the hero and, by a very great deal, the central figure in the greatest, the longest, and the most bitterly contested battle of them all—the Battle of Supply. He won that battle, as, again, every real student of naval history knew he would—if only he could keep his ship afloat. And the true glory of the achievement lies in the fact that there was nothing in the least spectacular about the part he played in it; there was nothing in the least spectacular about *him*. His role was just to keep his ship going until it reached port or sank, whichever happened first. Not for him the fierce joy which his escort sometimes wrung from the chase; not for him the wild exhilaration of the U-boat "kill". His main ambitions were all negative ones—that he would *not* suddenly feel the searing shock of the torpedo striking home; that he would *not* have to spend too long in or on the icy waters of the North Atlantic or the Arctic Ocean; that the exigencies of the Service would *not* prevent someone from stopping to pick him up. Most of us are not altogether cowards when we

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up and doing; the really brave man is the one who can carry on just as usual when he knows that something exceedingly unpleasant may happen at any moment. There is one little English monosyllable which may be vulgar, but it describes to perfection that particular quality which at length brought victory and repose to the British Merchant Seaman—"*guts*". In the First World War, the negative ambitions of some 15,000 of them were not fulfilled—they died: that was the price they paid for carrying on. In the Second World War more than twice as many footed the bill of victory.

When we hear, or see pictures, of great convoys of merchant ships steaming in formation, we are sometimes tempted to think of the Merchant Navy as much more of an organised, homogeneous, and professional service than it really is. It is far from it. Its masters, its mates, and its men are born individualists, and are not naturally at home in such manœuvres. They would much prefer, other things being equal, to be off on their own and take their chance. In the First World War, indeed, many a master went so far as to oppose the whole convoy principle, with inborn modesty saying to the Royal Navy, "It's all very well for you folk, brought up from youth to keep station, and to steam in formation: but if *we* try it, especially at night, our casualties may well be as heavy as those which the U-boat inflicts." Needless to say, this was a monumental under-estimate of their seamanship, and when the scheme was tried, their ability to sail in convoy was instantly proven. But, though recognising the necessity, they never took to it in principle.

Nor was there at any time in the Merchant Navy anything like the Long-term Service system of the R.N. The seamen had always signed on for a voyage and been paid off at the end of it, exercising their own discretion as to what they would do next—sign on again in the same ship, take another, or even do nothing for a while. But this would not do in Total War, where no man-power could be wasted, even for a day; and before the Second World War began it had become clear that there would be something of a seaman famine from the outset. The R.N. would claim a certain percentage in the form of R.N. reservists, and every available ship would have to be manned instantly, and kept manned throughout. So in 1938 a body was formed which was analogous to the R.N.R. in the naval service. A Merchant Navy Reserve was started which were enrolled all merchant seamen or ex-merchant seamen not then in harness. It was an excellent and timely move. By September 1939 it was many thousand strong, and it furnished the Merchant Navy with a fine "natural reserve". Before that source had run dry came the inevitable "direction" on the part of the Government, who here, as elsewhere in the colossal jig-saw of Total War, was the only body which could take so wide a view of the whole as to fit everybody into his right place.

But the resulting expansion of the Merchant Navy was not quite like th of the fighting Navy. For whereas (as we have seen) the Ordinary Man fill most of the new places in the latter, he did not take nearly so conspicuous place in the former. A great majority of those who manned the Mercha Navy remained members of the sea-going fraternity. But not all, for at le one biggish block of non-merchant seamen was imported into the D.E.M (Defensively Equipped Merchant Ships)—the men who worked the mercha ships' defensive armament. They were, at first, almost all naval ratings a marines, mostly pensioners, who thus helped to repay the debt which the Ro Navy had incurred from the Merchant Navy when she borrowed so ma Royal Naval Reservists. But later came the Royal Maritime Regiment, rais (as its military title implies) from the Army, and composed mostly of train machine-gunners ; and last came a number of " Hostilities Only " men—as ev the Ultimate Reserve—trained for the work from the start.

But here, surely, is abundant justification for our earlier assertion that it profitless to deal separately with Merchant and Royal Navies. Here, too, it pertinent to point out how little these things have changed through the ag Six centuries ago and more, the English merchant ship put to sea, girt te porarily for war, sailed by her seamen, and fought by her soldiers and " ordina men ". Exactly so girt, so sailed, and so fought, went out the British merch ship of 1945.

Indeed, by the end of the war this remarkable parallel had been pushed long stage further. In the sixteenth century the seamen had gradually tak over the fighting of the ship as well as the sailing of it : so, by 1945, ma thousands of merchant seamen had qualified as seamen gunners, and were n well on the way to doing exactly the same thing again.

4. THE "TOTAL" NAVY

But it takes ships *and* men to make a real Navy. We have hitherto dealt with hem separately, and so in some sort artificially. Let us now reunite them as hey ought to be united, and see, if we can, into the heart of the modern Total- War Navy of Britain.

In the Second World War the bonds between Royal and Merchant Navies, inking both ships and men, were revealed again and again in all their historic loseness and strength. Every month, every week, served to furnish examples of this great yet simple truth. But perhaps one week may be singled out in articular as showing it most clearly of all.

When honest and honourable men, the world over, thrilled to the great pic of Dunkirk in 1940, we heard all around us—in Britain as well as among riends elsewhere—exclamations of pride, admiration, and relief. But the out- tanding emotion was unquestionably amazement. " Marvellous ! " men said. ' Unique ! Unprecedented ! " It was all these things : indeed, the sheer rama of it beggared the vocabulary of the man in the street and left him speech- ess. To abstract an army of nearly 320,000 men, weary, ill-supplied, and argely unarmed, from open and exposed beaches under the very nose of the most powerful army then on earth, and under the very wings of the greatest (in numbers at any rate) of all air powers, was certainly not an operation to be found in the contemporary text-books of war. It seemed impossible.

But in real life a thing is impossible only when the men concerned admit it o be so, and it never crossed anyone's mind in Britain to do that. Moreover, now that the curtain has fallen on this particular act, we may examine it again, nd see, perhaps, whether Britain's previous record can help us to explain why. t was marvellous right enough : it was even unique and unprecedented in hat such an exploit, under such conditions and on such a scale, had never been ccomplished, nor even attempted, before. But it is not right, we believe, to tress the *newness* of the episode. The basic method at least was not new, but *old*—so old that most of us, perhaps, had forgotten all about it. The true ' Miracle of Dunkirk "—and it *was* a miracle, of that natural order wherein God helps him who is prepared to help himself—lay in the fact that the venerable methods of the Old English Navy should suddenly, and with the most matter- of-fact spontaneity, leap to life again many centuries after they had died, pparently, from sheer old age.

For what, in essence, was the whole affair but the old " emergency " of mediaeval England [1]—the maritime *levée en masse* when the Crown in times of national peril sent out what we should now call an S O S to all ships and to all

[1] See above, pages 29 and 39.

its seamen subjects ; and by means of an " embargo ", or commandeering of all the available shipping of all available subjects, hastily despatched to the threatened point the forces best suited to the occasion ? Everything and everybody—then—leaped into the breach : the King's ships, the King's Fighting Officers and Men ; the Merchants, their ships—even their boats—and all their ship-officers and crews ; " Voluntary Gentlemen " and voluntary seamen ; fishermen and fishing craft, bargees and their barges, ferrymen, watermen, longshoremen—every boat that would float was there, every man who knew the bows of it from the stern, and perhaps a few who did not.

But is this a picture, it may well be asked, of a mediaeval emergency or of the Miracle of Dunkirk ? In plain truth it is both, for they are, basically, the same phenomenon. Which of these elements was absent from the beaches on those still June days of 1940 ? None of them. Who else was present ? No one, save, perhaps, rather more of those ordinary men who, a few months before, had *not* known a boat's bows from its stern, but whose handling of it now made that fact seem all but incredible.

In omitting here the vital part played by the R.A.F. we must not be thought to be belittling a magnificent and—in every respect, this time—a unique achievement. The *conditions* of the battle, as we admitted, were unprecedented. The point of comparison here is the maritime method of evacuation. This took even the British by surprise in 1940, because they thought (if they thought about it at all) that the centuries of slowly evolving specialisation had given them a highly organised professional Navy which could perform every known function of sea war, and so leave no place for so impromptu—almost primitive—an affair as this. But they were wrong, for here was an occasion when the specialised ships of war were, physically, impotent to carry out the whole task ; their sheer deck-space was insufficient to accommodate such numbers. They were wrong, and may be glad of it, not only because the " Old Navy ", so unexpectedly resurrected from the dead, saved a gallant army from disaster, and maybe, a great nation from invasion, but also because, rightly understood, the whole episode of Dunkirk provided a striking illustration of that power which the whole world has long recognised and respected—the true naval strength of Britain.

No thoughtful person in the British Empire can logically regard the exploits of its seamen in war time as other than the parts of one great pattern, whether he is contemplating the hammer-strokes that fell upon the *Graf Spee*, the Italians at Matapan, and the mammoth *Bismarck* ; thrilling to the daring surprises sprung upon the enemy at Narvik, Taranto, and in that northern fastness where the *Tirpitz* thought herself secure ; or reading, humbled in spirit, of the deathless epics behind such names as *Jervis Bay*, *San Demetrio*, and *Rawalpindi* : whether

his heart glories and mourns over that great company of ships and seamen who will sail home no more, or glows with pride at the endurance and resource of the master mariners and men who persisted in their dangerous business in great waters. Through five grim summers and six grimmer winters, through foul and fair, they have gone down to the sea, in ships if their luck were in, but if not, on boats, rafts, floats, and even planks ; badgered and harried by sky-vultures from above and sea-sharks from below—themselves harried and badgered in their turn by all the resources of Britain's science, and by all the dogged tenacity of her race. Those miracles of technical skill, timing, and seamanship revealed on the beaches of North Africa and Sicily, Salerno and Anzio, and above all, Normandy ; those dark days when round Crete and all over the Eastern Mediterranean the naval might of Britain was reduced to a few war-weary cruisers ; those icy, nerve-racking nights when her hard-bitten merchantmen and their escorts battled, mile after mile, round the North Cape through all the dangers of the Arctic sea and the violence of the enemy ; those all-too-warm Mediterranean days, when even battleships and aircraft-carriers could scarcely push them through the hornets' nest beyond Cape Bon to save Malta from starvation ; disaster, stoically accepted, when her great ships *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* went down in far-off eastern seas ; triumph, sober and not unmixed with a grim humour, when a great enemy fleet, intact but harmless, came to anchor under the guns of battle-scarred Valletta, and when British sailors found in the ports of Bremen and Hamburg row upon row of mass-produced U-boats which would never wound British shipping—these are a few of the designs wrought into that unique tapestry, the Real Navy of Britain.

Whence comes the warp and the woof of it ? There is not a county, not a town, or perhaps even a village, which has failed to contribute its strands, or share, through the ties of blood and love, in the weaving of it. The *real* Navy of Britain is a true cross-section of the whole. It is not the ships and men of her Royal Navy only ; not the Navies of that free Commonwealth of Nations who call her Mother ; not her Merchant Navy ; not her Fishing Fleet ; not her Merchant Seamen and Fishermen, serving for the time being in her warships ; not her Amateur Seamen who have volunteered from every part of the country and the Empire ; not her Ordinary Men and Women, who have taken a novel, complex and dangerous profession in their stride. The real Navy of Britain is the sum-total of all these elements, sprung from the very marrow of her, maturing at their leisure through the centuries, and blended—slowly, so slowly and quietly—into a subtle, indivisible, and unconquerable whole.

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