

SHIELD OF EMPIRE: RACE, MEMORY, AND THE "CULT OF THE NAVY"
IN FIN DE SIÈCLE BRITAIN

By

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Abstract

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This thesis argues that the various cultural manifestations of the Royal Navy during the period from 1880 to 1914 were indicative of a sense of racial decline in Great Britain, and that the Royal Navy as an institution was used to compensate for that sense of decline.

Specifically, this thesis provides a narrative of the arms race, an analysis of the British caricature of the Germans as the "target" of their naval building, and a study of popular memory of Nelson and Trafalgar and the repulsion of the Spanish Armada. It then examines the meaning of fleet reviews as manifestations of current naval strength and as a means of reassuring the public about their future security. Finally, it studies the public reactions to the Battle of Jutland in 1916, and how these reactions indicate the degree to which public expectations of overwhelming naval victories had become unrealistic.

This thesis then closes with a brief comparative analysis between early twentieth century Britain and the early twenty-first century United States, in that they share the same sense of shock and fear of decline, and found themselves increasingly inclined to use their militaries as reassuring cultural institutions.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER	
1. THE BRITISH NAVAL BUILDUP, 1887-1914.....	12
2. THE RESTLESS CHILD.....	65
3. A HEROIC TRADITION.....	103
4. SHIELD OF EMPIRE.....	135
EPILOGUE: "WHERE IS OUR NELSON?".....	157
CONCLUSION.....	173
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	179

Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Lieutenant Allison M. Oubre, United States Navy, who lost her life on May 19th, 2009 when her SH-60 Seahawk helicopter crashed during a training exercise in bad weather off of Coronado Island, California, a little over a month before she was scheduled to be married.

The world is a lesser place and the Navy is a lesser institution without her.

I am grateful to have been her friend.

LIST OF FIGURES

1. <i>Punch</i> , April 5 th , 1905, "On Tour"	96
2. <i>Punch</i> , August 2 nd , 1905, "Melodrama in the Baltic"	97
3. <i>Punch</i> , May 10 th , 1890, "L'Enfant Terrible"	98
4. <i>Punch</i> , February 1 st , 1896, "The Story of Fidgety Wilhelm"	99
5. <i>Punch</i> , November 11 th , 1908, "An Unrehearsed Effect"	100
6. <i>Punch</i> , September 6 th , 1911, "Misunderstood"	101
7. <i>Punch</i> , September 23 rd , 1908, "Isolation"	102
8. Trafalgar Square during the Trafalgar Centenary, 1905.....	131
9. <i>Punch</i> , October 18 th , 1905, "1805-1905"	132
10. <i>Punch</i> , July 15 th , 1908, "England Expects-"	133
11. Cover Page, <i>Trafalgar Centenary Program</i> , New Zealand.....	134
12. Fleet Review Plans, 1887 and 1914.....	151
13. Advertisement, Chocolates, <i>Navy League Guide to the Thames Review</i>	152
14. Advertisement, Paint and Glue, <i>Navy League Guide to the Thames Review</i>	153
15. Advertisement, Wine and Tobacco, <i>Navy League Guide to the Thames Review</i>	154
16. Advertisement for Tailoring, <i>Navy League Guide to the Thames Review</i>	155
17. "Dreadnought Program," <i>Navy League Guide to the Thames Review</i>	156

INTRODUCTION

On August 5th, 1914, a small, humble, 55-year-old man took command of the most powerful assemblage of naval power ever created.¹ His name was Admiral John Jellicoe, and upon the outbreak of hostilities with Germany at the start of World War One he was ordered to replace his old mentor, Admiral Sir George Callaghan, as the Commander-in-Chief of the British Grand Fleet. Jellicoe got the job because Callaghan was considered by First Lord of the Admiralty Sir Winston Churchill to be too old and inflexible for the daunting task at hand.² When Lord Jellicoe hoisted his admiral's flag on the dreadnought battleship *HMS Iron Duke*, he had under his immediate command almost one hundred ships, not counting numerous support vessels. These included twenty-one Dreadnought battleships, eight older battleships, four smaller battle cruisers, eight armored cruisers, four light cruisers, and forty-two destroyers.³ This one man was entrusted with Great Britain's most powerful weapon, a weapon that was for the British people their most sacred defensive institution: the frontline force of the Royal Navy. His appointment inevitably came with great responsibility and high expectations as Britain went to war with Germany in a conflict that would alter European civilization forever, and help shape the twentieth century.

This thesis is a cultural study of the public perception of the institution entrusted to Lord Jellicoe in 1914. The period from 1880 to 1914 was one of troubling destabilization for the British. The newly-unified Germany was proving itself to be an economic and military juggernaut. In an increasingly unstable Concert of Europe, the British had considerable reason

¹ A. Temple Patterson, *Jellicoe: A Biography* (Southampton: St. Martin's Press, 1969), 59.

² John Winton, *Jellicoe* (London: Michael Joseph, 1981), 143.

³ Winton, 147.

to feel that the British economic and military superiority enjoyed in the nineteenth century would not last into the twentieth century. The Great Depression that began in the 1870s as a consequence of the “Second Industrial Revolution” compounded this sense of instability, and worked to erode British faith in their future. In their desire to seek refuge, the British people comforted themselves by looking to institutions and figures that were symbols of strength, and this resulted in a sort of naval rebirth and reawakening in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. British unease was compounded by the machinations of the volatile German Emperor, Wilhelm II, who upon his ascension to the German throne engaged in an aggressive German foreign policy known as *Weltpolitik*. This new German foreign policy included the construction of a large navy, which the British viewed as a direct threat to their sacred naval hegemony.

This thesis will thematically examine this period in four chapters and an epilogue. Chapter One will provide a narrative of the economic, political, technological, and naval doctrinal changes from 1880 to 1914, and will demonstrate the period’s fundamental dynamism. This sense of whirlwind change fed the British desire for culturally constructed sources of strength and stability.

Chapter Two examines British perceptions of their German cousins. The British caricature of the Germans provides a portrait of the Britons’ principal military and economic rivals, and also reveals insights about how the British viewed themselves. This latter element of British self-perception contributes to the thesis’s main theme of constructing the British sense of their own decline.

Chapter Three illuminates the significance of British popular memory of the heroic naval traditions of Trafalgar and the Spanish Armada. Celebrations of old naval victories reminded the British of what they had accomplished, and implied what they could accomplish again. The old British naval heroes, particularly Horatio Nelson, were canonized and celebrated as representing the fundamental power and virtue of the British race.

Chapter Four examines how manifestations of contemporary strength in the form of fleet reviews assured the British people that their fleet was powerful enough to handle anything that any conceivable enemy could throw at them. These spectacles attracted thousands of Britons from all over the empire, and allowed the expanding mass-market culture to participate in the “cult of the navy” through consuming naval literature and products with naval themes.

The Epilogue provides a brief recount of the Battle of Jutland in 1916, which saw the only significant engagement between Jellicoe’s armada and his German opponent. The failure to achieve a decisive victory, defined narrowly as the complete annihilation of the German fleet, provoked a firestorm of criticism. The reactions to the outcome at Jutland demonstrated how earnestly the British public and military elites yearned for new glorious victories. This passion cooled over time, allowing for a more rational analysis of the engagement, which highlights the ferocity of the earlier, more partisan material.

This thesis engages with several existing historiographies. It links military history, evolving concepts of “race,” the emergence of late nineteenth-century mass market culture, the rise of naval theater, and memory, in a single study. Much of earlier military history was

concerned with the technocratic details of wars and battles – troop movements, individual leadership decisions, weaponry, and twists of fate that have resulted in success or failure of military endeavors.

Studies of “martial races” in Britain have been exclusively focused on the British army. Sir George MacMunn’s *The Martial Races of India* (1933) was an early study of the employment of “naturally warlike” ethnic groups in the imperial forces of Great Britain. Later works include Cynthia Enloe’s *Ethnic Soldiers* (1982), Lionel Caplan’s *Warrior Gentlemen: “Gurkhas” in the Western Imagination* (1995), Mrinalini Sinha’s *Colonial Masculinity: The ‘Manly Englishman’ and the ‘Effeminate Bengali’ in the Late Nineteenth Century* (1995), and most recently Heather Streets’s *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture* (2004). Studies of popular support for the military in Victorian Britain have also been oriented toward the army rather than the navy. The most notable of these are John MacKenzie’s edited works *Imperialism and Popular Culture* (1989) and *Popular Imperialism and the Military: 1850-1950* (1992).

The rise of European mass-market culture as it applies to this thesis’s subject includes the proliferation of newspapers as printing became more affordable, and the increasing availability of products with naval themes marketed for common consumption. The first is dealt with in Stephen Koss’s *The Rise and Fall of the Political Press in Britain: The Nineteenth Century* (1981) and Mark Hampton’s *Visions of the Press* (2004). The second is most ably covered in Jan Ruger’s *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (2007).

Memory studies have an extensive body of work devoted to them. War memory as a subset of general memory studies includes a wealth of books, many of which are particularly focused on the memory of the Great War. The earliest of these is Paul Fussell's *The Great War and Modern Memory* (1977). More recently, Jay Winter has produced the more widely known studies *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (1995) and *Remembering War* (2006). In addition to these books that primarily concern themselves with memory theory, there have been case studies done of specific instances of memorialization, as with Edward Linenthal's *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for the American Past* (1996).

In tying these historiographies together, this thesis is able to do four unique things. First, and most importantly, it shifts the center of gravity of British popular enthusiasm for the military to the navy rather than the army, which provides for a more fruitful study. The navy was a much more centrally-located cultural institution than the army. The navy was much closer to the central concept of "Britishness," in that it was perceived by the British public to be a purely defensive arm. It was seen as a truly "national" institution, whereas the army was more of a regional one with individual regiments coming from different parts of the United Kingdom. Finally, the naval triumphs enjoyed by the British reached back farther (to 1588) than those of the army, and so a cultural study of the navy has a richer tradition to draw upon than similar studies of the army.

Second, it places a new spin on the study of "martial races." Whereas the British concept of "martial races" often involved placing foreigners in special regard (as with Sikhs and

Gurkhas),⁴ the British Navy was constituted entirely by “Britons.” Though the British regarded certain foreign races as being naturally better soldiers than Britons, they believed that there was no sailor or naval officer anywhere that could match the British Tar or the British Admiral. Within the naval context, the Britons were themselves a “martial race,” the natural masters of the seas. Therefore celebrations of the navy were exercises in self-congratulation. The racial health of the navy was the racial health of the British people.

Third, it allows for the synthesis of a single cultural “moment,” in that the past, present, and future of the British people are examined in a single place within the context of the “cult of the navy.” British memories of their heroic naval traditions were used to inspire them, representations of their existing naval power were used to reassure them, and the discourses generated by both were used to spur them to action so that their future might be safeguarded. This provides an illuminating example of past, present, and future coexisting simultaneously in the minds of naval enthusiasts and spurring them to action and sacrifice.

Finally, this thesis links a specific aspect of British culture with the wider European cultural landscape of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, commonly referred to as “fin de siècle.” Widespread disillusionment with modernity and liberalism coincided with the rise of such thinkers as Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, who between them studied and wrote about certain irrational aspects of the human condition, including sexuality, the subconscious, and the “overman,” who would destroy and then rebuild society. This disillusionment created a cultural mood of pessimism concerning the health of European

⁴ Heather Streets, *Martial Races: The Military, Race and Masculinity in British Imperial Culture* (New York: Manchester University Press, 2004), 2.

societies, and created the sense that the world was spinning out of control due to its increasing complexity. This was true in Britain as elsewhere. The best example of a work that captures this cultural mood is Carl E. Schorske's *Fin-De-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (1980). The unique link between memory, race, and the navy forged in this thesis illustrates how British naval enthusiasts tried to compensate for this sense of unease and bewilderingly rapid change.

This thesis contributes to each of these historiographies as well as making a fundamentally unique contribution of its own, but it also is reinforced by certain "supporting historiographies," which are used to flesh out the thesis's arguments. As each of the chapters is in many ways its own story, it would be most useful to consider how each chapter interacts with these various supporting bodies of historical scholarship. Chapter One, the retelling of the narrative of the naval arms race, shares space with several existing secondary studies. Arthur Marder's works, *The Anatomy of British Sea Power: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era* (1940) and *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era* (1961) provide somewhat dated but exhaustively researched accounts of the transformation of the institution of the Royal Navy in the period covered by this thesis. More recently, Paul Kennedy's masterful work *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (1980) traces the advent of the First World War to economic irreconcilabilities between the expanding Germany and the stagnant Britain, while pointing to the naval question itself as being the manifestation of that irreconcilability. Robert Massie's work, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (1991) provides some additional useful details and in general a lengthier account of the narrative, but does not fundamentally improve on Marder or Kennedy. Jon Sumida's work, *In Defense of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and*

British Naval Policy, 1889-1914 (1989) provides an intensive analysis of where the British policy makers went wrong in preparing their fleet, with an excruciatingly detailed description of the intricacies of fire control and range finding, cordite explosives, and other scientific topics, that help the reader better understand the outcome of Jutland from a material and scientific standpoint.

The goal of the Chapter Two is to construct a portrait of British perceptions of a foreign people (in this case, the Germans). Several recent works have attempted to build similar portraits. Michael Nolan's *The Inverted Mirror: Mythologizing the Enemy in France and Germany, 1889-1914* (2005) deconstructs the French mythology about the Germans, and vice versa, in the wake of the Franco-Prussian War of 1871. Robert Tombs's *That Sweet Enemy: The French and the British from the Sun King to the Present* (2007) constructs a portrait of British perceptions of the French, through periods of strife and quasi-alliance. To my knowledge, mine is the first attempt to construct a British caricature of the Germans in this period, and so the second chapter provides an original contribution to this strand of historiography, though this is not the thesis's main focus. This portrait is created entirely from primary sources, including newspaper articles and editorials from *The Times of London*, political cartoons from *Punch*, speeches from Hansard's *Parliamentary Debates*, and correspondence between Foreign Office officials pulled from the collection *British Documents on the Origins of War, 1898-1914*.

The study of commemorations conducted in Chapter Three overlaps with one monograph and one collection of essays. David Shannon's work *Nelson Remembered: The Nelson Centenary 1905* (2007) recounts the story of the ceremony of the centenary itself, as

well as providing useful insights from Shannon's experience as a tour guide at the Nelson Memorial. Holger Hoocke's edited collection *History, Commemoration, and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar 1805-2005* (2007) traces the evolution of the memory of Trafalgar, and in the essay covering the Centenary in 1905 comments on the attempts to reconcile the celebration of a crushing victory over the French with the then recently concluded Entente Cordial. Chapter Three is augmented by these secondary sources, but is primarily constructed from published poems, speeches, and sermons, and also books published by the Navy League of Great Britain on the occasion of these celebrations.

The study of fleet reviews as representations of current strength, which is the focus of Chapter Four, has been ably done by Jan Ruger in his recent work *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (2007). Ruger's work details the rise of naval theater in both Great Britain and Germany in the lead up to World War One, and argues that this realm of naval theater developed a momentum and life all of its own, an argument that this thesis echoes. In expounding upon further examples of how naval culture seeped its way into households in the form of home games, there is no more exhaustive work than Donald F. Featherstone's *Naval War Games: Fighting Sea Battles with Model Ships* (1965). Featherstone's work, while lightly touching on the history of naval gaming, spends most of its pages reconstructing the rules of the games. This gives it the feel of a gamer's handbook that would allow the reader to play these games himself, a notion that has subsequently been rendered obsolete by the merciful arrival of the XBOX 360, of which this thesis's author is an avid disciple. Primary sources used in creating this study of representations of existing naval strength include official programs for coronation reviews and other fleet reviews, articles in *The Navy and Army*

Illustrated and *Daily Express*, and certain other documents published on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee that celebrated the progress made over the reign of Queen Victoria.

There are extensive works on the Battle of Jutland, and an analysis of the evolving coverage of that battle is the subject of the bulk of the epilogue. Secondary sources that attempted to reconcile the expectations of what Jutland should have been with what it actually was were published in the 1930s (the ones prior to these were so fiercely partisan that I classify them as primary sources). Notable among these was Vice Admiral Harper's and Langhorne Gibson's *The Riddle of Jutland: An Authentic History* (1934). In addition to recounting the battle, this work also tried to redeem both Jellicoe and Beatty by hefting praise equally on both of them. Other, more recent, works on the Battle of Jutland include Keith Yates's *Flawed Victory: Jutland 1916* (2000), Nigel Steel's and Peter Hart's *Jutland 1916: Death in the Grey Wastes* (2003), and Daniel Butler's *Distant Victory: The Battle of Jutland and the Allied Triumph in the First World War* (2006), and there are undoubtedly many others. The one that I found the most useful in producing my own retelling of the battle was Holger Herwig's *Luxury Fleet: The Imperial German Navy 1888-1918* (1980). Herwig's work analyzes the social structure of the various officer and enlisted ranks on Wilhelmine warships, their interactions with each other, and the social backgrounds from which each class was drawn. In addition to his main effort, he provides a particularly crisp and concise account of the Battle of Jutland, which is to date the most easily understandable account I have yet read, though it is not as detailed as in the other works that I listed above.

This thesis tells the story of a people with a heroic past and an uncertain future. The British stiff upper lip had started to twitch, and the British people were compelled to drown themselves in the reassurance provided by their most powerful, most sacred, most culturally significant, most versatile, and most vibrant and colorful military arm, that would ensure the survival of the British race into eternity, and that would be the final word on and proof of the excellence of the British race when conflict came. The Royal Navy did its best to fulfill this utterly impossible expectation, and the disappointment following the Battle of Jutland illustrated to what extent that expectation had become fantastic.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BRITISH NAVAL BUILDUP, 1887-1914

This chapter has two purposes. First, for the layman not familiar with the topic, it provides the basic narrative of the British naval arms race itself, from the “Naval Scare” of 1887 to the outbreak of the First World War. Though the dedicated scholar of the period will not find new revelations in this rendering, this chapter will provide ready access to the narrative, along with some of the basic facts and figures associated with shipbuilding and budget allocations, as well as technical details. Second, the confluence of varying elements that I have tied together in this chapter is designed to demonstrate the dynamism of the period. Public apprehension rose and fell, economic prosperity fluctuated, and technological innovations abounded and were first, or increasingly, implemented in this period. The naval institution’s leadership as a whole in Britain asked itself fundamental questions about the Navy’s makeup, its organization, its methods of preparation, and against which enemies it might be deployed. The last question in particular seemed to answer itself fairly clearly by the end of the period covered here, but the others were largely conjecture, educated guesses that took on the force of ideology with their practitioners. Events elsewhere in the world served to reinforce certain of the revolutionary changes taking place within the Royal Navy, but these reforms were also spared the potentially rude awakening of actual combat testing, which allowed certain ideas that would eventually be debunked to flourish temporarily. In any case, the Royal Navy of 1914 was unrecognizable in size, philosophy, strategy, equipment, deployment, composition, and capability from the navy that conducted the shelling of Alexandria in 1882. This chapter

synthesizes an account of how such radical change occurred, and illustrates the extent to which the naval institution was affected by this dynamic period.

The chapter is divided into three sections, each an independent narrative of politics and foreign policy, technology, and doctrine as these changed over the period. They are told as separate stories, though they occasionally refer to one another. My presentation of each of these sections separate from each other is not intended to convey that they operated in a vacuum, but rather to give the reader a series of discrete thematic strands to ponder, which I will tie together at the conclusion of the chapter.

Politics and Foreign Policy

Through most of the nineteenth century, during the high tide of Victorian liberalism, Great Britain had been content to allow a 30% margin of superiority in numbers of naval vessels over her principal rival, France. No other navies were considered significantly strong enough in this period to warrant Britain's attention, and certainly not enough to provoke additional building to supplement the margin.⁵ By the 1880s this quiet confidence had been eroded.

In the 1870s, the period of the Great Depression of the nineteenth century, Britain curbed its defense spending on the Navy and allowed it to stagnate. The Depression sapped tax revenues from the government, and domestic concerns were more prevalent and immediate than fears of foreign aggression. This false sense of security was fed by the temporary diminution of French military power during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-1871, which

⁵ Arthur Marder, *The Anatomy of British Seapower: A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnought Era, 1880-1905* (New York: Knopf, 1940), 105.

immediately led to frantic efforts by the French government to reorganize its army and correct demonstrated deficiency. By the end of the 1870s, France had again diverted resources to rebuilding and expanding its navy, and this caught the British unaware as the French closed the gap. Press articles began to appear in Britain in 1884 that called attention to new French naval expansion, as did this article that appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* on September 18th:

The truth about our ironclads is that while we are superior, immensely superior to any other power in first-class ironclads, we are not irresistibly superior to a coalition of two or more naval powers even in first-class ironclads...The actual state of the Navy may be unsatisfactory, but you may ask, Are [sic] we not making up lost ground? On the contrary, we are losing ground. It is true that we are building more than we did; [sic] but the French are still ahead of us in the ships which they have on the stocks.⁶

This situation ignited a public outcry. Parliament responded with increased naval expenditures for the next two years, and then the spending pace was slackened as the panic subsided. In the late 1880s the French building program accelerated again, resulting in another public panic.⁷

This was exacerbated by a memorandum posted to the *Pall Mall Gazette* by then-Captain Lord Charles Beresford in October 1887, which called attention to the closing gap between French and British naval strength.⁸ Following the appearance of this article, press attention was naturally diverted to monitor the French naval buildup, including an article in the *London Standard* in January 1888 that spoke of the flurry of activity at the French naval base at Toulon.⁹

The fears of a shrinking margin of naval superiority over France were made more urgent by increased agitation in France for an alliance with Russia, which reached a peak in 1888, and

⁶ Unknown Author, "The 'Truth About the Navy', 1884," in *British Naval Documents*, ed. John B. Hattendorf et al. (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1986), 606.

⁷ Marder, *Anatomy*, 119-123.

⁸ Marder, *Anatomy*, 133.

⁹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 126.

which would override the Royal Navy's sanctified superiority if it came to fruition.¹⁰ Traditional British capacity for blockading enemy ports would be unsustainable against such an alliance, and would be illegal under the tenets of the Declaration of Paris of 1856, which Britain had signed. Specifically, this declaration had stipulated that in order for blockades to be legal, they must be effective, and so through Britain's inability to counter both the Russians and the French simultaneously, they would find themselves contrary to international law if they imposed an ineffective blockade.

In addition to new resources allocated to the French navy, there had been an institutional reawakening of the naval school of thought advocating *guerre de course*, or commerce destruction, in the 1880s in France. Several high-ranking French admirals spearheaded this institutional shift in strategic thinking, and they and their intellectual followers were called the *Jeune Ecole*, or "Young School."¹¹ Britain had never in its history been more vulnerable to debilitating economic consequences at home resulting from effective commerce warfare. The Industrial Revolution had left Britain bereft of its previously self-sufficient agricultural capacity through the reallocation of its arable land to urbanization and industrialization. By 1886, Britain imported an unprecedented two-thirds of its wheat.¹² Thus the *Jeune Ecole*, the expanding French navy, the advent of the torpedo boat as a blockade breaker, fears of a Franco-Russian alliance, and revelations of British vulnerability to commerce destruction all combined to create a powerful catalyst for dramatic public naval activism and government action in the late 1880s.

¹⁰ Marder, *Anatomy*, 131.

¹¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 86.

¹² Marder, *Anatomy*, 85.

The House of Commons, in response to the public outcry in 1888, took up the issue by commissioning an investigation of the readiness of the fleet.¹³ As of the summer of 1888, in spite of the aforementioned causes for concern about Britain's naval situation, the members of the Board of Admiralty still did not feel the need for increased naval expenditure. Admiral Sir Horace Hood, the First Naval Lord, testified to the House of Commons that the admiralty was satisfied with the strength of the Royal Navy. Contradicting this, earlier in that year the Director of Naval Construction, William White, had testified that 72 vessels needed to be retired in 1892 and replaced with more technologically up-to-date vessels in order to keep the fleet viable. Given this disparity, the House of Commons pressed for a confidential report on the requirements of the navy in the event of war with France. The ensuing "Report of the Three Admirals," written by Admiral Sir William Dowell, Admiral Sir Richard Vesey Hamilton, and Vice Admiral Sir Frederick Richards, called for additional expenditure:

The total [strength of the Royal Navy] is manifestly altogether inadequate for insuring a speedy and successful result to a war with France alone; [sic] and should the fleets of one other power – say of that great power (Russia) whose imperial interests may be said to clash most with those of the British Empire – have been joined to France against Great Britain at that time, the balance of maritime strength would have been most decidedly against her...We recommend a resumption and a steady continuance of ironclad building...England...takes her rank among the great powers of the world in virtue of the naval position she has acquired in the past, and which has never been seriously challenged since the close of the last great war. The defeat of her Navy means to her the loss of India and her colonies, and of her place among the nations.¹⁴

Following their deliberations on this report, the Naval Lords requested from the House of Commons a five-year building program that would add 10 battleships, 37 cruisers, and other

¹³ Marder, *Anatomy*, 132.

¹⁴ William Dowell, Richard Hamilton, and Frederick Richards, "The Report of the Three Admirals, 1888" in *British Naval Documents*, 614.

smaller units. The First Lord of the Admiralty concurred and added these expenditures to the naval estimates of 1889-1890.¹⁵

This building program was drafted as the Naval Defence Act, and reflected the recommendations of the Naval Lords. The funds to pay for this expenditure were freed up by reductions in service costs for the national debt, and so the bill was passed with light modifications on May 31st, 1889.¹⁶ Concurrent with this bill, the Two Power Standard recommended by the “Report of the Three Admirals” was officially articulated in its lasting form by the First Lord of the Admiralty to the House of Commons.¹⁷ It required that Britain should always have a navy equal to the two next largest naval powers (in this case France and Russia) and stated that this requirement represented a bare minimum strength. It would remain unchallenged as the baseline requisite British naval strength until 1904.¹⁸

The original £21.5 million allowed for in the bill would not survive implementation, as the new expanded naval program coincided with increased shipbuilding costs due to expanded ship capabilities and displacement. Merchant shipping was on an upswing, and so market forces drove up the cost of labor and shipyard resources due to scarcity. Additional allotments were made to supplement the original bill in 1893, allocating an additional £1.35 million.¹⁹ The Naval Defence Act doubled the size of the Royal Navy in modern warships and inaugurated the

¹⁵ Jon Sumida, *In Defense of Naval Supremacy: Finance, Technology, and British Naval Policy, 1889-1914* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd, 1989), 13-15.

¹⁶ Sumida, 13-15.

¹⁷ Arthur Marder, *From the Dreadnought to Scapa Flow: The Royal Navy in the Fisher Era, Volume I: The Road to War, 1904-1914* (London, Oxford University Press, 1961), 123.

¹⁸ Marder, *Anatomy*, 106.

¹⁹ Sumida, 15.

Royal Sovereign class battleship, at the time considered the most formidable capital ship of any navy.²⁰ The building program provided for eight of these new premier warships.²¹

The Naval Defence Act of 1889 was a watershed in naval procurement policy, because it set a precedent for multiyear building programs that would increasingly characterize naval finance. The adoption of coherent building programs rather than year-by-year expenditures vastly increased the effectiveness of the navy, by modeling it along premeditated building strategies. It also vastly increased the scope and volume of building, and expenditures with it. Between 1889 and 1897, navy estimates rose from £15,888,502 to £23,790,835, an increase of 65%. This did not cause significant internal strain within the government because these were years of strong economic growth. The end of the Great Depression in 1896 increased taxation revenue, so the new naval expenditures were easily absorbed by the larger government budget. Infrequent Great Power confrontations and a relative lack of colonial military activity meant that other forms of military expenditure were at a minimum. However, subsequent to the 1890s, procurement costs increased dramatically as warships became more complicated and powerful, and the expenditures made in fighting the Boer War led to increasing deficits. The years leading up to the First World War were characterized by oscillating periods of deficit and surplus, and this created recurrent strains on naval finances.²² These strains on naval finances were compounded by continuing public pressure to expand the navy, which was itself fueled by the increasing tensions that Britain experienced with France in the 1890s.

²⁰ Sumida, 16.

²¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 143.

²² Sumida, 18.

In 1893 tensions with France and Russia seemed to be approaching a peak, with the Russian advance into Pamirs (a mountainous region in Central Asia, on the modern border of Afghanistan and Pakistan), chronic trouble with France over the pursuit of hegemony in Egypt, and conflict over Siam. In a debate in the House of Commons on August 28th, 1893, Lord Hamilton (the aforementioned First Lord of the Admiralty) pointed out that the combined Franco-Russian naval strength amounted to 25 battleships, compared to Britain's 22. Hamilton argued for a bill to close the gap. A Franco-Russian alliance seemed all the more likely, especially in naval circles, by the announcement that the Tsar had agreed to send a squadron to visit Toulon, and subsequent to that establish a permanent base in the Mediterranean.²³ The Franco-Russian Alliance was concluded in 1894, and the Admiralty's fears became a reality.²⁴

The spring and summer of 1896 was a period of relative calm for British foreign policy. Relations with Germany were relatively good.²⁵ The French navy estimates were held in place in 1895 and 1896. The freezing of French spending on their naval assets reflected their realization that they could not hope to counter both the British navy and the German army. They had decided that the German army was the greater threat to their security and demanded greater investment in French land forces. As a result, the French shifted back to an emphasis on *guerre de course*, reflected in its current incarnation by the *Jeune Ecole*, and ceased ironclad construction in favor of small swift commerce destroyers.²⁶ French naval expenditures were increased again in 1897 to address new revelations in France about their own naval

²³ Marder, *Anatomy*, 174-175.

²⁴ Walter Arnstein, *Britain Yesterday and Today: 1830 to the Present, Eighth Edition* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 245.

²⁵ Marder, *Anatomy*, 266.

²⁶ Marder, *Anatomy*, 274-275.

deficiencies, which predictably prompted yet another round of agitation in Britain.²⁷ This new wave of French naval spending was aimed at modernizing their means of commerce destruction through the construction of armored cruisers. These armored cruisers were designed to allow France to choke off British commerce in the Mediterranean, thereby denying Britain's access to India via the Suez Canal.²⁸

Tensions between France and Britain grew, with only brief interruptions, for the last thirty years of the nineteenth century. This animosity came to a head dramatically and almost kinetically as a result of British and French attempts to colonize and control different portions of Africa, which Britain had had economic interests in since the Suez Canal had been opened in 1869.²⁹ This intersection of competing imperial interests clashed in the Sudan in 1898. A British Commander, Lord Kitchener, had entered Khartoum in Sudan at the order of Colonial Secretary Joseph Chamberlain, defeated a force of 60,000 Dervishes, and was subsequently ordered to proceed upriver and station a garrison at the fort of Fashoda. When he arrived, he found a small French force under Colonel Jean-Baptiste Marchand, which had already established a foothold on the area that Kitchener was assigned to acquire.³⁰ A standoff ensued, which reached its most pivotal moment on October 17th, 1898 when word reached London that the Toulon fleet had been mobilized. The naval superiority of Britain had made the standoff untenable for the French, and they were forced to back down. Should they have pursued war with the British, the French navy would have found itself outnumbered and outclassed. The

²⁷ Marder, *Anatomy*, 275-276.

²⁸ Marder, *Anatomy*, 286.

²⁹ Robert K. Massie, *Dreadnought: Britain, Germany, and the Coming of the Great War* (New York: Random House, 1991), 248.

³⁰ Arnstein, 186.

frontline British fleet had 18 battleships to France's 15, and the former had a significant advantage in displacement and broadside. The English had a substantial naval reserve to call upon, and the French did not. Because of this disadvantage in naval power, the French capitulated at Fashoda in exchange for concessions in Sub-Saharan Africa, and British control of Egypt and Sudan was preserved.³¹

For the British pro-naval expansion faction, this seemed to prove the wisdom of the Two Power Standard, and provided argumentative fuel for additional naval expenditures because the returns on such an investment had been so dramatically demonstrated. Admiralty requests had added weight in the 1899 estimate debates, and funding for two additional battleships was approved.³² For the French, the event was an awakening, and it left them looking for new allies. It even compelled them to contemplate approaching Germany about joining the Triple Alliance, but this proved unworkable given the immovable stance on both sides over the German seizure of Alsace-Lorraine in 1871.³³

Fashoda was the last significant international incident involving Anglo-French antagonism. Increasingly other powers would begin to take the spotlight. The process that would eventually polarize the British against Germany began its terminal phase in 1898 with the passage of the first German Navy Law.

Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz, head of the German navy, had managed to convince the Kaiser in the late 1890s that a powerful navy was a prerequisite to the Kaiser's realization of

³¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 320-332.

³² Marder, *Anatomy*, 345.

³³ Marder, *Anatomy*, 336.

Weltpolitik. The presence of a large battle fleet was an essential trapping of a world power, and it would allow the fulfillment of Germany's "place in the sun"-- a notion given prominence by the recent work of the American naval historian and theorist Alfred Thayer Mahan, in whom Wilhelm II was an avid believer. Admiral Tirpitz's "Risk Theory," that formed the rational justification for building an unprecedented German battle fleet, stated that even the strongest naval power (Britain) would not be able to engage Germany's battle fleet without significant risk of casualties. This risk, in theory, would deter the British from challenging Germany, lest they be reduced in strength themselves and subsequently become vulnerable to combinations of other powers arrayed against them.³⁴

This new German building program was first initiated by the passage of the 1898 Navy Law and a subsequently expanded 1900 Navy Law, which collectively initiated a building program designed to create a German fleet that by 1920 would consist of 34 battleships, 32 cruisers, and a "Foreign" and Reserve fleet of several others.³⁵ The initial passing of the 1900 Navy Law did not provoke a reaction in Britain. British attention was focused on the Boer War, and the two countries had relatively quiet relations until 1901, with the notable exception being the Kruger Telegram of 1896.³⁶ With the increasingly negative attention levied on Britain by the German press over the Boer War, and with the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, the two nations began to drift apart. As relations soured, the British public and press became more

³⁴ Marder, *Anatomy*, 457.

³⁵ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 106.

³⁶ The Kruger Telegram was a congratulatory telegram sent by Kaiser Wilhelm II to President Kruger of the Transvaal in 1896 after the latter had successfully thrown off an unofficial attempt by the Cape Colony's governor, Cecil Rhodes, to invade and annex the Transvaal. The telegram was seen as a defiant act against Britain, and served to spike tensions between Britain and Germany.

immediately aware of the German naval building, and increasingly alarmed about its intended purpose.³⁷

Between 1900 and 1905, the Germans began construction on 12 battleships. In 1901, British admiralty officials projected that Germany would have the second largest navy in the world by 1906. The Admiralty thus began circulating memoranda that raised the specter of Germany closing the gap between itself and Britain, which would allow Germany to present a decisive challenge should Britain find itself at war with both France and Russia.³⁸ Evidence suggested that the new German fleet was being built for North Sea operations. This evidence included limited operating range and cramped crew quarters of the German ships, both of which undercut the plausibility of long overseas deployments.³⁹ An inspection of the German fleet by King Edward in 1904 led to increased anxiety in British governing circles over German effectiveness in creating a world-class navy. The king's glances to his ministers during the visit indicated that he was concerned at how quickly and effectively Germany had advanced its naval capabilities.⁴⁰

The perception that Germany had sinister foreign intentions became solidified in the minds of British government elites by their interaction with the Germans during the Venezuelan Crisis of 1902, a police action against the dictator of Venezuela who had defaulted on debts to both powers. During the action, the German naval commander independently bombarded a

³⁷ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 458-459.

³⁸ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 106-107.

³⁹ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 107.

⁴⁰ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 108.

Venezuelan fort, violating the Monroe Doctrine of the United States and endangering British relations with the Americans.⁴¹

In addition to Germany's upstart navy and its newly aggressive behavior on the world stage, the British soon found a new cause for unease: the aforementioned Boer War of 1899-1902 fought between British forces in South Africa and the neighboring republic of Transvaal.

The Boers in Transvaal were farmers of Dutch descent who had settled on particularly lucrative gold and diamond deposits in a settlement adjacent to the British Cape Colony in South Africa. Upon the discovery of these deposits in the late nineteenth century, foreigners flocked to the area for prospecting. The Boers allowed this influx of miners and taxed their revenue, but refused to grant them citizenship protections. This led to increased tensions between the Boers and the tenant miners, and these tensions were encouraged and exacerbated by certain officials of the neighboring British Cape Colony. This was especially true of the impetuous Prime Minister of Cape Colony, Cecil Rhodes. He actively encouraged the miners to revolt in 1895, pledging a follow up by an armed incursion of South Africa Company personnel to assist the rebels. The revolt was put down in 1895, but the Cape Colony personnel invaded anyway, and were quickly defeated and captured. The British government denied involvement, and Rhodes was forced to resign. The congratulatory telegram in 1896 sent to the Boer President by the German Kaiser, known afterwards as the Kruger Telegram, sparked outrage in Britain and adulation in Germany.

⁴¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 465.

Though the conflict subsided, tensions between the British and the Boers only grew worse after 1896. Harsh treatment of British citizens in Transvaal sparked public outrage. British government attempts to protect their citizens from mistreatment provoked Boer resentment. In October 1899 Transvaal President Kruger issued an ultimatum to the British government, demanding that all of their forces withdraw from the Boer state. The British refused the ultimatum, and Transvaal declared war.⁴²

The British began the war confident of a quick and easy victory. The Boers initially frustrated this expectation, invading the Cape Colony and inflicting humiliating defeats on the British garrison there. The Boers outnumbered the British two to one, and were carrying modern German weapons, but in Britain there was still a public reaction of shock that their army could be so “easily” defeated.⁴³ Public outcry was compounded again by a fresh invasion scare fueled by the Navy League and other pressure groups. These groups argued that Britain was perilously undefended, as the army and navy were both dispersed. They pointed out that the army was busy in South Africa, and that the navy was busy ferrying soldiers back and forth while providing logistical support to the deployed British army. The Admiralty paid little attention to the invasion scare, but the public panic continued.⁴⁴

In 1900 the war turned in favor of the British with a fresh infusion of troops and commanders, and the Boers were nominally defeated in that same year.⁴⁵ The settlers continued guerilla attacks against occupying British forces, and frustrated attempts to quell the

⁴² Arnstein, 186-188.

⁴³ Marder, *Anatomy*, 372.

⁴⁴ Marder, *Anatomy*, 372-380.

⁴⁵ Arnstein, 189.

insurgency led to the use of unorthodox tactics, including crop destruction and concentration camps.⁴⁶ These practices provoked widespread indignation in Europe.⁴⁷ The suppression of the insurgency was complete by 1902, and Transvaal was added to the British Empire.

The British victory in Transvaal had come at great cost, and proved to be a culturally destabilizing event. The British public no longer had faith in the army (rightly or wrongly because of losing battles against numerically larger forces). The indignation of Europe had led to an overwhelming realization of British isolation and the possibility of an alliance against her. The invasion scare of 1900 had led people to question the readiness of the navy on a level not seen since 1889. It was possible in the public imagination that the navy could find itself as easily defeated as its army had been. As Paul Kennedy argues: “[t]he period 1895-1901 had been marked by Britain’s global embarrassment at the advances which the other powers (*inter alia*, Germany) were making in colonial, naval, and economic terms, and by the German government’s confident hope that... naval expansionism [was] already laying the foundation for the country’s drive towards an increasingly successful Weltpolitik. The nadir of British weakness and isolationism was reached in the early stages of the Boer War.”⁴⁸ Collectively, these cultural thematic elements created sufficient destabilization and unease to allow for a naval revolution that would begin in 1904 with the appointment of Sir John Fisher as First Sea Lord. It would also result in a changed attitude on the part of British politicians with regard to the need for new British allies.

⁴⁶ Massie, 553-554.

⁴⁷ Massie, 307.

⁴⁸ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 265.

The remedy to British isolation began with an alliance with Japan in 1902. The alliance treaty stated that in the event that either of the two signatories was engaged in a war with another power, the other would remain neutral. If one power were joined in war by an ally, the other signatory would fight for their ally. This alliance was aimed at Russia, owing to increased tensions between Britain and Russia over Asian (and particularly Indian) matters, and the treaty essentially freed Britain from the possibility of a hostile superior alliance in the Pacific resulting from Russia and Japan combining navies.⁴⁹ The treaty was praised by leaders in Germany, but in fact it removed incentive for British courting of German support, and made an alliance between them less likely. The prospects of an Anglo-German treaty became less likely because the British now had the flexibility to relax their deployment of forces in the Far East, because their new Japanese allies could police and safeguard those waters for them. This allowed the British to focus instead on their home waters and the Mediterranean. The treaty solidified Britain's naval situation in the Pacific, and allowed Britain to remain more isolated from the Continent than would have been otherwise possible.⁵⁰ This alliance with Japan was followed shortly by the Entente with Britain's old enemy, France, in 1904. French openness to reconciliation with Britain was fueled by France's disillusionment over their ability to compete with the British navy.

A singularly incompetent French naval administration under Minister of Marine Camille Pelletan that began in 1902 would have far reaching consequences for Anglo-French relations. The blunders and mismanagement that characterized his administration ensured that France

⁴⁹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 427-429.

⁵⁰ Kennedy, 249-250.

was, in a couple of years, on its way to becoming hopelessly second rate as a naval power compared to Great Britain.⁵¹ With the lessening of the naval rivalry between France and Britain, their foreign relations improved and paved the way for the Entente Cordial of 1904. The Entente was a settling of existing colonial disputes that over the remainder of the years leading up to the First World War would take on more and more of the character of an alliance.⁵² The Entente allowed British naval planners to concentrate on the North Sea and ignore the Mediterranean, control of which would only be necessary in a war with the French, and this new reality would be reflected in Admiral Fisher's fleet redistribution.⁵³

Following the Entente with France, matters almost immediately became worse with Germany. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 sharpened Anglo-German relations. Because the French were allied with the Russians and the British were allied with the Japanese, some British governing elites convinced themselves of the rumor that the Germans were behind the confrontation in an attempt to embroil the British with the French through a direct war between their respective allies.⁵⁴ The German jitteriness that ensued because of the heightened tension stemming from the diplomatic union between France and Britain contributed to their orchestration of the Moroccan Crisis in 1905.

One of the concessions laid out in the Entente itself was cession of control over Morocco to the French, in exchange for an agreement over British control of Egypt. Following the kidnapping of an American hostage in 1904, the French government offered to help the

⁵¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 469-470.

⁵² Marder, *Anatomy*, 475.

⁵³ Marder, *Anatomy*, 475.

⁵⁴ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 111.

sultan of Morocco reorganize his army and institute other reforms. The sultan refused.⁵⁵ As the French were increasing their level of intervention in Morocco, and in doing so attempting to ratify in effect Morocco's status as a French protectorate, the Kaiser at the urging of his ministers (especially Chancellor von Bulow) travelled to Morocco to antagonize the French and hopefully show the uselessness of British friendship.⁵⁶ He delivered a speech at Tangiers on March 31st, 1905, upholding the independence of Morocco, which was a direct snub aimed at the French and their claims of dominion over that country. Following this incident, the German government demanded an international conference be held on the status of Morocco, which the French were forced to accept by international pressure. The German government believed that they would be able to use this conference to split the British and the French, and nullify the Entente.

The ensuing Algeiras Conference delayed the establishment of Morocco as a French protectorate, but gained France the unwavering diplomatic support of Great Britain, because it showed the British that the Germans were more antagonistic and aggressive than their French partners. Rather than splitting the Entente apart, the crisis had drawn Britain and France closer together, and had polarized the intent of the Entente against Germany. Following the crisis the French and British general staffs began secret talks to plan for the contingency of war with Germany.⁵⁷ New British naval building as a result of Admiral Fisher's reforms also prompted the Germans to accelerate their own naval building program in response.

⁵⁵ Massie, 351-352.

⁵⁶ Massie, 356-362.

⁵⁷ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 114-116.

In response to the British launching of *HMS Dreadnought* on February 10th, 1906, Tirpitz's *Reichsmarine Amt* began planning its own class of ships to counter it. The first two German Dreadnoughts were authorized in 1906, and three more in 1907.⁵⁸ In 1906 the Reichstag passed an amendment to the Navy Law that added six more cruisers to the German fleet.⁵⁹ In 1907 they passed another amendment following the failure of the Hague Conference of the same year to curtail building rates, which reduced the replacement life of their dreadnoughts from 25 to 20 years, effectively increasing their production rates from three to four per year.⁶⁰

In the same way that increases in French naval expenditure had raised alarms in Britain before the Entente, these new increases in German naval shipbuilding provoked public panic and demand for action. Thus the German naval expenditure and procurement increases of 1906 and 1907 prompted the Navy Scare of 1909. The Scare began in December 1908, when First Lord of the Admiralty Reginald McKenna announced that more dreadnoughts were needed in order to maintain an adequate margin of superiority over Germany. The Germans were projected to have 13 dreadnoughts by 1912, compared to Britain's 16, and this was not considered an adequate margin.⁶¹ Should the maximum capacity of Germany's seven viable shipyards be implemented, this number could be increased to 21.⁶² Once McKenna's worries over German capacity and building increases reached the press, a scare ensued.⁶³ In January 1909 the Admiralty increased its recommendation from six to eight Dreadnoughts for the

⁵⁸ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 152.

⁵⁹ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 127.

⁶⁰ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 136.

⁶¹ Massie, 612.

⁶² Massie, 612.

⁶³ Massie, 613.

coming year. The cabinet was deadlocked over this issue, and Prime Minister Asquith conceived of the compromise that saved it. They would approve four dreadnoughts in 1909, and reserve the option of building four more if scrutiny of German building indicated that they were further expanding their battleship fleet.⁶⁴

Ironically, the building of the final four allowed by contingency in the 1909 bill was prompted by dreadnought building in 1912 by Austria and Italy, not Germany, who were in reality building against each other though they were technically allies. The Italian and Austrian governments each announced that they would build four new dreadnoughts, and as a result the British admiralty won its fight to have all eight ships built.⁶⁵

The Navy Scare of 1909 was not the end of the tumult caused by the fight between pro-expansion and fiscal restraint factions within the government. The estimates proposed by McKenna to Parliament in the following year, 1910, called for six new dreadnoughts. The Cabinet again fell into crisis over the requested expansion. The admiralty acquiesced by reducing their estimates to five. This would give Britain 25 dreadnoughts to Germany's 17 plus two Austrian ships (the other Austrian and Italian ships were still in the early stages of construction). The subsequent realization that this would concentrate the threat more heavily in the Mediterranean led to another round of radical fleet redistribution in 1912, following on top of Fisher's redistribution of 1904-1905.⁶⁶ This new redistribution would increase British strength in the Mediterranean, in order to counter the Austrians.

⁶⁴ Massie, 614-615.

⁶⁵ Massie, 623.

⁶⁶ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 214.

The new estimates before the 1912 German amendment called for five new dreadnoughts to be laid down instead of six. The estimates had now reached an unprecedented £40,000,000, and McKenna pledged that the estimates would go down in ensuing years if Germany engaged in no further expansion of its building program.⁶⁷ The Germans did expand their program in 1912, and their principal justification for doing so was another incident in Morocco that occurred in 1911.

In spite of the Act of Algericas, which had given France the primary political role in developing Morocco, tensions between Germany and France persisted over France's control of that country. Overthrows of various sultans and infighting bankrupted the Moroccan treasury and led the government to seek new sources of capital. High local taxes increased civil unrest, and this led to violence, particularly toward foreigners. A French officer was killed in 1911, and the French announced that they would be sending military forces to Morocco to restore order.⁶⁸

Unchastened by their experience in 1905, the Kaiser's ministers responded by convincing him to dispatch a small gunboat, the *Panther*, to the Moroccan port of Agadir to lend assistance to allegedly endangered Germans there. The plan was to encourage another standoff with France that would lead to the cession of portions of French Congo to Germany or parts of Morocco itself, which was adjacent to the German colony of the Cameroons. A single German citizen was dispatched to meet the German warship, in order to provide a pretext for German intervention. He arrived three days after the *Panther*, and was finally taken aboard the

⁶⁷ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 218-219.

⁶⁸ Massie, 719-720.

German warship for protection. The German action in recovering him led to a prompt European response.⁶⁹

The Germans and French subsequently began a long round of negotiations. The French absolutely refused to give up any part of Morocco, and the Germans responded by demanding all of the Congo. The final agreement hammered out was a thirty-year guarantee of the “Open Door” policy in Morocco, and the cession of a mere 100,000 square miles of the Congolese jungle to Germany. This was a terrible diplomatic defeat for Germany, having risked a great deal and gotten very little.⁷⁰ The British Cabinet interpreted the event as another indicator of Germany’s ill aims, and of their desire to split the Entente.⁷¹

The German Navy League made the most of the opportunity presented by Germany’s diplomatic defeat, claiming that Germany needed a still larger fleet in order to secure its interests abroad. This was reflected in the amendment to the Navy Law in 1911, the *Novelle*.⁷²

In the wake of the Agadir Crisis, Tirpitz encouraged the passage of a new supplementary naval bill, the *Novelle*, to establish a 2:3 ratio of capital ships with Britain.⁷³ The bill added three Dreadnoughts, a third battle squadron, and increased the readiness of all dreadnought class vessels, which put them all on a more immediate war footing.⁷⁴ The British delegates informed the German Foreign Minister Metternich that the new bill would be met by a fresh round of shipbuilding in Britain, and would result in the laying down of two keels to Germany’s

⁶⁹ Massie, 723-727.

⁷⁰ Massie, 739-741.

⁷¹ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 240.

⁷² Marder, *Dreadnought*, 245.

⁷³ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 272-273.

⁷⁴ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 279.

one in addition to building that had already been approved.⁷⁵ The response by Churchill in Parliament was to assert the “60% Standard,” and to declare openly that Germany was the only power that Britain was building against.⁷⁶ This firmly replaced the Two Power Standard of 1889, though it had been showing some cracks since 1904.

Rumors of an attempt by Tirpitz to push through the *Novelle* were widespread in Britain, owing to active press agitation in Germany for a larger fleet to prevent diplomatic disasters like the one that Germany had just suffered. In January of 1912, Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg provided a rough outline of the new law to the British government. The Admiralty assessed that the new German Law would require Britain to build an additional two ships for every one of the Germans’ in order to maintain the existing 60% margin of superiority.⁷⁷

In order to come to an agreement and forestall another wave of shipbuilding, the Cabinet dispatched Lord Haldane to Germany to explore the possibility of a building slowdown or reduction. His conversations with the Emperor, Chancellor, and Navy Secretary took place from February 8th to the 10th. These amounted to little, as Germany was only willing to slow its naval building if Britain agreed to neutrality in the event that Germany and France went to war. Haldane countered that it would be possible to secure an agreement if France attacked Germany but not the other way around. Haldane brought back with him a more detailed copy

⁷⁵ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 280.

⁷⁶ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 283.

⁷⁷ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 276.

of the Novelle, and it was even more alarming than the rough sketch provided by Bethmann Hollweg.⁷⁸

The Haldane mission failed because the British could not agree to neutrality in another Franco-German conflict. However, it did yield some positive results, as it opened the door to less pressing agreements on colonial disputes between Britain and Germany. It also led to a temporary thawing in relations.⁷⁹ The agreements that came out of the Haldane mission included a British acknowledgement of the German right to proceed with construction of the Baghdad railway, which had been a pet project of the German government for years. This and certain other outstanding colonial disputes were ready for signature by both governments when war broke out in 1914.

The spark that led to the ultimate conflagration originated in the politically turbulent Balkans. Archduke Franz Ferdinand, the heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was assassinated on June 28th, 1914 in Sarajevo by a Serbian nationalist belonging to a Serbian-backed organization called the Black Hand. Austria used this crisis to justify starting a war with Serbia. Russia responded with a partial and then a full mobilization along its western border. Germany then launched the Schlieffen Plan, violating Belgian neutrality in an attack into France. The government in London pleaded with the Germans to attend a conference to settle the dispute between Austria and Serbia, but they declined the invitation.⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 277-280.

⁷⁹ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 286.

⁸⁰ Arnstein, 255-256.

Although the British cabinet was divided over the choice of intervention on France's side, the German violation of Belgian neutrality settled the issue. The British government then mobilized its army and navy and entered the war with a significant sense of moral justification, and a unified populace.⁸¹

This period was one of constant political and diplomatic turmoil, notably characterized by the destabilizing effects of the Boer War, which loosely led to the Japanese alliance and contributed to the Entente with France, and also allowed for a political and cultural environment in which a far reaching transformation like Fisher's naval revolution could be enacted. As dynamic as the foreign policy situation was in Britain's attempt to respond to and curb Germany's brinkmanship, the period was also characterized by rapid advances in technology that both catalyzed and made feasible Fisher's transformation of the Royal Navy. In the next section I will sketch some of the more salient advancements, how they were applied to new classes of ships, and the effect that they had on naval capabilities.

Materiel

An admiralty committee appointed by Admiral Fisher in 1905 investigated the improvements to speed and firepower that could be made by incorporating turbine technology into propulsion plants, and replacing mixed caliber weapons with larger, single caliber weapons. What resulted from these efforts was a philosophy of warship design that would make obsolete all capital ships in the world, and it was realized in the building of the battleship *HMS Dreadnought* and the battle cruiser *HMS Invincible*. The original program had called for one

⁸¹ Arnstein, 257-258.

battleship and three battle cruisers, and Fisher had always intended battle cruisers to outnumber battleships. However, because the Dreadnought was completed first, it captured the public imagination, and subsequent building programs focused on battleships.⁸² The propulsion plant advancements incorporated into these warships allowed for unprecedented speed, and the use of uniform caliber weapons removed certain obstacles to accurate long range targeting.⁸³ *Dreadnought* had added protection below the waterline in the form of increased watertight compartmentalization— a nod to the increasing effectiveness of the locomotive torpedo. The furnaces in the propulsion plant were designed to carry and consume both coal and oil for added flexibility.⁸⁴ Dreadnought's main battery consisted of ten 12in guns, firing 850lb projectiles. The guns were mounted in pairs on five turrets. One was located on the foredeck, two on the wings, and two on the aft deck. This meant that eight guns could be fired in a broadside, six guns could be fired forward, and six guns could be fired aft without being limited significantly by conflicting fields of fire.⁸⁵ The ship instantly became the standard for warship design in this period, and became the quantifiable benchmark by which all nations measured their naval strength. We will now look at each of the advancements that made the Dreadnought possible, as its novelty was not associated with any particular invention, but rather the combination of cutting edge technologies in new ways, specifically in the areas of armor, propulsion, naval gunnery, and fire control.

In the wake of the ironclad revolution of the 1850s, and then after the first combat testing of ironclads during the American Civil War, armor became increasingly thicker and

⁸² Sumida, 37-38.

⁸³ Marder, *Anatomy*, 526.

⁸⁴ Marder, *Anatomy*, 534.

⁸⁵ Massie, 468, 472-473.

stronger in response to advancements in shell projectile technology. Compound armor (iron cores with an external steel cladding) of the 1870s had given way to all-steel armor, which slowly increased in thickness as projectile effectiveness increased. In the 1890s the Harvey process was developed, which allowed for further hardening of steel by heating the steel plate in direct contact with charcoal, which increased the amount of carbon atoms that diffused into the iron lattice structure. This hardened the steel down to one inch from the diffusion surface, and this allowed for lighter belts of armor. Nickel was later alloyed with steel to improve its strength and corrosion resistance. By 1897 the Krupp Company in Germany had developed a new process that proved superior to the Harvey process, which added trivalent chromium to the existing blend of nickel alloy steel, and also used a more sophisticated method of diffusing carbon.⁸⁶

The state of armor technology had remained essentially unchanged from the end of the 1890s until the building of the Dreadnought. The original Dreadnought battleship carried five thousand tons of armor of the nickel alloy type, concentrated below the waterline for torpedo protection. Turret armor was relatively thin, based on the belief by planners at the Admiralty that a direct hit to the turret would render it unusable regardless of whether the shell penetrated its armor.⁸⁷

Perhaps the most impressive feature of the new Dreadnought was its radically advanced propulsion system. Admiral Fisher had long been convinced of the importance of ship's speed in granting a naval commander operational flexibility. In 1881 Fisher had been given command

⁸⁶ Marder, *Anatomy*, 6.

⁸⁷ Massie, 475-476.

of *HMS Inflexible* (an ironic name given the temperament of its commander), and had been struck by how slow his ship was, and how much this limited his ship's effectiveness in exercises. He later oversaw early advancements in steam engine technology while serving at the Admiralty as the Controller in 1893. While in that post, he oversaw the transition from shell-type to tube-type boilers, which allowed for increased top speed of propulsion plants due to the higher surface area for heat transfer between the boiler water and furnace exhaust gasses.⁸⁸

Fisher's early opinions on the importance of warship speed were unaltered when he articulated the design parameters for the Dreadnought. Fisher's desired speed capability of 21 knots was unachievable with existing steam-powered reciprocating engines. Heavy repetitive motion cycles of steam lifting pistons in sequence meant that bearing adjustments were frequent, and ships with these propulsion systems after a short time of running at flank speed almost always had to put back into port for repairs. Top speeds were also limited by the wasted efficiency of momentum loss inevitable with piston-driven crankshafts, which had to be started and stopped as they completed their up and down strokes. The relatively new steam turbine system was adopted instead. This steady flow, unidirectional rotation machine was quieter, cleaner, and did not have any of the cyclic stress and ensuing fatigue failure exhibited by the earlier engines.⁸⁹ By contrast to earlier designs, during its sea trials the *Dreadnought* was able to steam at full speed for eight hours without breakdowns or adjustments.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Sumida, 38-40.

⁸⁹ Massie, 474-475.

⁹⁰ Massie, 482.

HMS Dreadnought was also the benefactor of twenty years of British gunnery advancements. In the late 1880s the British Admiralty developed cordite as a propellant, which was a mixture of nitrocellulose, nitroglycerine, and petroleum jelly. It was significantly more powerful than black powder, and was more suited to weapons with higher muzzle velocities due to its slow, even burning characteristics. In order to accommodate shell projectiles of increasing power, gun barrels became longer, and were increasingly constructed with wire wrapping methods. Wire wrapping increased the hardness and toughness of the gun barrels and made them more shock resistant.⁹¹ Over the course of the 1890s, rate of fire was improved significantly on 12in guns, and by 1900 the rate of fire was one shell per minute, double the firing rate that large guns had in 1889.⁹²

Dreadnought's heavy main battery of 12in guns included the capability of firing either high explosive or armor piercing shells, using cordite propellant. The armor piercing shells of the early twentieth century were originally designed to penetrate target armor along a straight flight path, which reflected the short engagement ranges that had characterized battle practices up to that point. In 1910 Admiral Jellicoe, as the Controller (Third Sea Lord), noted that the projectiles flying toward their targets on parabolic arcs at greater ranges struck the enemy at a downward angle, and did not penetrate. He asked for development of a projectile that would alleviate this deficiency and perform properly when fired from long range. In 1911 the First Sea Lord (Admiral A. K. Wilson) and the Director of Naval Ordnance concluded that high explosive shells would be used to wreck an enemy's fire control system at long ranges, and

⁹¹ Sumida, 46.

⁹² Sumida, 47.

that armor piercing shells should be saved for subsequent close-in work after the enemy's weapon systems had been disabled. This is one possible explanation for why the error was never fixed,⁹³ but it also explains why the British shells were largely ineffective at Jutland against German battleships. The flaw had been previously identified and then disregarded.⁹⁴

These advanced guns suffered from a lack of aiming equipment that could take advantage of their increased range. Maximum effective naval fighting ranges up until 1900 were about 2,000 yards, and these had not significantly improved from the Napoleonic Wars. This was partially caused by the conservatism of older admirals, who nostalgically celebrated past victories by preserving their associated tactics as current dogma, long after the state of technology had antiquated them. However, the introduction of cordite in the late 1880s removed the vision-obscuring impediment to longer range engagements, and subsequent to this certain pioneering individuals began to work toward enabling the fleet to engage at longer ranges.⁹⁵

In 1898 Captain Percy Scott adopted telescopic sights for individual guns, which greatly increased their effective accurate range. He also trained his gunners in "continuous aim" techniques that eliminated the effect of ship roll and yaw on gunlaying.⁹⁶ The Barr & Stroud range finder was an optical coincidence instrument that was adopted in 1893 and entered widespread service in 1899. It was limited in its effectiveness to ranges of about 4,000 yards.

⁹³ Sumida, 207.

⁹⁴ Sumida, 308.

⁹⁵ Marder, *Anatomy*, 519-520.

⁹⁶ Sumida, 47.

Errors grew exponentially beyond that range.⁹⁷ In 1899 and 1900 officers in the Mediterranean fleet (including Fisher) developed the salvo method of gauging accuracy of fire. This involved firing several guns at once and observing the spread pattern of the splashes. If the splashes were evenly spaced before and beyond the target, then the computed range was accurate. This simultaneous firing of weapons required a method of gun coordination, and this attempt at coordination was the genesis of fire control.⁹⁸ This was a significant step forward from the traditional practice of allowing every gun controller to operate independently.⁹⁹ In 1903, the fighting range of the British fleet was about 3,000 yards.¹⁰⁰ In the wake of the revelations of the *Jeune Ecole*, there was considerable incentive to increase the effective fighting range and thus render the enemy's torpedoes useless, as these torpedoes were always increasing in effective range and reliability.¹⁰¹

Arthur Pollen was the salient inventor who attempted to tackle the problem of accurate fire at increased range, but his designs went largely ignored by the Admiralty. In 1901 he devised a bearing telemetry system that would estimate the range of a target through triangulation.¹⁰² This increased the maximum theoretical range beyond that which was possible with the Barr & Stroud range finder, which used reflective surfaces and was not effective in low light, or past the aforementioned bearing accuracy limit of 4,000 yards.

⁹⁷ Sumida, 72.

⁹⁸ Sumida, 48.

⁹⁹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 521.

¹⁰⁰ Marder, *Anatomy*, 521.

¹⁰¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 524.

¹⁰² Sumida, 79.

In 1904 Pollen developed a method of plotting the true course of a firing ship relative to its target, which if implemented would have provided the fire controller with real time target solutions and range data.¹⁰³ Due largely to bureaucratic inertia and excessive conservatism by certain members of the Admiralty, the system was rejected multiple times, in spite of improvements and modifications made to further satiate the Sea Lords.

In a development that could have complemented Pollen's fire control system, Percy Scott (of "continuous aim" fame) developed the director firing system in 1905, designed to slave all guns in a broadside to a single operator's station aloft, and permit accurate fire out to an advertised 8,000 yards.¹⁰⁴ The observer would calculate a range and bearing to the target, and all guns would be automatically trained to fire on the appropriate coordinates. The director system also had a master-firing switch that allowed a single operator to fire an entire broadside. Trials were conducted up through 1910. Due to inadequate setup these trials were ineffective and the program was stalled, due in no small part to bureaucratic obstruction by Admiral Wilson.¹⁰⁵ When they were finally adopted in 1912, they were slow to be implemented, and only one third of the battleships had been fitted with directors in 1914.¹⁰⁶

Pollen's system was never adopted at all, and instead the navy decided to adopt an inferior invention, which pirated the features of the Pollen system and the Argo Clock (its most important constituent component), called the Dreyer Table. Dreyer Tables were introduced in 1912, and though they were not as effective as the Pollen system, they still represented a

¹⁰³ Sumida, 81.

¹⁰⁴ Sumida, 153.

¹⁰⁵ Sumida, 207.

¹⁰⁶ Sumida, 251.

significant leap forward from existing range finders. Even so, only 15 frontline warships were fitted with new fire control gear in 1914, fully two years after it had been officially adopted.¹⁰⁷

This section has illustrated the dynamic, radically high pace of technological change that constantly raised the bar on naval capabilities, destructive potential, and expense. Rapidly advancing technology gave a compelling incentive for one-upmanship, even as the conservative elements of the British Admiralty stalled change at every turn. As Arthur Marder argues,

The bewilderingly rapid progress in naval construction had far-reaching consequences which lay at the root of much of the naval expansion after the 1880s. It was in large part responsible for the *nervousness* and *feeling of insecurity* among peoples and statesmen. If one power introduced military or naval improvements, the others had to follow, for, as one writer put it, 'failure to keep up with the scientific developments of a single year might very conceivably ruin a great empire [italics added].'¹⁰⁸

This rapid change contributed to unease, and a constant restless sense of rushing to catch up with competing powers, or of rushing to stay ahead of them in Britain's case. Having illustrated the dynamism of the political scene and the rapidity of change on the technological scene, this chapter will now explore changes in naval doctrine and measurements of superiority. Standards of superiority and minimum acceptable naval strength changed with the shifting of Britain's likely foreign enemies from Russia and France to Germany. Ship design and employment changes occurred in this larger political context. Doctrines reflecting increased naval capabilities in turn reflected the advancements in technology that made them possible. Prevailing schools of thought on naval warfare influenced priorities of procurement and force composition. This last section is a survey of these elements.

¹⁰⁷ Sumida, 251.

¹⁰⁸ Marder, *Anatomy*, 8.

Doctrine

The verbalization of the Two Power Standard was the first time that a discrete naval power standard had been laid down in Britain since the eighteenth century.¹⁰⁹ This standard was reiterated by the Gladstone government in 1893, and would continue unchallenged and unchanged until 1904.¹¹⁰ The government applied this standard to numbers of battleships, and in practice extended it to numbers of large cruisers.¹¹¹ No regard was made to quality. The ideal espoused by the big navy advocates was a 5:3 ratio of British naval vessels over those of France and Russia combined.¹¹² The aforementioned “Report of the Three Admirals” (1888) backed up this ratio, which stated that such a margin was needed in order to establish an effective blockade to account for casualties and rotations off station. The British admiralty still considered blockading to be the best solution for Britain in a naval war with a continental power.¹¹³ Alfred Mahan’s work in 1890 espoused the prominence of the battleship and was overwhelmingly accepted by the European navies, and this coincided with a temporary loss of confidence in the torpedo boat at that time. This meant that the Two Power Standard was permanently linked to the battleship as the logical primary recipient of resources in building a front line navy.¹¹⁴

Britain’s rivals in the late nineteenth century, especially France, adopted their own doctrines for nullifying the British battleship fleets. As mentioned in the first section, by the

¹⁰⁹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 105.

¹¹⁰ Marder, *Anatomy*, 106.

¹¹¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 106.

¹¹² Marder, *Anatomy*, 107.

¹¹³ Marder, *Anatomy*, 109.

¹¹⁴ Marder, *Anatomy*, 113.

late nineteenth century Britain had become entirely reliant on sea commerce for its survival. Denial of this commerce by a hostile power was the constant fear of naval policy makers and naval expansionist agitators throughout the period. Linked with this was fear of the loss of the basis of the English economy— foreign trade and raw material imports for supporting England’s industrial manufacturing.¹¹⁵

Guerre de Course was reawakened in the minds of naval thinkers as a viable strategy in France in the 1880s, and was particularly spearheaded by Admirals Aube and Bourgeois. It outlined methods for the neutralization of Britain’s advantage in capital ship superiority by using torpedo boats to sink blockading ships, and for using these new weapons to destroy British commerce on an unprecedented scale.¹¹⁶ The British response varied from arming merchant vessels to relying on the Declaration of Paris of 1856, which essentially forbade *guerre de course* in its classic form of individual privateers.¹¹⁷ Another reaction was the commissioning of “torpedo boat destroyers,” the etymological genesis of the “Destroyer” of present-day navies, as called for in the following excerpt from a recommendation to the First Naval Lord by the Director of Naval Intelligence in 1893:

It is absolutely necessary to make some provisions to meet possible attacks made by the numerically strong and elaborately organized torpedo-boat establishments on the other side of the Channel. A large portion of the foreign torpedo boats are in continuous commission and are almost daily exercised at all seasons...It is submitted that it is absolutely necessary that a respectable nucleus of these anti-torpedo boat craft should be kept in continuous commission, so that – when the emergency arrives – we should have at least some officers and

¹¹⁵ Marder, *Anatomy*, 84-85.

¹¹⁶ Marder, *Anatomy*, 84-88.

¹¹⁷ Marder, *Anatomy*, 89.

men as practically experienced in handling them as our possible adversaries are in handling their torpedo boats.¹¹⁸

The 1880s manifestation of *guerre de course* was the *Jeune Ecole* School. The fundamental notion of *Jeune Ecole* was that blockades could be broken by modern weapons, and so blockades could be instantly voided by clever accumulation of torpedo boats and fast armored cruisers. It also recognized that steam ships employed in blockade duty also suffered from reliance on support infrastructure that sail powered ships had not been constrained by, and so a blockading power could not reliably keep ships on station indefinitely.¹¹⁹

The more nuanced, directly intended effect of *Jeune Ecole* in France as a war plan was not the mass starvation of Britain, but the economic crippling of Britain through an exorbitant rise in insurance rates for shipping. These were first published in articles in France by Gabriel Charmes, including one called “La Reforme Maritime” in 1884.¹²⁰ These higher insurance rates would hopefully hamstring Britain’s other war efforts by reducing the available resources that could be allocated to them.¹²¹ Pro-navy advocates argued that expenditures on a decisively powerful navy that could protect shipping routes were in the long run an economic investment that would be cheaper than the expenditures required to replenish the merchant fleet in the event of successful implementation of modern *guerre de course*.¹²² The *guerre de course* scare evaporated with the Entente with France, and protection of trade against Germany seemed like

¹¹⁸ C. A. G. Bridge, “Countering French Torpedo Attacks, 1893” in *British Naval Documents*, 621-622. Rear Admiral Bridge was the Director of Naval Intelligence when this was written.

¹¹⁹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 107.

¹²⁰ Bernard Semmel, *Liberalism and Naval Strategy: Ideology, Interest, and Sea Power during the Pax Britannica* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 89.

¹²¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 91.

¹²² Marder, *Anatomy*, 92.

a much less problematic task.¹²³ Consequently, concerns over the *Jeune Ecole* disappeared from discussion after 1904. Though it eventually became irrelevant as a result of the Anglo-French Entente, naval thinkers and strategists had sought to counter the claims of the *Jeune Ecole* since the 1880s, and none more effectively than the American strategist Alfred Mahan.

Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan's *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783*, written in 1890, was in many ways a response to the strategic doctrine of the *Jeune Ecole*. He asserted that Britain's command of the seas was its greatest asset, and that by holding onto that supremacy, Britain had nothing to fear from a lesser naval power attacking its shipping. He wrote that commerce destruction could be a nuisance to a strong naval power, but could never prove decisive. Mahan qualified this thesis in his later work published in 1892 about the Napoleonic Wars. He did not retreat from his belief in large fleets of battleships, but he did characterize naval struggle in terms of protecting sea communications and denying it to others. Therefore, he asserted that the stronger naval power would advance its cause in a war more effectively if it engaged in *guerre de course* against weaker powers as a supplementary strategy.¹²⁴ Mahan's initial work received unbridled attention in Europe, with delayed attention in America, and provided the intellectual underpinning for the naval arms race that ensued between Germany and Great Britain. His was the first attempt at explaining Great Britain's economic and political dominance, and he attributed them to Britain's mastery of the seas.¹²⁵ He laid out the prerequisites for a nation achieving the status of a great power (specifically targeted toward how the United States could achieve such a status), and these

¹²³ Marder, *Anatomy*, 104.

¹²⁴ Semmel, 92-94.

¹²⁵ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660-1783* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1890), 33.

prerequisites were founded on an overarching naval superiority over others.¹²⁶ His first book was translated into Japanese, German, and French. At a British state banquet in his honor in 1894, General Lord Roberts toasted Mahan's success, and publicly stated that he hoped that Mahan would write a similar book for the army.¹²⁷ On that same visit to London, Mahan was half-jokingly told by "many naval officers" that his book was the reason for the recent increases in naval expenditures.¹²⁸ That same year, Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a telegram to one of his ministers announcing that he was "devouring" Mahan's book, and "hoped to learn it by heart."¹²⁹ The Kaiser had copies of the book sent to the wardrooms on all of his warships, and had a personal copy within reach of his armchair in his private study at Sans Souci, with extensive handwritten notes in the margins.¹³⁰

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 and especially the Spanish American War of 1898, the latter of which resulted in the complete destruction of the Spanish fleet by modern American battleships, cemented the already considerable belief in the validity of Mahan's thesis. This widespread acceptance of Mahan would be reflected in British and German naval policies as the arms race developed.¹³¹

Sir Julian Corbett, an English barrister turned journalist turned historian, wrote alongside Mahan, and nuanced some aspects of his arguments. In 1906 Corbett had published a work about the prudence of a defensive war against a weaker naval power (Germany) arguing

¹²⁶ Mahan, 36.

¹²⁷ W. D. Puleston, *The Life and Work of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, USN* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939), 155.

¹²⁸ Puleston, 154.

¹²⁹ Puleston, 159.

¹³⁰ Puleston, 159.

¹³¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 48.

that the British fleet's purpose should be to safeguard her own sea communications, and only force a decision on the enemy fleet if Britain's sea communications were threatened. This was not in keeping with Mahan's notion of the primacy of offensive strategy, and Corbett was forced to articulate his defense. In doing so, he pointed to Clausewitz, borrowing the latter's clout and insisting that defense was not always heretical.¹³² Corbett's thesis was more nuanced and flexible than Mahan's. It asserted the notion that strategies could change with changing enemies, whereas Mahan's thesis was more centrally tied to the unyielding notion that total mastery of the seas should be the ultimate aim of any aspiring great power.

Corbett made other specific contributions to the study of naval strategy. He coined the phrase "commerce prevention" in 1911 as opposed to the singular acts of *guerre de course* that had characterized eighteenth century wars.¹³³ He advocated raids on Germany's coasts and occupation of Germany's outer islands in an attempt to draw out the German fleet for a decisive action. This would, he argued, short-circuit the long and painful process of waiting for the economic forces unleashed by denial of communication of the seas to an enemy to take effect.¹³⁴ These varying interpretations of how navies should be properly constituted and employed affected the outlook of governments in both countries. In Great Britain the strategic outlook of the government and Admiralty was also affected by the changing foreign policy situation.

In 1904, Russia and France were no longer a direct naval threat to Great Britain, and so the initial basis for the Two Power Standard had disappeared. The Two Power Standard now

¹³² Semmel, 141-142.

¹³³ Semmel, 97-98.

¹³⁴ Semmel, 144.

seemed obsolete and inadequate with the increasingly volatile situation of changing alliances and emerging naval powers. Thus, the Two Power Standard “with a good margin” was announced by Prime Minister Balfour in 1904 in the House of Commons. This naval power standard would not be revised again until 1908.¹³⁵

In 1908, the Two Power Standard was overridden by the “One Power Standard Plus Sixty Percent,” which was first presented to the Admiralty Committee on Manning Requirements in 1908. The rise of Germany as the primary naval threat to Great Britain had resulted in this change of naval power standards, and in 1909 the admiralty drafted an estimate for shipbuilding necessary in order to maintain that margin over Germany. This was done again at First Lord of the Admiralty Churchill’s request in 1911, and he decided that it should be formalized and become the new official standard. Churchill spoke of the new standard in a speech to the House of Commons in March of 1912.¹³⁶ In addition to the changing attitudes by the British government toward which margins of superiority were acceptable, the Royal Navy also experienced revolutionary changes in organization, deployment, and equipment during the first decade of the twentieth century. Most of these changes were the result of the reforms enacted by the headstrong First Sea Lord, Sir John Arbuthnot Fisher, who entered that office in 1904. His notions about how the Royal Navy needed to be reformed were shaped over his long career, and focused primarily on the importance of speed.

In 1900, there was a return to the old “formal line of battle school” that had characterized the pre-Nelson Royal Navy. Due to the increasing viability of steam power,

¹³⁵ Marder, *Anatomy*, 509.

¹³⁶ Sumida, 191.

Nelson's unique methods of enveloping an enemy and concentrating fire on a single portion of the enemy's line had become obsolete, and so subdivision of fleets seemed pointless. Single lines were favored because they allowed unimpeded fire and maximum utilization of all broadsides (which was the reason that the line of battle was introduced in 1660 in the first place).¹³⁷

Mahan's thesis and the American experience of the Spanish-American War indicated that the gun was the most important element of a battle fleet. Fisher acknowledged this in the form of greater armaments while simultaneously shifting his ultimate priority to greater speed. He called it the "weather gage"¹³⁸ of the modern era, because it would allow fleets to engage at a time of their own choosing, and to flee from a superior enemy.

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904 seemed to confirm Fisher's belief in the importance of speed, to which he attributed the Japanese victory. This does not mean that the genesis of the Dreadnought concept came from that war, but only that its champions were encouraged by the results.¹³⁹

Arthur Marder points out several considerations that went into the design of the Dreadnought. These included the newly viable torpedo boat, advancements in range finding technology, the advent of salvo firing, the increased range and power of large caliber weapons, and Fisher's belief that speed was the most effective way of maximizing flexibility in combat.¹⁴⁰ Collectively these design considerations went into creating the fastest battleship ever floated,

¹³⁷ Marder, *Anatomy*, 516-517.

¹³⁸ Marder, *Anatomy*, 517.

¹³⁹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 530.

¹⁴⁰ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 58-59.

which also had large, powerful guns. This new battleship could decide when to attack because of its great speed, and could theoretically engage accurately from long range. However, this theoretical maximum gunnery range would not pan out in practice due to the lack of an effective long range fire control system of the type that Arthur Pollen had offered the Admiralty.

Also with the construction of the *HMS Dreadnought* came the first of three armored cruisers, the *Invincible* class, capable of even greater speeds of up to 25 knots. They were designed to harass an enemy fleet already engaging battleships, and to chase down merchant hunters. These ships had minimal armor protection, but it was believed to be enough to outmatch any vessel except a Dreadnought battleship.¹⁴¹ By 1904 Fisher had become convinced that torpedoes had made large battleships obsolete.¹⁴² He went on to argue with First Lord of the Admiralty Selborne that battleships were no longer necessary but that armored cruisers were, and he was rebuked. He acquiesced on this point in October 1904, acknowledging that his ideas in this instance were too radical to be feasibly acceptable to the naval establishment, and that it was unreasonable for the navy to abandon battleships especially given the entrenched belief in Mahan's thesis.¹⁴³ However, through 1905 he repeatedly argued to the Committee on Designs that the armored cruiser was just as effective as the battleship, because advances in armor piercing projectiles had made heavy armor obsolete.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴¹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 534-535.

¹⁴² Sumida, 51.

¹⁴³ Sumida, 53.

¹⁴⁴ Sumida, 56.

Fisher's faith in the promise of the Pollen fire control system in 1906 led him to reinforce his belief in the primacy of the battle cruiser, which when properly equipped could shell enemy battleships outside their effective weapons range.¹⁴⁵ With the decision to reject the Pollen system, the case for armored cruisers lost its momentum.¹⁴⁶ When the admiralty agreed to re-review the Pollen system in 1909, Fisher again got his hopes up about being able to retire the battleship in future building.¹⁴⁷ He never stopped agitating for more battle cruisers, even after his retirement. They were the desired end state of his reforms. Fisher's continued drive for greater numbers of armored cruisers at the expense of battleships was blocked by the Admiralty, and the resulting force in 1914 was more heavily represented by battleships than by battle cruisers. This turned out to be a blessing, as battle cruisers would prove more vulnerable than their heavier, more well protected battleship cousins at the Battle of Jutland in 1916.

Not everyone embraced Fisher's new ships with enthusiasm. At the time that the Dreadnought was built, the British navy had a 3:1 ratio of superiority over Germany in terms of numbers of battleships, which was effectively nullified by the introduction of the Dreadnought.¹⁴⁸ By introducing the Dreadnought, the British effectively reset the naval arms race with Germany to the starting line, and this provided fodder for Fisher's critics. When the Dreadnought became known to the public, its critics immediately began vocally questioning the logic of this radical shift in procurement. They criticized the practice of concentrating their resources in so few large but vulnerable units, which inevitably meant that Britain would be

¹⁴⁵ Sumida, 100.

¹⁴⁶ Sumida, 115.

¹⁴⁷ Sumida, 162.

¹⁴⁸ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 56.

able to afford fewer of them. The most salient criticism was that it reset the clock on the arms race. It voided Britain's overwhelming superiority in numbers of battleships because all other battleships were instantly rendered obsolete, and Britain's enemies were now building against them from the same starting position.¹⁴⁹

Critics also claimed that Fisher had sacrificed offensive power for speed, and so had violated the dictates of Mahan, whose thesis emphasized offensive rather than defensive power. Fisher sidestepped Mahan by arguing the self-evidence of the importance of speed, and claimed that he had not exorbitantly sacrificed offensive power, having still placed the most powerful guns available on the Dreadnought.¹⁵⁰ Another criticism was that the Dreadnought gave up armor protection in favor of speed, to which Fisher replied that Dreadnought was still more heavily protected than any of the pre-Dreadnoughts.¹⁵¹ Yet another criticism, particularly advanced by Sir William White, Director of Naval Construction from 1885 to 1902, argued that a series of smaller battleships were preferable to a few large ones, because the consequences of losing one of them were not as catastrophic. This was countered by claiming that more powerful battleships were less likely to be sunk, and by the argument that increasing the number of small ships would increase the chance of accidental loss.¹⁵² The final and most persistent argument concerning the technical design choices made for the new ship class was against the normalization of single caliber of main battery. Critics said that the Russo-Japanese War had been won by the six-inch shells of the Japanese, and that a higher volume of small projectiles was more effective than a few large ones. The admiralty countered with the

¹⁴⁹ Marder, *Anatomy*, 536.

¹⁵⁰ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 60-61.

¹⁵¹ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 62.

¹⁵² Marder, *Dreadnought*, 62-63.

confidential results of the battle practices that demonstrated the viability of long-range fire, which was especially suited to large caliber weapons.¹⁵³ The ramification of effective long-range fire was that a fleet could engage an enemy outside of their range to return fire, which would make the British fleet invincible. This could only work, however, with large caliber weapons.

Critics of the battle cruiser followed the same path of argument as they had for the Dreadnought, but specifically wondered if there was any wartime utility to the battle cruiser at all. They argued that cheaper vessels could do the scouting job equally well, as they would not require as much armor or offensive power, and the fleet being scouted could amass enough firepower to drive off the scout regardless of their armament or armor.¹⁵⁴ Therefore the battle cruiser was argued to be a singularly wasteful concentration of resources that offered no real advantages.

The most ardent critic of Fisher's reforms was Lord Charles Beresford. Lord Beresford had served as vice fleet commander under Fisher in the Mediterranean Fleet until 1902. While under his charge, he was consistently rebuked by Fisher, merely as a result of Fisher's personality and style of command, and Beresford came to take these caustic encounters personally. He took command of the Channel Fleet in 1903 and then of the Mediterranean Fleet in 1905, while Fisher was redistributing the fleets as a part of his early reforms. This meant that Beresford's fleet was shrinking just as he was taking command, and he believed that this redistribution was personally targeted against him. He blew these events up into a

¹⁵³ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 66.

¹⁵⁴ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 70.

personal and public grudge that would characterize his behavior for the rest of Fisher's tenure. The ensuing rift between Fisher and Beresford led to the polarization of the officer corps, with the two sects lining up to support one admiral or the other. This rift would prove injurious to the professional unity of the navy.¹⁵⁵

Beresford resumed command of the Channel Fleet in 1906, and commenced undermining Fisher and the admiralty at every turn, which only entrenched the dislike between the two.¹⁵⁶ After rotating off of his command in March 1909, Beresford continued his antagonism, and the intensity of the feud only increased. As a result of the relentless attacks by Beresford on Fisher's reforms, and mounting pressure from Fisher's other critics, Fisher was forced to resign early in 1910. Following this, Beresford won a seat in the House of Commons and continued his agitation from Parliament. However, his influence waned as his agitations continued. He was denied promotion to Admiral of the Fleet by First Lord McKenna, and he died in 1919. Massie argues that he came along at the wrong time, and represented unsustainable conservatism in a period of radical change. He and Fisher both had "colossal egos, but over a lifetime of service, Beresford's ego tended to focus on himself, while Fisher's was devoted to the advancement of the Service."¹⁵⁷ Beresford's story is indicative of how dynamic this period was, and the extent to which it was set apart from the period that preceded it. Beresford was a symbol of the conservative past, and was unable to adapt to the changing realities of the early twentieth century.

¹⁵⁵ Massie, 511-516.

¹⁵⁶ Massie, 516-527.

¹⁵⁷ Massie, 542.

Fisher had introduced two revolutionary ship types that had the potential to fundamentally change the capabilities of the Royal Navy. These radical ship types drew fire from critics who saw them as expensive and overreaching. Critics feared that these vessels would provoke identical building from Germany, which would negate Britain's naval numerical advantage. In spite of the criticisms generated by Dreadnought, Fisher's reforms of the Royal Navy continued in other areas of the institution, and the remainder of this section will examine these. Fisher's remaining reforms were focused on the Nucleus Crew concept, the scrapping of obsolete vessels, and redeploying the Royal Navy to reflect new foreign policy realities. These all reflected the rapidly changing naval situation and contributed to a dizzying level of institutional change.

Prior to Fisher's posting, the ships laid up in the Fleet Reserve had only skeleton crews onboard for basic upkeep and security. Upon mobilization, the crews were hastily assembled from shore detachments, and these new crews would go to sea completely unfamiliar with the unique eccentricities of their ships. To alleviate this problem, Fisher created the nucleus crew system, which manned each ship with a two-fifths nominal crew complement in a variety of rates and officers. They lived and worked onboard as active duty stewards of their vessels, and participated in regular exercises. This mitigated the effects of the remaining three-fifths of the crews that were made up from shore detachments. This meant that the effective fighting strength of the navy included combat viable reserves, and that admirals would not have to account for the reserves as a liability. The extra personnel needed for this expansion were

provided by the new manpower surplus created by ship scrapping, which Fisher simultaneously enacted.¹⁵⁸

When Fisher took office in 1904, there were small obsolete gunboats, sloops, and lesser rank cruisers deployed throughout the world on police duty, which contributed to Britain's forward deployed presence throughout its extensive empire. They were of almost no value in modern war, and as a result Fisher decided to scrap most of them. This freed up their crews from stagnant duty and contributed to the men available for the nucleus crew system. It also reduced annual estimates by cutting maintenance costs. Fisher's initial estimate upon removing 154 vessels from the active list was £845,000 per year.¹⁵⁹ With the leaner, more effective fleet left behind after the scrapping of obsolete vessels, the First Sea Lord completely reorganized and reshuffled how that fleet was to be employed.

Fisher had first floated the need for redistributing the fleet with regard to changing geopolitical realities when he advocated that the vessels deployed off the coast of the United States be reduced in 1902 while he was in command of the Mediterranean Fleet.¹⁶⁰ By the time he became First Sea Lord two years later, the foreign policy situation had changed significantly again (with the Entente), and so Fisher further revised the existing system. The old deployment scheme was a holdover from the age of sail, when a forward deployed presence was necessary in order to protect far-flung parts of the British Empire. Sailing ships were slow and took a long time to be deployed from centrally located ports, and news travelled slowly, increasing the actual response time in a crisis. This was no longer true with the steam-powered vessels and

¹⁵⁸ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 36-38.

¹⁵⁹ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 38-40.

¹⁶⁰ Sir John Fisher, "The Distribution of the Fleet, 1902" in *British Naval Documents*, 751-752.

telegraph networks that existed in 1904. It also reflected an historical enmity with France that was no longer valid, and did not reflect the relatively new alliance with Japan. The redistribution effectively placed three quarters of Britain's front line units in positions that made them available to be deployed against Germany upon the outbreak of war. This was done by heavily reinforcing the Channel and Atlantic Fleets at the expense of fleets in the Far East and South Africa. The North America squadrons were also reduced, as Fisher had requested in 1902.¹⁶¹

State of the Fleets in 1914

There were a limited number of flag officers of any real ability by the outbreak of World War One. This was due to their lack of having been tested in combat, and due to the transition from sail to steam propulsion during their lifetimes. Bureaucratic stagnation plagued many of them, and most were not inclined to seek counsel from subordinates. However, there were a few standouts. Arthur Marder argues that the majority of the talent lay in the junior ranks, the captains and rear admirals.¹⁶² In spite of the drawbacks of institutional stagnation and bureaucratic inertia, one advantage that the British had consistently over their German cousins was confidence. They embodied the long tradition of British naval superiority, and they faced an upstart enemy with no real naval traditions of their own.¹⁶³

By comparison, the German Navy was plagued by the same problems as the Royal Navy, and their service lengths of three years increased turnover and training. They did most of their

¹⁶¹ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 40-43.

¹⁶² Marder, *Dreadnought*, 405-412.

¹⁶³ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 412.

training in protected waters, and this prevented them from attaining the same level of proficiency as the British.¹⁶⁴ The British primarily conducted training operations in the North Sea and the Atlantic, where they were able to tackle the considerable challenges of high sea states and open-ocean maneuvering. By contrast, the Germans conducted most of their training in the protected harbor at Wilhelmshaven, and the relatively calm waters that guarded its approaches. They were therefore not as highly skilled in open-ocean warfare.

The British and German governments also built different capabilities into their warships. For example, the *Queen Elizabeth* and the *Kronprinz Wilhelm*, laid down in 1912, had different calibers of their main batteries. The British ship had four 15in guns, with a broadside of 15,600 lbs, compared to the German ship, which had ten 12in guns, with a broadside of 8,600 lbs. The Germans claimed parity because their guns had a higher muzzle velocity and so preserved their penetration power relative to the heavier British guns. Arthur Marder argues that the heavier guns were superior, because they preserved their accuracy at longer ranges, and so had greater effective firing range.¹⁶⁵

In terms of materiel, the German battleships were more heavily armored than their British counterparts, with 11.75in in the first round of ships and 13.75 in the later battleships, compared to 11, 12, and 13in for the evolving British classes. The cruisers were also more lightly armored on the British side. The German heavy armor was due to the heavier guns on the British ships, and the Germans were not at an advantage considering the weapons of the enemy that they were building against. The British had made a conscious choice to sacrifice

¹⁶⁴ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 412-413.

¹⁶⁵ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 413-414.

armor for weapon weight, and this included allowing vulnerable spots in the British armor, that was not as continuous or as high as that of their German counterparts.¹⁶⁶

The armor piercing shells used by the British were ineffective owing to the poor choices of the Controllers after Jellicoe, and this spared German warships at Jutland in 1916. When striking at an oblique angle, the shells would disintegrate or else fail to fully penetrate the armor. This partially denied them the advantage of their heavier broadside while exposing them to their chosen weakness in armor protection. The Germans also reaped the advantages of building naval works from the ground up, which permitted greater beams and watertight protection due to more expansive docks.¹⁶⁷ The British had to expand their existing naval infrastructure, which was more difficult and costly than building brand new ones, and the German shipyards were more modern owing to their more recent construction.

In the end, however, numerical superiority was clearly in favor of the British. When the war broke out, the British had 20 battleships and nine battle cruisers, to Germany's 13 battleships and five battle cruisers.¹⁶⁸

Conclusion

From every thematic perspective relevant to naval power, this period was characterized by constant flux. Threats and targets, capabilities and vulnerabilities, and a half-century-old faded memory of the last significant naval conflict (Crimea) accounted for continuous changes in doctrine, which both reflected and impacted changes on the political scene and on

¹⁶⁶ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 414-417.

¹⁶⁷ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 417-419.

¹⁶⁸ Marder, *Dreadnought*, 420.

technology. The rapidity of doctrinal supersession reflected the lack of concrete evidence of the viability of one strategy or employment technique over another, fueled by the volatile changing political situation and quickly advancing state of the naval art. Supplanting one school of naval thought in favor of another was a triumph of discourse rather than an incorporation of lessons learned through combat experience.

Into this growing maelstrom the British government committed vast and ever increasing resources. Between 1889 and 1914 British naval estimates grew by £37,906,032, an increase of 278%. In 1913 one out of every four pounds spent by the British government was spent on the Royal Navy.¹⁶⁹ The British people committed these resources understandably unsure of whether the navy they were purchasing was capable of fulfilling its intended charge, and the government, newspapers, and pro-navy advocates went to considerable pains to reassure the public that the navy would not embarrass itself the way that the army had done during the Boer War. Such a potential setback was perceived to be completely unacceptable, as the navy was Britain's first and last line of actual *defense* that guarded British physical sovereignty and ensured her ability to keep her rightful prosperous place in the world order. Any occurrence seen to be curtailing that naval hegemony resulted in a panic, as happened in no fewer than four full blown "scares" during this period.¹⁷⁰

The subsequent chapters will explore various aspects of how these cultural reassurances were constructed, including conceptualizing the "Other," representations of past strength through commemorations, representations of current strength through contemporary

¹⁶⁹ Sumida, Table 15.

¹⁷⁰ 1889, 1901, 1909, and 1912. As shown in this chapter, tensions never abated, but these "scares" represented the nadirs of British naval numerical confidence.

celebrations of naval power, and perceptions and reactions to the climactic but indecisive employment of this massively expensive and all important fleet at the Battle of Jutland in 1916.

CHAPTER TWO

THE RESTLESS CHILD

The people of Great Britain found their racial cousins of the Second German Empire puzzling, and they created a caricature of the Germans in order to help them understand their behavior. Examining this caricature is useful for two reasons. First, Britons' attempts to reconcile the peculiarity they saw reveals a significant amount about how the British viewed themselves, and so they are a window into the sense of racial decline that characterized British culture during this period. Second, the representations of the Germans that were presented to the British people mythologized the threat that the Germans represented, and helped the British government justify expending resources for the common defense. Thus, this caricature directly fueled the naval arms race. This chapter will reconstruct this portrait of the Germans as viewed by the British in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and will then point out the deeper significance of this portrait to the remaining themes of study in this thesis. Having established the basic sequence of events for the period in Chapter One-- the political, technological, and doctrinal narrative—this chapter will focus on the *target* against which the British were arming themselves-- the German Empire. For practical reasons, I have chosen to consider the portrait static throughout the period, without accounting specifically for changes in British attitudes between 1896 and 1914. This is somewhat problematic because it simplifies the caricature in a way that a more detailed study would not, but it allows for a brief synthesis of the overall portrait that would otherwise be impractical. Even in such a brief study, the portrait yielded by this analysis of the documentary evidence is still effective and illuminating. The reader will notice an intensification of the language as the period progressed

commensurate with the intensification of the naval arms race, without necessarily noticing any changes in the perception of basic German qualities. In constructing this portrait, I have chosen selections from *The Times of London*, *Punch*, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, and Foreign Office correspondence from the period, with focused scrutiny on periods of particular friction between the two countries, as editorializing about the Germans increased in periods of greater strife. Narrowing the search in this way has allowed for a focused collection at moments of effervescence of discourse, when commentary about German eccentricities, faults, and virtues was at its highest pitch. This collection of documents compose an effective cross section of contemporary opinion, as it contains documents for popular consumption (*The Times* and *Punch*), official speeches designed to affect government policy (The Parliamentary Debates), and the frequently confidential correspondence between officials at the Foreign Office, in which the most intense language and longest pontifications often occurred, without fear of public or foreign backlash because of their secrecy.

In terms of popular consumption, newspapers had the most widespread readership relative to the other sources used in constructing this portrait. In the second half of the nineteenth century newspaper sales exploded in Great Britain. This was initially set off by repeals of paper taxes in 1855 and 1861, but newspaper readership continued to expand long after this initial boost. Newspaper circulation stagnated in the 1870s, and picked up again in the 1880s. Circulation continued to expand from the 1880s into the twentieth century.¹⁷¹ In 1860, there were 32 daily newspapers in Great Britain. That number had grown to 150 by the 1890s. Eighty-five million newspapers were sold in England in 1851. By 1920, sales exceeded

¹⁷¹ Lucy Brown, *Victorian News and Newspapers* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 31.

5.6 billion. Per capita consumption also increased from six newspapers per year in 1851 to 182 in 1920.¹⁷² These figures indicate the extent to which the mass consumer market was expanding during this period, and the extent to which the newspaper excerpts cited in this chapter enjoyed a large swath of public exposure.

This chapter will not proceed chronologically, but thematically. It will focus on three main subjects of study: the person of the Emperor, who for many exemplified the worst qualities of the German race, the structural defects of German society, and the larger German caricature as a whole, which expands upon the singular British perception of the Emperor, but does not significantly break from the characteristics ascribed to Wilhelm.

Kaiser Wilhelm was the primary focal point of British cultural contact with the Germans. He was the most visible German, and through the force of his personality made sure that he remained so. In addition, he also possessed a high degree of personal control over the foreign affairs of Germany. In keeping with his great institutional importance and visibility, the British public identified him as the archetype of the German race. As he came to embody the worst aspects of that race, British views of the German race as a whole soured. This was explicitly stated in 1906 by Sir Frank Lascelles, the British Ambassador to Germany from 1895-1908: "In one respect the Emperor may perhaps be considered as a typical German...They [are] the most sensitive people in the world, and at the same time it would never enter into their heads that they could by any possibility be offensive themselves, although in reality they very often were. It was not long before I realized that the Emperor himself shared to a very large extent the

¹⁷² Mark Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004), 28.

sensitiveness which [is] considered a characteristic of the German people generally.”¹⁷³ The specific aspects of his character explored here were his perceived impetuous showmanship, instability, bellicosity, narrow mindedness, and immaturity.¹⁷⁴ On the occasion of the Emperor’s visit to Tangier in 1905, *Punch* published a drawing portraying his impetuous nature and tendency to grandstand (see Figure 1¹⁷⁵). In that image, he was portrayed as the Moor of Potsdam, dressed conspicuously in his military uniform and decorations, striking a theatrical pose. This reflected the belief that the Emperor was mainly interested in drawing attention to himself rather than looking after the legitimate foreign interests of Germany. Later in the same year, *Punch* published a drawing of a meeting between Wilhelm and the Czar (see Figure 2¹⁷⁶). Foiled against the relatively discrete Nicholas II, hunched down so as to not be noticed and speaking “anxiously,” the Kaiser was sitting erect, defiantly unashamed of his presence, in the face of the naval activity in the background, with the caption indicating that he was unconcerned with the stirs that he might have caused. This also portrayed the Emperor as the impetuous showman, who recklessly caused disruption on the international political scene whenever he was able. The man portrayed in this drawing was confident to a fault, and dared the rest of Europe to challenge him.

¹⁷³ Sir Frank Lascelles, “Extract from General Report on Germany for 1906,” in *British Documents on the Origins of War, 1898-1914*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1927), Volume 3, 436. Sir Frank Lascelles served as ambassador at Berlin from 1895-1908, and wrote this report on May 24th, 1907 (his biographical information is located on p. 454 of the same volume).

¹⁷⁴ These qualities were not unrelated, and those writing about the person of the Emperor frequently made reference to many of these traits simultaneously. For the purpose of illustrating the most powerful examples of the voicing of these perceptions, I have chosen selections which predominantly focus on one theme or another, but that may contain passing references to additional themes.

¹⁷⁵ Unknown Artist, *Punch*, Volume 128, 237. This drawing was published on April 5th, 1905.

¹⁷⁶ Unknown Artist, *Punch*, Volume 129, 83. This drawing was published on August 2nd, 1905.

Reports from the foreign office supported the general interpretations of *Punch* cartoons. They frequently indicated that the Kaiser loved to talk and pontificate, and the understated jibes at this caricature were often less than subtle: "As is often His Majesty's habit when he begins a conversation with one person, [He] continued to talk to me till the Empress sent word to him that it was time to go home."¹⁷⁷ These long talks turned to rants or "tirades,"¹⁷⁸ perceived to be the occasional boiling over of pent up energy and emotion on the part of the Emperor, and not worthy of serious concern: "It is the Emperor's habit to indulge from time to time in public expression of his personal sentiments; and to extemporaneous utterances of that kind serious political importance does not necessarily attach."¹⁷⁹ These passages portray the Emperor as a man who was unable to keep his mouth shut, and who was prone to violent outbursts of emotion that were immediately expressed. In a dispatch to Sir Edward Grey in 1913 the British Ambassador to Italy, Sir J. Rennell Rodd, revealed how this showmanship had dysfunctional consequences for the Emperor's governing style:

[A member of the Emperor's entourage] said that he found no difficulty when an opportunity was offered of seeing His Majesty alone. The Emperor was then a sympathetic and receptive listener, and accepted a difference of opinion in very good part. It was by no means however easy when a number of other persons were present. The Emperor had a quickness and brilliancy of repartee which put his interlocutor at a disadvantage, as the latter had to take into account the obligations not to put His Majesty at a disadvantage before witnesses.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ "Memorandum by Lord Granville," in *British Documents, Volume 9 Part 2*, p. 503. The author was the Second Earl of Granville, and served as Secretary at the British Embassy at Berlin, 1904-1905, as 1st Secretary at Berlin, 1905-1908, at Brussels, 1908-1911, and again at Berlin from 1911-1913 (Biographical information located on p. 1087). This was written on February 18th, 1913.

¹⁷⁸ "LtCol J M Grierson to Sir F. Lascelles," in *British Documents, Volume 1*, 42. J. M. Grierson was the British Military Attache at Berlin from 1896 to 1900 (biographical information located on p. 340). This was written on January 19th, 1898.

¹⁷⁹ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, January 4th, 1896, p. 9 col. 3.

¹⁸⁰ "Sir R. Rodd to Sir Edward Grey, January 6th, 1913," in *British Documents, Volume 10*, 662. Sir J. Renell Rodd was Secretary of the British Embassy at Rome from 1901-1903, Councillor of Embassy 1904, Minister at Stockholm, 1904-1908, and Ambassador at Rome, 1908-1921 (biographical information located on p. 854). Sir Edward Grey

Therefore the Emperor had multiple faces and personalities, a quality which was referred to consistently throughout this period, and that would also be projected onto the German people as a whole.

The bulk of the sources explaining the personality of the Emperor identified his instability as being his most prominent feature. Sir Frank Lascelles's analysis of the Emperor was telling:

It is no easy matter...to attempt a description of His Majesty's personality, which is composed of various and sometimes contradictory qualities...The Emperor certainly possesses a great and varied knowledge, and is very quick in grasping the meaning of what is said to him, but this quickness is not an unmixed advantage, as it not unfrequently causes His Majesty to jump at a conclusion without giving sufficient consideration to all the conditions of the case. It has been pointed out to me that when a question is submitted to His Majesty he is apt to at once express an opinion, and when the same question is again submitted from a different point of view he very probably may pronounce a very different opinion...The well known impulsiveness of the Emperor's character, coupled with the exaggeration in which he is in the habit of indulging in conversation, have given rise to an impression [that he] constitutes a danger for the peace of Europe.¹⁸¹

Sir Frank's analysis of the Emperor painted him as a person who was so dizzyingly active, in mind and body, that he could not control himself. He spoke and acted without thought, and was apt to try to impress those around him with his aggressiveness. This instability also gave the Emperor the quality of an unwelcome guest, and in dealing with his allies, according to Sir Harold Rumbold, the British Ambassador to the Austro-Hungarian Empire from 1896 to 1900, "Emperor William is held rather to have thrust himself of late years unduly upon his Imperial neighbor, and...his visits [to the Austro-Hungarian Empire] have been more frequent than

was the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, from Dec 11th, 1905 to Dec 11th, 1916 (biographical information located on p. 847).

¹⁸¹ "Extract from General Report on Germany for 1906 Sir F. Lascelles May 24th, 1907," in *British Documents*, Volume 3, 434.

welcome.”¹⁸² This quality of the Emperor contrasted with the British perception of their own king, and this perceived difference in the personalities of the two monarchs was reported on by Mr. Fairfax Cartwright, a Councilor at the British Embassy at Madrid from 1905-1906, in a Foreign Office report:

[Certain German newspapers] attribute the erratic and somewhat changeable foreign policy of the Empire to the peculiarly impulsive and romantic temperament of the Emperor, and it draws attention to the importance of appreciating, in dealing with public affairs, the cool and determined character of King Edward, whose tenacity of purpose, especially in foreign affairs, makes him a dangerous antagonist. The misunderstanding between the two countries is in great part due to the difference of temperament of their Sovereigns, for in England the changeable character of German foreign policy is attributed by the public to duplicity, whereas the tenacity of purpose of Great Britain makes the Germans fear that they will be worsted by their neighbors if they are not careful and this renders them suspicious and gives rise to numerous articles in the press entitled ‘Perfidious Albion.’¹⁸³

Therefore, Mr. Cartwright was accusing the German newspapers of being jealous of the British, because the British king was capable of controlling himself in ways that the German Emperor could not. This put the two monarchs on an uneven playing field, and the British had the advantage. He was also praising this quality in his king.

This theme of Wilhelm’s instability recurred in shorter passages, and was used to explain the erratic and counterproductive nature of German policy, as with Frank Lascelles’s report published in 1906: “His [Majesty’s] information is often not complete enough to enable

¹⁸² “Sir H. Rumbold to the Marquess of Salisbury, September 19th, 1898,” in *British Documents, Volume 1*, 280. Horace Rumbold was the British Ambassador at Vienna from 1896 to 1900 (biographical information located on p. 344). The Marquess of Salisbury was the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from June 29th, 1895 to November 12th, 1900, and Prime Minister from June 19th, 1895 to July 12th, 1902 (biographical information located on p. 417 of Volume 2).

¹⁸³ “Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, August 20th, 1906.” *British Documents, Volume 3*, 371. Mr. Fairfax Cartwright was British Councillor of the Embassy at Madrid from 1905 to 1906, and the Minister at Munich and Stuttgart from 1906 to 1908 (biographical information located on p. 445).

him to form a correct opinion,”¹⁸⁴ [but] “He really is animated by the most pacific sentiments.”¹⁸⁵ References to this quality also occasionally hint at admiration for “The restless spirit and feverish energy of the German Emperor,”¹⁸⁶ attributed to him by Sir Charles Hardinge in 1905, which also included a “love of ideas, versatility, [and] buoyancy of spirits, now probably less than in his earlier days,...real generosity of temperament and vivid imagination, tend to make him feel sympathetic towards a state of mind which may be described as that of a mystic,”¹⁸⁷ which Fairfax Cartwright used to describe the Emperor in 1907. However personally charming this quality may have made the Emperor, the reference to the consequence of this quality on German foreign policy was more characteristically expressed by the following editorial of *The Times*: “The Emperor, in fact, is so impulsive and passes so rapidly from one mood to another that he is himself often apt to forget in a later mood what he had done and thought in an earlier mood. Against every utterance friendly to England other utterances equally unfriendly could be quoted, but both at the moment are equally sincere.”¹⁸⁸ This reinforced the notion of the Emperor as a chaotic element, and the implications of this author’s comments were that the British government could not be justly blamed for failing to effectively engage with the German Emperor. In such an impossible situation, Britain was instead worthy of praise for taking on the challenge of bringing order to the situation.

¹⁸⁴ Sir Frank Lascelles, “Extract from General Report on Germany for 1906,” in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 436. This was written on May 24th, 1907.

¹⁸⁵ “Extract from General Report on Germany for 1906 Sir F. Lascelles, May 24th, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 438.

¹⁸⁶ “Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne, June 13th, 1905,” *British Documents, Volume 4*, 197. Sir Charles Harding was British Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1903 to 1904, Ambassador at St. Petersburg from 1904 to 1906, and Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1906 to 1910 (biographical information located on p. 631). The Marquess of Lansdowne served as Foreign Secretary from November 11th, 1900 to December 11th, 1905 (biographical information located on p. xiii of Volume 1).

¹⁸⁷ “Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, Jan 12th, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 8.

¹⁸⁸ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, October 29th, 1908, p. 5 col. 3.

This caricature of the Emperor was long standing. *Punch* published a drawing of him in 1890, shortly after his accession to the throne of Germany (see Figure 3¹⁸⁹). The Kaiser in this drawing was unsteady, and unsure of himself. He had the clumsiness of an adolescent, and his high energy and immaturity were a disruptive force to the Concert of Europe. The older, wiser rulers were sensibly seated in the boat that Wilhelm was rocking, and they were imploring him to stop. Six years later, in the wake of the Kruger Telegram, expressions of this instability were made more explicit (see Figure 4¹⁹⁰). Here, Wilhelm was again portrayed as an adolescent. In addition to disrupting the Concert of Europe, Wilhelm was causing concern even to his allies, the Italian and Austro-Hungarian governments. While he rocked back unstably in his chair, he looked confused and concerned as he threatened to rip the map of Europe off of the table, and his allies yelled for him to stop.

This notion of Wilhelm as an unstable figure did not soften as the Emperor aged. In 1908, *Punch* published a drawing commenting on the *Daily Telegraph* fiasco of that year (see Figure 5¹⁹¹). In this drawing, an adult Wilhelm still incompetently failed to produce his intended result, as his interview with the *Daily Telegraph* produced a public outcry in Great Britain. Upon realizing this, the Wilhelm in the drawing looked surprised, reinforcing the notion of Wilhelm as a clumsy, unstable force in European politics.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁹ Unknown Artist, *Punch*, Volume 147, Supplement 3. This drawing was published on May 10th, 1890.

¹⁹⁰ Unknown Artist, *Punch*, Volume 110, 50. This drawing was published on February 1st, 1896.

¹⁹¹ Unknown Artist, *Punch*, Volume 135, 353. This drawing was published on November 11th, 1908.

¹⁹² Wilhelm's famous interview with the *Daily Telegraph* in 1908 was ostensibly intended to improve Anglo-German relations, but as a result of the Emperor's volatile personality and diplomatic incompetence, he ended up infuriating both the British and his own population in Germany through a series of inflammatory remarks he made during the interview.

The Emperor was frequently accused of bellicosity and a thundering bombast that was related to his showmanship. The interconnectedness of his bellicose nature and his tendency to grandstand was well illustrated by a report sent by Lieutenant Colonel Grierson to Sir Frank Lascelles: “[I said to the Emperor that] we did not desire to embroil ourselves with anybody, we were strong enough to hold our own against either group [of potential adversaries], and it was unlikely that both would combine against us. To this he replied: ‘You are mistaken, they can combine, and they *shall* combine.’ (This latter with great emphasis.)”¹⁹³ Two years later this inclination toward expressing aggressive attitudes again appeared in a report by Sir Frank Lascelles. This report also hinted at the duplicity of the Emperor’s motives, while again reinforcing the notion of him as an impetuous showman: “The speeches which the Emperor had recently delivered...breathed a very warlike spirit. Count Bulow said I was so well acquainted with the Emperor that he need not explain His Majesty’s character to me, and he could assure me that, whilst His Majesty was delivering these warlike utterances, he was at the same time giving commands to his Ministers to issue instructions in the most moderate and conciliatory spirit.”¹⁹⁴ Therefore there were two faces of Wilhelm. The public Wilhelm had an excitable temperament, and was prone to violent verbal outburst. The private Wilhelm was more thoughtful, rational, and calm.

Juxtaposed with characterizations of the unstable Wilhelm, prone to change his opinion on a whim, or because of a change in the tone of information presented to him, were accounts of his narrow-mindedness, rich examples of which appear in the Foreign Office documents of

¹⁹³ “LtCol J M Grierson to Sir F. Lascelles, Jan 19th, 1898,” in *British Documents, Volume 1*, 42-43.

¹⁹⁴ “Sir F. Lascelles to the Marquess of Salisbury, Aug 9th, 1900,” in *British Documents, Volume 2*, 6.

1907, just as the naval arms race was accelerating. In January, Mr. Cartwright wrote to Sir Edward Grey, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1905 to 1916, that “One of the most serious evils which affect Germany at present is the absence of men of character at the helm of affairs. Little by little Ministers have effaced themselves before the Kaiser and have been reduced to the position of senior Clerks of Departments...His Majesty’s personality is more and more dominating every branch of public life. The effect of this on German diplomacy is very marked and should not be lost sight of.”¹⁹⁵ Later in the same document he went on to say that “[at] moments [the Emperor] begins to realize that there is danger ahead and he feels disheartened, though his confidence in himself is so great that he cannot bring himself to believe that he has really engaged on a wrong path; then, in despair, he...denounce[s] all those who were opposed to him as pessimists and enemies of the nation.”¹⁹⁶ Therefore, Mr. Cartwright’s assessment was that the strong force of the Emperor’s personality had emasculated his subordinates to the point that they were no longer able to effectively stand up to him or challenge his policies. The Emperor was so sure of himself that he could not be moved from his decisions, even when he himself recognized subsequently that they had been incorrect. In bolstering his self confidence, the Emperor relied upon supernatural legitimacy: “I have been told on good authority that he interprets the words ‘King of Prussia by the grace of God’ in a literal sense, and regards himself as placed in a very special manner under the direct protection of the Almighty.”¹⁹⁷ Therefore Wilhelm believed that he was always right, and that

¹⁹⁵ “Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, Jan 12th, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 5.

¹⁹⁶ “Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, Jan 12th, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 7.

¹⁹⁷ Sir Frank Lascelles, “Extract from General Report on Germany for 1906,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 435. This was written on May 24th, 1907.

God was guiding him and his nation to greatness. As a result, critical assessment of his own policies was unnecessary.

All of the personality traits thus far expounded upon feed into the last aspect of this portion of the portrait, which can be seen as the overriding characteristic of the Emperor and the fundamental explanation for all of the others: immaturity. This quality was also projected onto the whole German nation, as this chapter will explore in the final section, but there were several examples of this being directed at the Emperor personally. Frank Lascelles said of him in 1899: “[The Emperor claims that Great Britain has] brought upon herself [ill feeling] by the constant disregard and contempt with which she treated German interests...He had constantly labored to bring about a good understanding with England, but whenever he seemed to be on the point of succeeding, some incident had occurred to frustrate his desires.”¹⁹⁸ “Frustration” is perhaps the most important word in this passage, and it feeds into the portrait constructed of Wilhelm as functionally adolescent, straining against the artificial bounds that he sees as unfairly curtailing his activities. A childish exchange between Frank Lascelles and the Emperor provided another example of the latter’s defiant attitude: “On my asking whether [the Emperor] had any orders for me as I was about to leave for England, His Majesty replied in the negative. It was useless for him to make suggestions which were disregarded, and he was not going to ‘stick to us’ any longer. I ventured to ask to whom His Majesty proposed to ‘stick’ now, and he promptly replied ‘to myself.’”¹⁹⁹ This was obviously one of the “tirades” that the officials at the foreign office frequently complained of, that was based on fleeting emotion and

¹⁹⁸ “Sir F. Lascelles to the Marquess of Salisbury, May 26th, 1899,” in *British Documents, Volume 1*, 118.

¹⁹⁹ “Sir F. Lascelles to the Marquess of Lansdowne, Nov 9th, 1901,” in *British Documents, Volume 1*, 261.

tantrum-like rhetoric that did not give the impression of rational reflection on the part of Wilhelm.

In addition to the person of the Kaiser, the structure of the German state that Wilhelm governed was also a subject of interest to British commentators, and these representations portrayed a society that was artificially held in check by its least sophisticated elements. The whole description created a sense of unbalance and disproportion, which also can be interpreted as sophomoric adolescence of the state itself. Sir Eyre Crowe, a senior clerk in the British Foreign Office, published a memorandum in 1907 detailing his interpretation of Germany's structural defects and their consequences:

For purposes of foreign policy the modern German Empire may be regarded as...the descendant of Prussia ...[Prussia's history] has not been a case of a King's love of conquest as such, nor of the absorption of lands regarded geographically or ethnically as an integral part of the true national domain, nor of the more or less unconscious tendency of a people to expand under the influence of an exuberant vitality, for the fuller development of national life and resources. Here was rather the case of the Sovereign of a small and weak vassal State saying: 'I want my country to be independent and powerful...I must have a larger territory and more inhabitants, and to this end I must organize strong military forces.'²⁰⁰

In reconciling the best with the worst elements of German cultural society, the British ascribed to Prussia a disproportionate amount of influence as the founder of the Empire, and described how this was suppressing Germany's otherwise more sensible nature, as Fairfax Cartwright reported that same year:

The Prussian Excellencies are too often engaged in the unfortunate attempt to look down upon Germany from their Pomeranian flats. The heart and nervous

²⁰⁰ "Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, Jan 1st, 1907," in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 403-404. Sir Eyre Crowe was a Senior Clerk in the British Foreign Office from 1906-1912, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1912 to 1920, and Permanent Under-Secretary from 1920-1925, (biographical information located on p. 446).

centre of the country is not to be found in the north but in the central and southern portions of the Empire; from them- now as in the middle ages- come the artists, the poets and the thinkers of Germany, who exert a vibrating influence on Teutonic life. Prussia is but the fist of the Empire and the evolution which it appears to me is at present going on in Germany, perhaps slowly but surely, is a revolt of the brains of the country against their long subjection to the highly organized material forces of the north.²⁰¹

Cartwright's perception of the Germans in this passage was of an unbalanced nation, with its best qualities suppressed by its most outdated, archaic ones. He ascribed to this fundamentally untenable internal contradiction much of German's erratic behavior. In the same report, he stated that those not represented in powerful Prussian circles were represented as chafing under their own constraints and against the autocracy of the Kaiser: "If I may be allowed to form an opinion it would be that, in South Germany at least, the tendency of the Kaiser to ever increase his autocratic power in the State is not appreciated by the mass of the people, neither has His Majesty gained in prestige by doing so during the past year, nor has the confidence of the public in his judgment been augmented."²⁰² Following the *Daily Telegraph* interview, Sir Francis Bertie described the backlash against Wilhelm: "All the pro-Germans here have been shaken and shocked by the impulsive indiscretion of the Emperor; they doubt his sanity; and as for the German people, they have been stirred into a greater sense of responsibility, and are taking the Emperor in hand for themselves."²⁰³ This unrest would increase as the period went on: "The Zabern incident²⁰⁴ has brought the military and civil, or in other words the aristocratic

²⁰¹ "Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, Jan 12th, 1907," in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 9.

²⁰² "Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, Jan 12th, 1907," in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 6.

²⁰³ "Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie, Dec 1st, 1908," in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 225. Sir Francis Bertie was Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1894 to 1903, Ambassador at Rome from 1903 to 1905, and Ambassador at Paris from 1905 to 1918 (biographical information located on p. 338 of Vol. 1).

²⁰⁴ The Zabern incident was a public outcry over racist comments made by a young German officer in the province of Alsace-Lorraine in November of 1913. The officer's comments drew out large protest crowds, which led to suppression by the civil authorities and the military. The incident served to further reduce the Kaiser's popularity as he blindly backed the German military.

and democratic elements in the Empire, into sharp conflict, at the moment.”²⁰⁵ As these passages demonstrate, the British Foreign Office believed that the German people were straining against the bonds of autocracy, and that the stability of Wilhelm’s state apparatus was becoming increasingly imperiled.

Thus far, this chapter has examined the person of the Emperor and the structure of German society. There were also elements of this British caricature that applied to the German people as a whole, and the remainder of this chapter will focus on these elements of the German national and racial character. These selections illuminate the British perception of the German mentalité and cultural makeup, and how German racial peculiarities explained Britain’s difficulties in dealing with them. All of these collective personality traits were also attributed to the Emperor, and this reinforces the importance of British perceptions of the personality of the Emperor by British elites when formulating diplomatic policy toward Germany. In describing Germany’s restlessness and unease as a nation and a race, a quality already extensively developed in caricatures of Wilhelm, the later Foreign Office documents intensified this sentiment. In 1914 Sir Maurice de Bunsen, the British Minister at Lisbon wrote: “[The German Ambassador] has more than once described to me the position of Germany as that of an island threatened to be swamped with the rising tide of revolution which flows in upon it from the East and from the West. In his eyes Germany stands for the maintenance on the Continent of the idea of law and order.”²⁰⁶ The singularity of Germany as the principle disruptive force in

²⁰⁵ “Sir V. Corbett to Sir Edward Grey, Jan 13th, 1914,” in *British Documents, Volume 10*, 730. Sir Vincent Corbett was the British Minister at Munich and Stuttgart from 1910 to 1914 (biographical information located on p. 844).

²⁰⁶ “Sir M. de Bunsen to Sir Edward Grey, Mar 13th, 1914,” in *British Documents, Volume 10*, 764. Maurice de Bunsen was the British Minister at Lisbon from 1905 to 1906, the Ambassador at Madrid from 1906 to 1913, and at Vienna from 1913 to 1914 (biographical information located on p. 842).

Europe was mentioned in a speech by the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Cranborne, in 1902: “Germany appeared to be the one disturbing Power of Europe.”²⁰⁷ *The Times*, during the Navy Scare of 1909, wrote that “Germany...seems to exact something more. They [seem to have] pretensions to be treated as the dominant Power of Europe and to treat others as ‘subordinate allies.’ The feeling there is against her in other countries has sprung, to a great extent, from her supposed reluctance to accept this position of an equal amongst equals.”²⁰⁸ This spoke to the perception that Germany was incapable of being satiated or of stabilizing itself, but that its restlessness and pretentiousness was somehow inherent to its national character.

Expanding on this restlessness was an extremity of temperament, commented on by Sir Francis Lascelles in 1906: “[Britons] complain that the German temperament is at times – without reason – too enthusiastic, and at other times too cold.”²⁰⁹ Therefore the German people from the British point of view suffered from the same bipolar temperament that characterized their Emperor.

As with Wilhelm, the most salient and pervasive quality ascribed to the German people and German nation was its puerile immaturity. Sir Eyre Crowe somewhat sympathetically narrated the advent of this quality in the Germans:

With ‘blood and iron’ Prussia had forged her position in the councils of the Great Powers of Europe...The young empire found opened to its energy a whole world outside Europe, of which it had previously hardly had the opportunity to become more than dimly conscious...The colonies and foreign possessions of England

²⁰⁷ “The Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Cranborne of Rochester, July 3rd, 1902” in Hansard’s *Parliamentary Papers, Series 4* (London: Reuter’s Telegram Co., 1908), Volume 110, 714.

²⁰⁸ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, January 9th, 1909, p. 9 col. 4.

²⁰⁹ “Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, August 20th, 1906,” in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 370.

more especially were seen to give to that country a recognized and enviable status in a world where the name of Germany, if mentioned at all, excited no particular interest. The effect of this discovery upon the German mind was curious and instructive...Here in a field of portentous magnitude, dwarfing altogether the proportions of European countries, others, who had been perhaps rather looked down upon as comparatively smaller folk, were at home and commanded, whilst Germany was at best received but as an honoured guest. Here was distinct inequality, with a heavy bias in favour of the maritime and colonizing Powers. Such a state of things was not welcome to German patriotic pride. Germany had won her place as one of the leading, if not, in fact, the foremost Power on the European continent. But over and beyond the European Great Powers there seemed to stand the 'World Powers.' It was at once clear that Germany must become a 'World Power.'²¹⁰

This passage richly described Sir Eyre's analysis of how the German mentalité had been constructed. The new empire was young and vibrant, bristling with energy and vigor. The nation's potential for greater power and influence bred ambition in its national leaders. This had the effect of immediately making Germany jealous of what its "older" fellow nations had, and this especially was true of those nations with colonial possessions. Therefore, Germany was, in adolescent fashion, in a frenzied hurry to "grow up." This demonstrates how the British Foreign Office could have convinced itself that it was effectively dealing with a nation of children. This German frustration over not occupying their proper place as the premier Great Power was also expressed by Mr. Cartwright in 1906: "German interest had to yield to those of Great Britain because Germany was not at present in a position to dispute with her rival the sovereignty of the seas. This feeling of impotency, though not often expressed in official circles, has sunk deeply into the hearts of the German people and it has been ably encouraged by the Navy League and other such like patriotic associations."²¹¹ The notion of Germany as an

²¹⁰ "Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, Jan 1st, 1907," in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 404.

²¹¹ "Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, August 20th, 1906," in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 372.

aimless state was indirectly touched upon by an analysis of German policy by Sir Eyre Crowe in 1907:

There is then, perhaps, another way of looking at the problem: It might be suggested that the great German design is in reality no more than the expression of a vague, confused, and unpractical statesmanship, not fully realizing its own drift. A mind and temperament distinguishing for good or evil the present Ruler of Germany may not improbably be largely responsible for the erratic, domineering, and often frankly aggressive spirit which is recognizable at present in every branch of German public life, not merely in the region of foreign policy; and that this spirit has called forth those manifestations of discontent and alarm both at home and abroad with which the world is becoming familiar; that, in fact, Germany does not really know what she is driving at, and that all her excursions and alarms, all her underhand intrigues do not contribute to the steady working out of a well conceived and relentlessly followed system of policy, because they do not really form part of any such system.²¹²

This passage explicitly blamed the heavy hand of the Kaiser for Germany's foreign policy problems, in that his own erratic behavior created a constant atmosphere of chaos within the German government. These qualities had trickled down to every level of the German government, so that the bureaucratic system that the Kaiser oversaw had become molded by his personality. Therefore, the whole country was being controlled by leaders who had no well-defined system of governance or foreign policy. This was indicative of British exasperation in trying to deal with Germany. Sir Eyre was essentially saying that there was no point in trying to understand the Germans and their motivations, because they could not be engaged with as rational adults. The imagery of a child-like race was more explicit in *The Times* of 1896: "It is useless to tell [Germany] that it is only a nation brought up in liberal institutions, individuals armed with the spirit of enterprise, perseverance, and self-reliance, that will accomplish great things, and that Germany, sadly wanting in these qualities, must *grow up* and get ripe before

²¹² "Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, Jan 1st, 1907," in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 415.

they can emulate the English [italics added].”²¹³ In addition to typical British condescension, this statement implied a teleological faith in what had gotten the Britons so far, and preached to the Germans that the British path to hegemony could not be properly circumvented. The Germans, according to *The Times*, were required to take a more conservative path to national greatness rather than their own clumsy, reckless, and irresponsible track. Moreover, the British example provided the Germans with an illustration of the proper way of doing this.

Even more telling was the parental attitude adopted by many officials in how best to deal with the German “child.” Selections starting in 1907 illustrate this, especially this one by Sir Eyre Crowe, after the first Moroccan Crisis (in which the German Emperor attempted to assert a German stake in Morocco at the expense of French interests in 1905) and the intensification of the naval arms race:

There is one road which, if past experience is any guide to the future, will most certainly not lead to any permanent improvement of relations with any Power, least of all Germany, and which must therefore be abandoned: that is the road paved with graceful British concessions- concessions made without any conviction either of their justice or of their being set off by equivalent counter-services. The vain hopes that in this manner Germany can be ‘conciliated’ and made more friendly must be definitely given up...There will be no surer or quicker way to win the respect of the German Government and of the German nation.²¹⁴

Sir Eyre Crowe in this passage argued that treating the Germans as children would be the quickest and most painless way to get them to behave. Just as children needed limits, so did the Germans, and attempts at appeasing every German whim would only lead to more demands from that country. Mr. M. de C. Findlay, the British Minister at Dresden, asserted during the Navy Scare of 1909 that this policy of standing up to Germany had borne itself out

²¹³ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, January 18th, 1896, p. 9 col. 6.

²¹⁴ “Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, Jan 1st, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 419-420.

and should be relied upon in the future: “It is obvious that the fear of British Naval Power must recently have had a considerable effect in restraining German combativeness within certain limits...I feel sure that you will agree that it is only when Germany realizes that it is impossible for her to attain to a position of even temporary and accidental Naval equality with Great Britain that she will be brought to seriously consider the question of a limitation of armaments.”²¹⁵ Yet another excerpt by Sir Edward Grey ascribed this quality to the “Prussian mentality,” which “is such that to be on really good terms with it one must be able to deal with it as an equal.”²¹⁶ These three examples show how the British characterization of the Germans as inherently childish played a direct role in their attitudes toward dealing with them. Children are not to be indulged, and do not have a clear understanding of their own best interests. This whole passage is telling for the condescension and situational simplification shown by the British, which seemed to provide justification for them standing firm against the Germans “on principle.” In this vein, *Punch* published a caricature of “Germany” in 1911 (see Figure 6²¹⁷). In this drawing, a fully-grown German soldier cried like a child, lamenting the illusory threats all around him. Though he completely out-sized his surroundings, he was not satisfied that he was safe and secure. This highlighted “immaturity” as a part of the national character of Germany, and reflected the *Punch* publisher’s belief that dealing with Germany could only be effectively done by conceptualizing the Germans as a child-like people. This child needed limits, and it was therefore in Britain’s best interests to stand up to their German cousins.

²¹⁵ “Mr. Findlay to Sir Edward Grey, March 31st, 1909,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 259. Mr. Findlay was the British Minister Resident at the Courts of Saxony and Saxe-Colburg-Gotha at Dresden (biographical information located on p. 840).

²¹⁶ “Sir Edward Grey to Sir R. Rodd, Jan 13th, 1913,” in *British Documents, Volume 10*, 663.

²¹⁷ Unknown Artist, *Punch, Volume 141*, 171. This drawing was published on September 6th, 1911.

Linked with Germany's childishness was its jealousy of what other nations had, and this was presented as Germany's principle motive. This was expressed by Sir Eyre Crowe: "It would therefore, be but natural that the power of a State supreme at sea should inspire universal jealousy and fear, and be ever exposed to the danger of being overthrown by a general combination of the world."²¹⁸ Sir Eyre was sweepingly claiming that Britain's enemies were simply coveting what the British had, and that therefore their grievances were baseless. Mr. Cartwright worded the same sentiment differently: "Everything which in any way redounds to the credit of Great Britain arouses in [Germany] what must appear to most persons a somewhat puerile manifestation of jealousy and envy."²¹⁹ This was most extensively written of by editorials in *The Times*:

The common-sense view of the matter is plain enough. England, by the intelligence, pluck, and energy of her sons, has planted her flag in the most desirable corners of the globe. Her commerce is matchless in its volume and universality, and her wealth is in consequence almost unbounded. For the last 20 years Germany has been dreaming of a colonial empire and made some attempts at it, especially in Africa. She had worked hard to develop her commerce in Europe and beyond the seas, and to attain wealth and prosperity. But everywhere, or almost everywhere, England is in the field, and bars the way...If you ask me what are the causes of that German hatred, and other European hatreds, I venture to suggest that the first cause is jealousy, the second cause is jealousy, and the third cause is jealousy.²²⁰

This jealousy was perceived as not being exclusively levied at England, but at any nation that gained favor over Germany, as reported on by an editorial in *The Times*: "The origin of the

²¹⁸ "Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, Jan 1st, 1907," in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 402.

²¹⁹ "Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey, March 13th, 1907," in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 15.

²²⁰ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, January 11th, 1896, p. 7 col. 5.

present storm cloud [the First Moroccan Crisis] lies no deeper than the jealousy and irritation of Germany at the favourable position now occupied by France.”²²¹

Compounding these other difficulties, but not breaking with them thematically, the Germans were believed to be insincere in their foreign dealings. Sir Edward Grey wrote about this in 1909: “The Germans are a very difficult people; one never knows with whom one is dealing; sometimes one mind seems to give the impulse, and sometimes another, and they tolerate or encourage mischief makers in their service...If the Germans would only deal with us as we deal with them there would be no difficulties.”²²² He wrote roughly the same thing in 1913: “One of our difficulties in past years has been that we never know what Germany really wants.”²²³ *Punch* touched on this theme of Germany’s duplicitous nature in 1908 (see Figure 7²²⁴). In this portrayal, “Peace” implored the Kaiser to back up his claims of harmonious intentions with action. The Kaiser looked insulted by this response, which intersects with themes of German childishness. “Peace” looked frustrated, as if she had done all that she could to bring Germany into the fold and now held her hands up in bewilderment and exhaustion. The sentiments expressed in this drawing reinforce the sentiments expressed by the earlier passages quoted of Foreign Office officials, in that they expressed frustration over what they believed was the duplicitous nature of German foreign policy.

²²¹ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, April 8th, 1905, p. 5 col. 4.

²²² “Sir Edward Grey to Sir E. Goschen, March 4th, 1909,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 237. Sir William E. Goschen was the British Ambassador at Vienna from 1905 to 1906, and the Ambassador at Berlin from 1908-1914 (biographical information located on p. 805).

²²³ “Sir Edward Grey to Sir R. Rodd, Jan 13th, 1913,” in *British Documents, Volume 10*, 663.

²²⁴ Unknown Artist, *Punch*, Volume 135, 227. This drawing was published on September 23rd, 1908.

Contrasted with the press in England, the perception of the British Foreign Office was that the German press was being used by the state for fear-mongering and to galvanize its natural militarist spirit. As Sir Edward Grey reported in 1907, "The Press Bureau in Berlin has always been an obstacle to good relations between us. A Press Bureau is used to make mischief, and some German Diplomats have done a good deal of mischief making."²²⁵ As they had with numerous other instruments of their policy, the Germans had bungled their attempts at manipulation, and were slowly losing the allegiance of their populace, which also harkened back to the unbalanced structural nature of German society that favored the Prussians and their associated forces of bland efficiency. Sir Frank Lascelles commented on the evolution of common consumption of Press articles during his tenure in Germany:

When I first came to Berlin, eleven years ago, I was told that the attitude of an ordinary German in reading a newspaper was to ask whether the statements contained in it were official. If the answer was in the affirmative, he would read it with attention and respect; if in the negative he would attach but little importance to what he read. Now, anything published by authority is received with suspicion and closely criticized, and constant attacks have been made in newspapers, which might be expected to support the authorities, not only against the action of the Government, but also against the person of the Emperor. The first manifestations of this change came under my notice during the sittings of the conference at Algeciras, when I was astonished to hear people in society, to whose individual opinion no great weight was attached, openly criticizing the action of the Government.²²⁶

This fed into the general perception that German society was approaching a crisis between parliamentary cosmopolitan forces and the forces of reaction.

Like the Kaiser who embodied them, the German people were believed to be inherently imbued with a fighting spirit, and were apt to be tempted to use it. This appeared in the

²²⁵ "Sir Edward Grey to Sir R. Rodd, Jan 13th, 1913," in *British Documents, Volume 10*, 663.

²²⁶ Sir Frank Lascelles, "Extract from General Report on Germany for 1906," in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 433. This was written on May 24th, 1907.

language used to describe them: “They have constantly and for some years past made use of...threats and blandishments.”²²⁷ Their every action was seen as being caustic: “It is not so much what they do as the nasty way they do it which is so annoying.”²²⁸ Sir William E. Goschen wrote in 1910: “We know that the phrase ‘Balance of Power’ stinks in their nostrils. In fact they have told me so. They want the Hegemony of Europe and to neutralize the only thing which has prevented them from getting it, viz. England’s naval strength. They want an understanding which would have that effect.”²²⁹ This also reinforced the notion of German imbalance, again calling forth images of the aimless, teetering nation incapable of settling down. One of the most interesting passages was retold from a conversation had between Sir C. Spring-Rice, Secretary of the British Embassy at St. Petersburg, with a visiting American professor studying in Germany, who said that:

[At the Berlin University] it was no longer the Bismarckian doctrine that force was stronger than justice, but a new doctrine that force *was* justice...[These opinions] are the opinions of that class which has been in the past, and which is still, dominant in politics: and what from his point of view is the most important aspect of this question, the bureaucracy has gained complete ascendancy over that body of professors whose enlightenment and independence has been so long the glory of Germany...He added that what struck him more painfully was the fact that where ignorance did not prevail, he had often found in its stead a sort of dull acquiescence.²³⁰

As represented here, the problem was not that all Germans were incapable of controlling their martial spirit, but rather that they were unwilling to curtail the martial spirit of others in their

²²⁷ “Memorandum by Mr. Bertie, Nov 9th, 1901,” in *British Documents, Volume 2*, 73.

²²⁸ “Sir E. Goschen to Sir C. Hardinge, Jan 28th, 1910,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 437.

²²⁹ “Sir E. Goschen to Sir A. Nicolson, October 22nd, 1910,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 536. Sir Arthur Nicolson was the British Ambassador at Madrid from 1905 to 1906, at St. Petersburg from 1906 to 1910, was the British Representative at the Algericas Conference in 1906, and the Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs from 1910 to 1916 (biographical information located on p. 814).

²³⁰ “Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey, June 5th, 1911,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 639. Sir C. Spring-Rice was the Secretary of British Embassy at St. Petersburg from 1903 to 1906, the Minister at Tehran from 1906 to 1908, and at Stockholm from 1908 to 1913.

population, and also that the leadership of the nation was overwhelmingly associated with the latter type, as Edward Goschen wrote in 1913: "There is still a war party, or let us call it a military party with whom past events still rankle and who are unfortunately rather strongly represented in the immediate entourage of the Emperor."²³¹ This also contributed to the notion that the Prussian mentality was ruling the country and suppressing the more sophisticated elements of German society.

There were also fantastic qualities to occasional German utterances, some of which must have particularly heightened fears among the British that good relations with Germany were impossible, as least in the way that these were reported on and presented by the media and the foreign office. Sir Frank Lascelles in 1899 wrote of his suspicion of Kaiser Wilhelm: "During the course of the evening His Majesty honoured me with further conversation, in which he alluded to the large sums of money which had been sent from England to bribe the American press to attack Germany. I replied that I had no knowledge of this, but even if it were the case, I did not suppose that His Majesty really considered that Her Majesty's Government were responsible."²³² In a later Memorandum by J.A.C. Tilley, Assistant Clerk for the British Foreign Office, he wrote that "the strong belief entertained by the German Emperor and Government that England was about to attack Germany."²³³ This paranoia was also used to characterize German dissatisfaction with their situation, as written by Sir Frank Lascelles in 1907: "There is no doubt that there is a great feeling of 'nervosity' in Germany just now, to be explained perhaps by the fact that the Germans have an uneasy feeling that their country does

²³¹ "Sir E. Goschen to Sir A. Nicolson, Jan 24th, 1913," in *British Documents, Volume 9, Part 2*, 445.

²³² "Sir F. Lascelles to the Marquess of Salisbury, May 26th, 1899," in *British Documents, Volume 1*, 118.

²³³ "Memorandum by Mr. JAC Tilley," in *British Documents, Volume 1*, 337. J.A.C. Tilley was an assistant clerk at the British Foreign Office from 1904-1906 (biographical information located on p. 346).

not occupy the position in Europe which it used to and ought to hold, and this is quite true. But the German, as a rule cannot admit that this can be possibly due to any fault of their own [sic], but can only be the consequence of the machination of some wicked man.”²³⁴

In a further attempt to diagnose the specific reason that Germany seemed to exhibit this paranoia, *The Times* accused the Germans of collective mental illness: “There is a well-known form of mental disease called the ‘mania of persecutions,’ in which the sufferer, though he may display exceptional intelligence, and even exceptional judgment, upon all other subjects, is convinced that he is the victim of impossible conspiracies. The Germans who honestly share such apprehensions [about England’s alleged hostility] must be supposed to be affected by a somewhat similar malady.”²³⁵ The author of this *Times* editorial expressed the most extreme form of frustration with the Germans. Whereas others had attempted to conceptualize the Germans as children for the purposes of dealing with them, this author went further and accused them all of being crazy.

Having articulated the flaws, often severe, attributed to the German national and racial character by the British, it is important to also look on those things which the British admired about the Germans, which nuances the portrait further, and which created an exacerbated sense of confusion and unease among the British. Sir Eyre Crowe admired the German willingness to self sacrifice: “In no other country is there a conviction so deeply rooted in the very body and soul of all classes of the population that the preservation of national rights and the realization of national ideals rest absolutely on the readiness of every citizen in the last

²³⁴ “Sir F. Lascelles to Sir Edward Grey, April 19th, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 28.

²³⁵ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, January 9th, 1909, p. 9 col. 4.

resort to stake himself and his State on their assertions and vindication.”²³⁶ Later in the same document he ascribed to the Germans a “purity of national purpose, fervor of... patriotism, [a] depth of... religious feeling, [a] high standard of competency, and the perspicuous honesty of... administration, the successful pursuit of every branch of public and scientific activity, and the elevated character of... philosophy, art, and ethics.”²³⁷ He credited German civilization as having improved European civilization by its very existence:

It cannot for a moment be questioned that the mere existence and healthy activity of a powerful Germany is an undoubted blessing to the world. Germany represents in a pre-eminent degree those highest qualities and virtues of good citizenship, in the largest sense of the word, which constitute the glory and triumph of modern civilization. The world would be immeasurably poorer if everything that is specifically associated with German character, German ideas, and German methods were to cease having power and influence.²³⁸

Therefore the Germans had national zeal, a good work ethic, a tireless quest for efficiency, and a willingness to self-sacrifice. All of these qualities were positive, and the implication of these quoted passages was that the British could find something to emulate in the German example.

Parliamentary members also found much to admire in German civilization. They were specifically interested in emulating the German educational system in order that Britain not fall behind as a society, as shown by this excerpt from a speech given by Mr. Haldane of Haddingtonshire in 1902: “You have only to turn to Germany to find half-a-dozen cases in which the training of experts and the turning out of young experts has made a difference of an equally striking character in other industries.”²³⁹ Later that year, the Duke of Devonshire expressed

²³⁶ “Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, Jan 1st, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 404.

²³⁷ “Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, Jan 1st, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 404.

²³⁸ “Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe, Jan 1st, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 3*, 404.

²³⁹ “Mr. Haldane of Haddingtonshire, May 5th, 1902,” in *Parliamentary Papers, Series 4*, Volume 107, 706. He was a liberal politician in parliament from 1885-1911, and he later served as Secretary of State for War from 1905-1912.

similar sentiments: “It was not surprising, in view of these [German] efforts in education, that the industry and commerce of Germany should be forging ahead.”²⁴⁰ *The Times* echoed similar adulation of German efficiency and effectiveness, ascribing to them “painstaking industry and thoroughness,”²⁴¹ a “spirit of enterprise,”²⁴² and granted them “continual laudation of the thoroughness of [German] methods.”²⁴³

Even the Emperor, the epitome of the worst aspects of the German race, was not perceived as being bereft of all good qualities, as Count de Salis, Councillor of the British Embassy at Berlin, noted in 1907: “Even in the worst days of anti-German feeling when the Emperor was looked upon in England as the embodiment of all that was hostile, there was still a subcurrent of admiration for the manliness of his personality.”²⁴⁴ As this quote demonstrates, there was another side to the boundless energy exhibited by the Kaiser and his people. While this same quality was tied in with their erratic behavior, it also positively placed the German people in an enviable racial position. Theirs was a virile people, and the Count de Salis found something to admire in that.

How the British contrasted themselves with the Germans is noteworthy in that it illustrates the qualities that the British aspired to, and the qualities that the British believed that they possessed. Sir William E. Goschen in 1909 attributed the British with “sound good sense, tenacity of purpose, confident strength and eminent achievements in all spheres of life

²⁴⁰ “Duke of Devonshire, December 13th, 1902,” in *Parliamentary Papers, Series 4*, Volume 116, 1082. He was a liberal unionist politician who was a MP from 1891 to 1908 for West Derbyshire.

²⁴¹ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, April 23rd, 1906, p. 16 col. 1.

²⁴² Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, July 10th, 1911, p. 5 col. 1.

²⁴³ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, February 8th, 1909, p. 9 col. 4.

²⁴⁴ “Count de Salis to Sir Edward Grey, November 22, 1907,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 105. Count J.F.C. de Salis was the Councillor of the British Embassy at Berlin from 1906 to 1911, and the Minister at Cetinje from 1911 to 1916 (biographical information located on p. 817).

they heartily and honestly admire.”²⁴⁵ Sir A. Nicolson commented on British steadfastness in a dispatch to Sir Edward Grey in 1910: “England is regarded as the exemplar of sober, moderate, and sane progress, and it would have caused a shock to her well-wishers and admirers here if she had started off on a headlong course of breaking abruptly with all her traditions and her past.”²⁴⁶ *The Times*, while expressing shock over the Jameson Raid in 1896, still took time to note that the British were un-phased by the negative international reaction:

The sudden explosion of unprovoked hostility against this country in the United States and in Germany has, we are proud to think, neither disturbed the composure of the British nation nor deflected the policy of the British Government. Our people have not minimized the gravity of these menaces from two great and kindred Powers...but we have not been thrown off our balance by the disclosure of unsuspected jealousy and rancor.²⁴⁷

At the outset of the Boer War, *The Times* published a similar ode to the stiff British upper lip: “The English people- being, I imagine, rather a proud than a vainglorious race, too strong to be hyper-sensitive, and successful enough not to feel tempted to retaliate with injustice- will patiently await the return of your countrymen to a more equitable frame of mind.”²⁴⁸ This *Times* editorial author was essentially congratulating the British people for not letting their precarious position get their hackles up, and also attempted to reassure readers that this quality would see the British people through their troubles.

Collectively, this portrayal of the Germans is of a people possessing great vitality, intelligence, charm, resolution, and efficiency, but beset with a flawed societal structure, akin to a child in puberty that in unwieldy fashion tries to come to grips with its rapid,

²⁴⁵ “Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey, February 12th, 1909,” in *British Documents, Volume 6*, 232.

²⁴⁶ “Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey, February 9th, 1910,” in *British Documents, Volume 9, Part 1*, 120.

²⁴⁷ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, January 7th, 1896, p. 9 col. 3.

²⁴⁸ Unknown Author, *The Times of London*, October 16th, 1899, p. 11 col. 3.

uncomfortable growth. The vocal elements of the German governmental establishment, the Prussians, were smothering the more pacific elements of German society and suppressing its creative ones. Adrift in uncertainty and without a proper knowledge of their way in the world, the Germans acted rashly, unpredictably, and with a penchant for bellicosity that was characteristic of their overtly offensive and paranoid nature. The kernel of all of this was the German Emperor, who by virtue of his personality was adept at brazenly exhibiting all of these characteristics, and who also by virtue of his absolute authority prevented a culture of cooler political heads from prevailing in Germany.

There are two sides of this caricature. The faults that the British ascribed to the Germans were indicative of what the British believed distinguished their race from the German one. The British believed that they did not possess the same character flaws. The Germans were rash; the British were cautious. The Germans were militaristic; the British were peace-loving and fair-minded. The Germans were prone to outbursts of emotion; the British were calm and thoughtful. The restlessness of Germany was something to be feared, but was also something to reassure Britons about their own restlessness and insecurity because they did not possess it to the same extent as their German cousins. This was expressed explicitly in the British characterizations of themselves. Beset with worry, unease, and feelings of insecurity, the British pointed to the Germans as the extreme personification of restlessness, and the subsequent cause of their own. They reminded themselves of the timeless British virtues that had carried their civilization to its high achievements. They appealed to these stereotypical virtues to continue to carry them through the current whirlwind of uncertainty. British fears about their own decline also prompted them to take action to defend themselves. While they

were accusing their German neighbors of destabilizing the tranquility of Europe, they were rapidly arming against them. While they were conducting this arms race with Germany, they sought out symbols of strength to reassure them about their own security. The remaining chapters will explore specifically how they used the Navy to do this, through reminders of past strength, representations of current strength, and when war finally came and the fleet was employed, representations of the use of that strength.



ON TOUR.

(Tangier, March 31.)

KAISER WILHELM (as the Moor of Potsdam) sings:—
“‘UNTER DEN LINDEN’—ALWAYS AT HOME,
‘UNDER THE LIME-LIGHT’ WHEREVER I ROAM!”

Figure 1

Kaiser Wilhelm (as the Moor of Potsdam) sings: -
“‘Unter Den Linden’ – Always at Home,
‘Under the Limelight’ Wherever I Roam!”



MELODRAMA IN THE BALTIC.

CZAR (*anxiously*). "I TRUST WE ARE NOT OBSERVED."
KAISER (*aside*). "IT WON'T BE MY FAULT IF WE'RE NOT."

Figure 2

Melodrama in the Baltic

Czar (*anxiously*): "I trust we are not observed."

Kaiser (*aside*): "It won't be my fault if we are not."

7
6, 1888



Supplement to "The Nation," of the Eastern Chamber, September 15, 1890.
The New Rake's Progress.

L'ENFANT TERRIBLE.
CHORUS IN THE STERN. "DON'T GO ON LIKE THAT—OR YOU'LL UPSET US ALL!!"

May 10, 1890.

. The Kaiser begins to alarm his fellow Rulers.

Figure 3

L'Enfant Terrible

Chorus in the Stern: "Don't Go On Like That – You'll Upset us All!"

Subscript: The Kaiser begins to alarm his fellow Rulers.



THE STORY OF FIDGETY WILHELM.

(Up-to date Version of "Struwwelpeter.")

"LET ME SEE IF WILHELM CAN
BE A LITTLE GENTLEMAN;
LET ME SEE IF HE IS ABLE
TO SIT STILL FOR ONCE AT TABLE!"

"BUT FIDGETY WILL
HE WON'T SIT STILL."

JUST LIKE ANY BUCKING HORSE,
"WILHELM! WE ARE GETTING CROSS!"

Figure 4

The Story of Fidgety Wilhelm

"Let me see if Wilhelm can be a little gentleman; let me see if he is able to sit still for once at table!" "But Fidgety Will He won't sit still." Just like any bucking horse, "Wilhelm! We are getting cross!"



AN UNREHEARSED EFFECT.

GERMAN KAISER (as Conjuror). "AND NOW, GENTLEMEN, FOR THE BENEFIT OF MY ENGLISH FRIENDS IN THE AUDIENCE, I WILL, FROM THIS SIMPLE PAPER, PRODUCE THE DOVE OF PEACE."

"HALLO! WRONG ANIMAL. MY MISTAKE."

Figure 5

German Kaiser (as Conjuror): "And now gentlemen, for the benefit of my English friends in the audience, I will, from this simple paper (the Daily Telegraphy interview), produce the Dove of Peace."

"Hallo! Wrong animal. My mistake."



MISUNDERSTOOD.

GERMANY. "NOBODY LOVES ME—AND THEY ALL WANT TO TRAMPLE ON ME!"

Figure 6

Misunderstood

Germany: "Nobody loves me – and they all want to trample on me!"



“ISOLATION.”

PEACE (*attending the Inter-Parliamentary Congress at Berlin*). “EVERYBODY ELSE SEEMS TO BE MY FRIEND; WHY DO YOU STAND ALOOF?”
GERMAN KAISER. “BUT HAVEN’T I ALWAYS SAID THAT I WAS YOUR FRIEND?”
PEACE. “YES; BUT CAN’T YOU DO SOMETHING TO PROVE IT?”

Figure 7

“Isolation”

Peace (attending the Inter-Parliamentary Congress at Berlin).
“Everybody else seems to be my friend; why do you stand aloof?”
German Kaiser: “But haven’t I always said that I was your friend?”
Peace: “Yes; but can’t you do something to prove it?”

CHAPTER THREE

A HEROIC TRADITION

On October 21st, 1905 almost a million Britons made a pilgrimage to Trafalgar Square to honor the memory of one of their greatest heroes.²⁴⁹ The Trafalgar Centenary celebration had been spearheaded by the Navy League, who used the occasion as an opportunity to bring to the forefront naval matters in the aftermath of the embarrassment of the Boer War, which saw a heightened interest in heroic emulation as a means of re-bolstering belief in the strength of the British race.²⁵⁰ In preparation for the 100th anniversary of Trafalgar, Nelson's monument in Trafalgar Square was decorated on an unprecedented scale (see Figure 8²⁵¹). These decorations included evergreen ropes on Nelson's column, and a rope of leaves reaching up to Nelson's statue at the top.²⁵² Lines were rigged to the column so that Nelson's last signal to his fleet could be raised at the appropriate time.²⁵³ On the day of the celebration, at 8am, the signal flags were raised. Wreaths were laid at the base of the monument, including one that had been brought in from as far away as New Zealand, which had been refrigerated during its long journey from the dominion in order to preserve it. David Shannon describes the column of Nelson's monument on Trafalgar Day as having been "transformed into the very heart of the British Empire, and Nelson stood proud, above it all. Ordinary people had been whipped up into a patriotic fervour – they just had to make the pilgrimage to Trafalgar Square. And this was

²⁴⁹ David Shannon, *Nelson Remembered: The Nelson Centenary 1905* (Sydney: Broadside Maritime Publications, 2007), 19.

²⁵⁰ Bertrand Taithe, "Remembering Victory – Commemorating Defeat? The Franco-British Trafalgar Centenary in 1905" in *History, Commemoration, and National Preoccupation: Trafalgar 1805-2005*, ed. Holger Hoocke, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 63.

²⁵¹ Reprinted from Shannon, 18.

²⁵² Shannon, 19.

²⁵³ Shannon, 19.

despite the poor weather prediction. Although bright sunshine was forecast, so too were heavy showers towards the end of the afternoon, but this did not seem to dampen spirits or attendance.”²⁵⁴ The main part of the ceremony occurred in the afternoon, and it took the form of a religious ceremony by Bishop Welldon of Westminster Abbey, concurrent with the ceremonial lowering to half-mast of the Union Jack. At the end of the Bishop’s semi-sermon the Union Jack was raised to full height, and a recitation of Kipling’s *Recessional* followed, which prompted the crowds to “applaud... with the utmost heartiness.”²⁵⁵ The crowds lingered on and were joined by more and more of their countrymen until after midnight, when the throngs of people began to dissipate.²⁵⁶ They collected fallen leaves from the evergreen rope and kept them as souvenirs. The vast numbers of people had to be controlled by police, who arranged a pedestrian traffic system to allow the maximum number of people to pass by and read the wreaths at the column.²⁵⁷

While the Trafalgar Centenary in 1905 was the Navy League’s finest achievement in grandstanding thus far, the organization had been agitating for increased naval expenditures since 1894, coming into existence after a highly publicized Parliamentary debate over the naval estimates that year. Initially it grew slowly, as the naval threat posed by the French was not sufficient to compel large portions of the population to join. By 1901, the Navy League only had 14,000 members.²⁵⁸ Yet the rising specter of German naval power caused its membership to

²⁵⁴ Shannon, 19.

²⁵⁵ Shannon, 20.

²⁵⁶ Shannon, 21.

²⁵⁷ Shannon, 21.

²⁵⁸ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 370.

explode. By 1914, its membership rolls had swelled to 100,000.²⁵⁹ It was led by “aristocrats, bishops, retired admiral and other notables,” and such intellectuals as Kipling, Spencer Wilkinson, and Arnold-Foster lent it their support.²⁶⁰

The League drew most of its support from the middle class. It also encouraged its members to proselytize to the working classes, distributing literature and advertising the Navy League to workers as they commuted by train to and from their factories,²⁶¹ but these recruiting drives did not significantly diversify the social demographics of the League.²⁶² They also lobbied to children in schools. Headmasters were offered positions of prominence in the League in exchange for the right to have League members speak to their students. Lord Beresford was among those naval officers tapped for this purpose.²⁶³ The Navy League also directly lobbied Parliament, forcing them to go on record as to their stance on naval expansion issues. Paul Kennedy argues that: “It was a brave candidate for parliamentary election who did not say ‘yes’ to the Navy League’s standard question of whether he was for the maritime supremacy of Great Britain.” With dramatic increases in membership and a wide scope of mandates that the Navy League took on, much of the material associated with naval remembrance was either generated by or at least enhanced by this pressure group.²⁶⁴

Chapter Two explored the cultural meaning behind what was perceived to be the main foreign threat to Great Britain in this period. This chapter will now begin to explore the ways in

²⁵⁹ Kennedy, 370.

²⁶⁰ Kennedy, 370.

²⁶¹ Kennedy, 374.

²⁶² Kennedy, 382.

²⁶³ Kennedy, 375.

²⁶⁴ Kennedy, 385.

which cultural manifestations of the Navy, fueled by the growing resources and effectiveness of the Navy League, served to provide a sense of pride and security, and a pathway to galvanizing the public toward increased efforts at military preparedness. Specifically, this chapter will explore how the memory of a glorious naval past affected the British people. The act of remembering certain aspects of Britain's naval tradition involved making choices about which things to remember and how to remember them. Those things that were deemed worthy of remembering were those things that were perceived to be applicable to contemporary society. Elites and Navy League writers who called forth these memories through popular writings, speeches, and other forms of discourse believed them to be of use to their fellow Britons.

The focal points of naval memory that this chapter will explore are the repulsion of the Spanish Armada, the Battle of Trafalgar, and the naval heroes Sir Francis Drake and Horatio Nelson. Drake and Nelson respectively represented the origin and culmination of Britain's naval hegemony. Drake was the aggressive, uncivilized British naval prototype. Nelson was the thoughtful, civilized British naval archetype, the highest incarnation of British naval mastery.

This is an attempt to get at what the memory of Nelson, Drake, and the battles they won meant to the British people. What did Britons think of when they saw pictures of their naval heroes? What did the state and the church want people to take away from the experience of remembering these great men and great battles? The answers to these questions reinforce the sense of anxiety that the British were dealing with as a society, clinging to bulwarks of British virtue and power in order to strengthen their own resolve and to reassure themselves about their own security. In order to answer these questions, this chapter will

examine the histories and poems that were written, drawings that were published, and politically galvanizing propaganda that was distributed in connection with these celebrations. This analysis of these cultural artifacts will show how the legends of Drake and Nelson, and the Spanish Armada and Trafalgar, were used alternatively to inspire and shame the public to action. It also shows how the navy was perceived as a potential means of societal rebirth, that the navy was a reservoir of ideal British virtue, and how certain of these publications used this naval memory as an tool for overt lobbying for increased naval expenditure.

The memory of the Spanish Armada and the Battle of Trafalgar were closely linked, though the events themselves in reality had nothing to do with one another, as they were separated by more than two centuries, were fought against different enemies, and were characterized by a wide disparity of actual control over the flow of events on the part of the English belligerents. Lord Nelson decisively crushed the opposing Franco-Spanish fleet in 1805 through his own tactical genius. By contrast, Lord Howard and Francis Drake watched the Spanish fleet in 1588 destroy itself, while aiding it along a bit. In spite of these differences, the remanufactured versions of both of these stories were specifically designed to inspire the public, and were then presented for popular consumption. The “informed” public then received further moral instruction, much of which was quite overt. This link between the Spanish Armada and the Battle of Trafalgar, and the associated link between the personages of Drake and Nelson, is demonstrated by this excerpt from the Navy League’s publication *Twelve British Admirals*: “In the mind of the nation, though it may have only the vaguest idea of his deeds, Drake stands second to Nelson in our naval history. His was in essence the same high and daring spirit as Nelson’s, the same devotion to duty, and at times the same touch of

petulance; but he lived in a more romantic age and he moved in an atmosphere of legend and marvel.”²⁶⁵ Further links between the personage of Drake and Nelson recurred in the portrait of Drake: “The victory was in great part his [Drake’s] winning, and it was decisive, if not absolutely crushing. Like Nelson, Drake deplored the fact that more had not been done; his aim, like his great pupil’s, was not success, but annihilation of the foe.”²⁶⁶ In Robert Anslow’s poem “The Defeat of the Spanish Armada,” he ascribed the danger presented by the Armada as only having been duplicated twice more in the history of Great Britain since 1588, which again linked the Spanish Armada to Trafalgar:

Not since the Norman Conquest had our shores such peril known./ But then the Normans were absorbed, the Conqueror’s yoke outgrown,/ True Anglo-Saxon liberties were again old England’s pride;/ And these once more a foreign power was anxious to o’erride./ Since then but two dangers have threatened England’s shore;/ The treason of the Second James, which its own sentence bore,/ And then Napoleon’s project to cross the silver streak,/ By Pitt’s wise forethought thwarted, by Nelson held in check.²⁶⁷

As re-illustrated in this stanza, the Spanish Armada and the Battle of Trafalgar were the two principle stories in British middle and upper class culture of mortal danger and long odds being overcome by naval heroism. For this reason, by exploring the memory of these two events, and the discourse generated in the process of remembering them, an effective synthesis of the “cult of naval memory” can be constructed. Fleshing out these various aspects of this naval memory will help to flesh out this construction, and these various aspects will occupy the bulk of the remainder of this chapter.

²⁶⁵ Unknown Author, *Twelve British Admirals* (London: The Navy League, 1904), 1. This collection was originally printed in the *Navy League Journal* in 1904, and was reproduced on the occasion of the Centenary as a separate volume.

²⁶⁶ *Twelve British Admirals*, 6.

²⁶⁷ Robert Anslow, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada: A Tercentenary Ballad* (London: Eliot Stock, 1888), v-vi.

In late nineteenth and early twentieth century portraits of Drake, the victor over the Spanish Armada, he was portrayed as a prototype, rather than an archetype, of the ideal Briton. He represented a more primitive version of the British race, and in his portrait he was described as having:

[L]ived in a more romantic age and he moved in an atmosphere of legend and marvel. He believed in witchcraft; he thought that there really was a land peopled with demons to be found on this earth of ours; when fogs encompassed his ships he put it down to the machinations of Satan; and, like one of Homer's heroes, was convinced that round his person raged a contest between the powers of light and darkness.²⁶⁸

The Drake of memory lacked the nuance and sophistication of the fully developed Briton, as Drake had lived in the long ago sixteenth century. Nevertheless, the authors pointed to the heart of Drake's character as being in line with and anticipating that of Nelson. In Drake's Navy League portrait, the author wrote that "[Drake] was born of Puritan stock- the stock from which so many of our best fighting men have sprung."²⁶⁹ He was called "our sturdy Francis Drake"²⁷⁰ in one of Douglas Sladen's poems. A full stanza devoted to him in another of Sladen's poems about the Spanish Armada's demise read as follows: "And then arose a cry of Francis Drake,/ And the staunchest turned to fly for his name's sake,/ Who had swept the Spanish main/ Like a Carib hurricane,/ Since his fighting-day began;/ And who fought more like a devil than a man."²⁷¹ Collectively, and particularly with the last passage, Drake was portrayed as a hardy, brave, passionate patriot, with an explosive fighting capability, indicative of the then more

²⁶⁸ *Twelve British Admirals*, 1-2.

²⁶⁹ *Twelve British Admirals*, 2.

²⁷⁰ Douglas Sladen, *The Armada Off Devon* (New York: The Cassell Publishing Company, 1891), 17. Douglas Sladen was an Australian colonist who became a professor of history at the University of Sydney in 1879. In the 1880s he moved to London and became a writer. He wrote at least two ballads about the Spanish Armada, an event that he called "Britain's Salamis" (in the preface to this poem).

²⁷¹ Douglas Sladen, *The Spanish Armada: A Ballad of 1588* (Penzance: Alverton Press, 1888), XII.

overt power of the British spirit, that would subsequently be checked and civilized. Drake, and the repulsion of the Spanish Armada to which his memory was tied, was also remembered as an important turning point for the British people. It was the moment when England became a great sea power. That resulting seagoing tradition cast a long shadow down to the twentieth century, as demonstrated by the following passage from a program published for the naval review in Smolent in 1909:

By whom was the Spanish Armada met? 'Not by the Hotspurs of medieval chivalry, ... but by a new race of men such as medieval England had not known, by the heroes of buccaneers, the Drakes, and the Hawkins, whose lives had been spent in tossing about that ocean which to their fathers had been an unexplored, unprofitable desert. Now for the first time it might be said of England – what the popular song assumes to have been always true of her – that 'her march is on the ocean wave.'²⁷²

Therefore the naval culture and tradition of Great Britain “began” with the Spanish Armada, and Trafalgar was the culminating point in the process of the naval coming of age, as analysis of Nelson’s personality cult shows. This fundamentally altered the character of the British “race,” and permanently stamped the “mastery of the seas” as a fixture of British power and virtue. For this reason, the Royal Navy was centrally located as an all-important British institution.

In contrast to Drake, Nelson’s portrait was that of the fully developed and archetypical Briton, and numerous sources fleshed out and reinforced this concept of him. Nelson was not portrayed as perfect, and most of the authors acknowledged his personal weaknesses, with one bishop on the occasion of the centenary of Trafalgar explicitly choosing to ignore them in incorporating the lessons of Nelson’s story. The Navy League heralded Nelson as “the greatest

²⁷² Unknown Author, *Official Programme of the Great Naval Review Westminster to Southend 17-24 July 1909*, (London: Gale and Polden, Ltd., 1909), 6.

sailor since the world began.”²⁷³ In telling the story of his career, the Navy League author attributed to Nelson a “fiery zeal,” which would be the cornerstone of a sermon given for him at the centenary. The author wrote that: “Nelson lost his right eye through a shot striking the parapet of one of the batteries, dashing gravel into his face and eye. That Nelson was the soul of the attack is undoubted, and the success was entirely due to his fiery zeal and determination, which made his reputation as a fighting commander.”²⁷⁴ Alfred Thayer Mahan, to whom so much of the doctrinal underpinning of the German naval expansion can be attributed, also chimed in on this international naval star and was subsequently quoted by the Navy League:

As Mahan says: ‘It was characteristic of Nelson that his value transpired through the simplest intercourse, and amid the common-place incidents of service. Locker and Parker each in turn felt this.’ It is remarkable that his extraordinary ability was universally acknowledged in spite of some weaknesses and even deficiencies, thus he had no sense of humour, his passionate patriotism and his burning ambition to attain honour and distinction would be likely to make enemies, and tradition tells us that Nelson’s purely seamanlike qualities were not valued highly.²⁷⁵

Thus the Nelson of memory was not a man of bluster, and his consistent action in the day-to-day execution of his duty was indicative of his sincerity, and to this personal vigilance the authors attributed his great success.

The Nelson of memory possessed great physical courage, and was unconcerned about his own safety: “He (Nelson) had been ready to risk himself, his ship, even his squadron, but all did not depend on his sole judgment, and it was in these weightier matters, when the destiny of the nation was in his hands as the trusted admiral of this Sea Empire that he was to show to the highest advantage, shining forth to future generations and the greatest sailor the world has

²⁷³ *Twelve British Admirals*, 123.

²⁷⁴ *Twelve British Admirals*, 130.

²⁷⁵ *Twelve British Admirals*, 126.

ever seen.”²⁷⁶ He had unswerving love of action, and yearned to always be in decisive places at decisive moments, as with this retelling from his Navy League biographer: “Nelson asked [a colonel] if he had been at the Admiralty, then started up, and stretching out his unwounded arm, said: ‘I would give this other arm to be with Duncan²⁷⁷ [in battle] at this moment;’ so unconquerable was the spirit of the man, and so intense was his eagerness to give every instant of his life to the service.”²⁷⁸ These anecdotes were designed to instruct the populace through Nelson’s example, a theme that the chapter will explore further in a later section.

Horatio Nelson had well known character flaws that centered on his open and blatant infidelity to his wife. In the final years leading up to Trafalgar he abandoned his wife altogether, and chose to spend his shore leave with his mistress, Lady Hamilton. In describing Nelson’s faults, his biographer treated them lightly and partially explained them away:

It is a part of the career of our hero which may be legitimately abridged, as it does not contain any of his most brilliant feats of arms, while it shows his judgment warped and even his energy at times slackening through the enervating influence of his environment. There is no doubt that this period of weakness, for so it may fairly be called, was partly physical, due to his six years’ strenuous effort, during which he had sustained three severe wounds.²⁷⁹

The author also apologized for Nelson, and in doing so ascribed to him the core British qualities that were brought out in the sources cited at the end of the second chapter of this thesis, especially temperance and moderation:

Nelson’s life at Merton [with his mistress] was not altogether unworthy, and...his nephew, Mr. Matcham...speaks of his ‘temperate habits,’ his ‘warm and generous disposition,’ that he ‘never heard a coarse expression issue from his

²⁷⁶ *Twelve British Admirals*, 136.

²⁷⁷ Nelson was referring to his colleague, Admiral Duncan, who was at the time engaging Napoleon’s Dutch allies at the Battle of Camperdown in 1797.

²⁷⁸ *Twelve British Admirals*, 141.

²⁷⁹ *Twelve British Admirals*, 151.

lips,' and that his demeanour in private life was 'quiet, sedate, and unobtrusive'; while [others] witness[ed]... a continued course of charity and goodness, setting such an example of propriety and regularity that there are few who would not be benefited by following it.'²⁸⁰

This provided an appropriate foil to Nelson's "fiery zeal," implying to the Britons who were reading these publications that they also had the potential to transform themselves into something more closely emulating Nelson and other naval heroes.

Navy publications throughout the dominions echoed the essential portrait of Nelson as the glory-seeking warrior, as seen in this New Zealand Centenary publication:

The life of Horatio Nelson presents one of those rare examples of that early and ardent passion for true glory, which may induce men to excel in every branch of professional duty and to preserve, through all vicissitudes of public service, a steadfast reliance on the gratitude of their country...By proving himself entirely devoid of indolence, avarice and envy, he inspired his countrymen with such confidence in his integrity and abilities that they almost regarded his existence as essential to their own independence and to the liberties of the civilized world...Nelson is the one sea-captain who has stamped his image imperishably on the imagination of the English-speaking race.²⁸¹

This also by extension enforced ties with the dominions, in that they all shared these common British qualities, and had reason to claim the navy as their own birthright just as the British did. This was evident both from the fact that New Zealand celebrated the memory of Nelson through the production and distribution of this pamphlet, and especially in the last sentence of the passage above, which refers to the "English-speaking race," which spanned the British Empire.

²⁸⁰ *Twelve British Admirals*, 167.

²⁸¹ Unknown Author, *Trafalgar Centenary Issued by the Navy League to Members and Associates Gratis* (New Zealand: Navy League Wellington Branch, 1905), 5.

On the occasion of the Centenary of Trafalgar, a sermon given by the Lord Bishop of Stepney attempted to pin down Nelson's character, and attributed it to an all-encompassing enthusiasm:

In the ranks of that high chivalry of God, of the men who have burned their way through the world, there stands conspicuous the great sailor whom we commemorate to-day. The spirit of Nelson was essentially 'a flaming fire.' There were other gifts of greatness which he had in plenty. He was calm and fearless at decisive moments; he thought and acted with the swiftness of intuition. He was generous alike to friend and to foe; he as prodigal of his affections; above all, he was devoted to duty and country.²⁸²

The Lord Bishop repeated and distilled these fine qualities that were inherently (or that he thought should be inherently) British: "His Name, the essential spirit of the man, what he was at his best— it is this which lives. And this essential spirit of Nelson, let me repeat, was tenacity of purpose, generosity of heart, devotion to duty and country, all glowing in a single heroic fire."²⁸³ He went on to model three pillars of Nelson's identity, which would segue into a later discussion of how to use Nelson's example to correct the flaws of society: "First, there was the fire of the fighter²⁸⁴ ...Secondly, there was a patriotism of rare intensity. It was a patriotism which was lavish of its sacrifice²⁸⁵ ...Thirdly, blended with this love of country there was in the Nelson fire a deeper element still – a real faith in the sovereignty of God."²⁸⁶ Therefore, according to the Lord Bishop, Nelson provided the model by which the British race could rejuvenate itself, centered on qualities of self-sacrifice, patriotism, and faith in God.

²⁸² Lord Bishop of Stepney, *Nelson a Flaming Fire: A Sermon* (London: S. W. Partridge & Co., 1905), 3.

²⁸³ Stepney, 3-4.

²⁸⁴ Stepney, 5.

²⁸⁵ Stepney, 6.

²⁸⁶ Stepney, 7.

The Lord Bishop explicitly chose to ignore those morally reprehensible aspects of Nelson, and urged his listeners to do the same, demonstrating the importance of choice on these constructed memories:

What was unique in Nelson was that all these qualities were kindled within him by a native warmth and heat of the soul into a heroic fire...This is the Nelson who lives. There is a Nelson who is dead – our fellow mortal, fretful, self-conscious, the man who in his wistful yearning for affection yielded to a pathetic infatuation. This Nelson was buried here beneath our feet- we do not wish to raise him from the tomb. He is dead; rather he is withdrawn from sight in the hands of God, who in judgment remembers mercy. The Nelson who lives is the heroic spirit which burned its way through and above the failings of his mortal flesh.²⁸⁷

The Lord Bishop was also bold enough to include the French in the celebration, arguing that as the French had since become Britain's ally, the French could celebrate the figure of Nelson without feeling it inimical to their honor:

Nelson [was not just] the embodiment of all that is dear to the sailor heart of England; still less the protagonist of Great Britain against the French. For, thank God, his enemy has become our friend. We can even, in the confidence of friendship, ask our ancient rivals to share with us the heritage of our pride; and when we saw their sailors standing before our Nelson's statue and salute him in silence, we saw that our request was not in vain: 'Now Nelson to brave France is shown/ A hero after her own heart.'²⁸⁸

This was the height of revisionism, implying that the French were "in spirit" fighting alongside Nelson rather than against him, but this example illustrates how these memories were altered and crafted for maximum effectiveness. The end goal of recalling these events was to evoke an appropriate reaction, rather than to remember things as they actually were.

The legacies of Drake and Nelson developed above could be used for reassurance, to spur the public to action, or both. The last passage of *Twelve British Admirals* reads from an

²⁸⁷ Stepney, 3.

²⁸⁸ Stepney, 4-5.

epitaph on Nelson: “This only tribute to my memory give;/In all your struggles, both by land and sea,/Let Nelson’s name in emulation live,/ And in the hour of danger think on me.”²⁸⁹

Something similar was written for Drake: “It is fabled that a roll upon [Drake’s] drum, which still hangs in the house of his descendants, will wake him from his last sleep, in that hour when fleets of England again go forth to battle in the narrow seas: ‘Take my drum to England, hang et by the shore,/Strike et when your powder’s running low;/If the Dons sight Devon, I’ll quit the port of Heaven,/ An’ drum them up the Channel as we drummed them long ago.’”²⁹⁰ As this poem illustrates, there was great effort taken to ensure that the memory of Drake and Nelson took the form of something that could be reincarnated, or called forth to act again. The great naval heroes of the past were not dead; they were merely dormant, waiting to be resurrected in the new British race. This sentiment was echoed in a drawing in *Punch* on the occasion of the Trafalgar Centenary (See Figure 9²⁹¹). The drawing showed the specter of Nelson surveying the modern incarnation of the Royal Navy with stern satisfaction, saying that “My Ships are Gone, But the Spirit of My Men Remains.” Therefore the modern incarnation of the British fleet was presented as being worthy of Nelson’s memory, and this assertion was designed to reassure *Punch’s* readers. *Punch* later published a drawing with a different purpose (see Figure 10²⁹²). In this drawing, “Britannia” hoisted Nelson’s old signal that he published as his final order to the fleet as the Battle of Trafalgar was beginning. “Britannia” then expressed disgust over what her admirals were allowing her fleet to come to. This drawing was designed to shame the Admiralty and Parliament to action, as well as to raise public awareness about Britain’s

²⁸⁹ *Twelve British Admirals*, 190.

²⁹⁰ *Twelve British Admirals*, 6.

²⁹¹ Unknown Artist, *Punch*, Volume 129, 281. This drawing was published on October 18th, 1905.

²⁹² Unknown Artist, *Punch*, Volume 135, 47. This drawing was published on July 15th, 1908.

allegedly inadequate naval building program on the eve of the 1909 Navy Scare. The power of the Nelson legend was cultivated to have this effect, so that it could soothe or agitate, inspire or manipulate. The centrality of the Nelson legend to the British consciousness meant that it was frequently called upon and instantly recognizable by the British public.

Closely linked to these myths surrounding Britain's naval heroes were the attempts to link the past to the present, a vital part of this particular exercise in memory. A Navy League author, drawing upon Alfred Mahan, wrote of the continuity between Nelson's time and his own:

In Mahan's words: 'Happy he who lives to finish all his task.' The words 'I have done my duty' sealed the closed book of Nelson's story with a 'truth broader and deeper than he himself could suspect...The decisive supremacy of Great Britain's sea power, the establishment of which beyond all question or competition was Nelson's great achievement,' has been a legacy to his descendants, and has not been seriously disputed in the ninety-eight years which have since passed. It is a sacred heirloom, and while we cling to his memory we must see that our modern arms are not rusty, and unequal to keeping that command of the sea which we have inherited... No one supposes that our tools can be similar to those of a hundred years ago, but we have much to learn from the spirit, the devotion to country, and even from the strategy and tactics of our great naval hero.²⁹³

In this passage the author was pulling out those aspects of the Nelson story that were still considered to be applicable, and was also making frequent references to lineage ("legacy to his descendants, sacred heirloom") and references to the need for vigilance ("we must see that our modern arms are not rusty"). The final part of Nelson's portrait, which addressed the lessons to be learned from Nelson's example, expressed similar sentiments of continuity between Nelson's qualities and the enduring qualities of the British race: "His intuition, his genius we may not possess, but we can all endeavour to copy his patriotism, his energy, his

²⁹³ *Twelve British Admirals*, 189-190.

determination, his straightforward honesty, his self-devotion and consideration for others, and his courage, both moral and physical. That he was intensely human is one of the qualities which most endeared him to the nation, and made him so beloved, in spite of moral failings and some weaknesses of character.”²⁹⁴ This is perhaps the best, most concise statement of the sources quoted here of what the Nelson of memory was supposed to mean to the British people. Though even Nelson himself showed occasional weakness, he was able to transcend that weakness and achieve something great. His descendants, the British people, were also capable of overcoming their own shortcomings and stemming the tide of racial degeneration that they believed was threatening their society.

Like those who wrote about Nelson and Trafalgar, the authors of the Spanish Armada ballads were as concerned about warning of the dangers of the immediate future as with rejoicing in modern power and celebrating supremacy, as the following passage from Sladen’s “The Armada Off Devon” shows: “So they finished in full their game, and to-day we treasure its fame/ Mid the feats of light-hearted valour that have won our England her name;/ And we pray when it comes once more/ For England to hold her breath in the struggle of life and death,/ That men may be many to die with the smile on the lip and eye,/ Which has made these Armada heroes a proverb the wide world o’er.”²⁹⁵ Particularly important are the lines “And we pray when it comes [danger] once more/ For England to hold her breath in the struggle of life and death.” These emphasized that the danger to Great Britain would never be over, and so it was an implicit call for vigilance and preparedness. This was more explicit in Anslow’s poem:

²⁹⁴ *Twelve British Admirals*, 189.

²⁹⁵ Sladen, *The Armada Off Devon*, III.

Not since the Norman Conquest had our shores such peril known...Since then but two dangers have threatened England's shore;/ The treason of the Second James, which its own sentence bore,/ And then Napoleon's project to cross the silver streak,/ By Pitt's wise forethought thwarted, by Nelson held in check...And of the perils which her sons withstood in bygone days:/ A tale of what they once withstood, and still may yet withstand,/ Should any power of Europe seek on our shores to land.²⁹⁶

The final lines are the most important here: "the perils which her sons withstood...[they] may still yet withstand." This implied a residual hardiness of the British people that could still be called forth if necessary. As a result, though the danger to Great Britain was eternal, its strength and quality were also eternal, and were capable of being marshaled toward the protection of the British people.

In keeping with the anxious spirit of the age, these stories were targeted to resonate with their audiences by highlighting aspects of those stories that told of sailors facing grave danger or overwhelming odds. These sailors of memory then triumphed over those odds through their possession of and application of British virtues, many of which were also attributed specifically to the naval heroes discussed earlier in the chapter. A description of one of Nelson's expeditions read: "Thus ended this ill-starred expedition; but, failure though it was, it shows a bright example of the courage and determination of British seamen in the face of difficulties, while the personal devotion and heroism of their chief went far towards relieving the bad effect of the disaster on his hitherto successful career."²⁹⁷ These stories of overcoming long odds also appeared in the literature on the battle against the Spanish Armada. James Wylie's work *The History of Protestantism* accentuated the critical turning point that the repulsion of the Armada represented: "The hour had now come when it was to be determined

²⁹⁶ Anslow, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada*, v.

²⁹⁷ *Twelve British Admirals*, 139.

whether England should remain an independent kingdom, or become one of Philip's numerous satrapies; whether it was to retain the light of the Protestant faith, or to fall back into the darkness and serfdom of a medieval superstition."²⁹⁸ In repulsing the Armada, the British sailors demonstrated their ability to triumph in the face of adversity, doubt and anxiety, and this was recreated and retold to show the British people, by extension, what they were capable of:

In the meantime, anxious consultations were being held on board the English fleet. The brave and patriotic men who led it did not conceal from themselves the gravity of the situation. The Armada had reached its appointed rendezvous in spite of all their efforts, and it joined by Parma, it would be so overwhelmingly powerful that they did not see what should hinder its crossing over and landing in England. They were willing to shed their blood to prevent this, and so too were the brave men by whom their ships were manned.²⁹⁹

Therefore the British forerunners who defeated the Armada did so in spite of their anxious misgivings about their situation. This was designed to reassure readers that though they had their own fears and anxieties, the British race would triumph in the twentieth century just as its forerunner from the sixteenth century had.

In addition to nailing down what he considered to be the essential qualities of Nelson, the Lord Bishop of Stepney used his pulpit at the Centenary celebration for a wider critique of British society. He sought to craft a moral lesson from Nelson's example:

Do not let this Centenary [of Trafalgar] become another display of our modern sentimental emotionalism. Let it have results in the fire of a new service to our country, running through the veins of the English people...The lesson is this: God and our country still want, still ask for, [Nelson's] service of zeal, the ministry of a flaming fire. In every sphere of life at the present time we stand in sore need of zeal...Softness of living, fullness of bread, love of money and comfort- these things are making the national spirit limp and slack...Men we have in plenty,

²⁹⁸ James A. Wylie, *The History of Protestantism* (London: Cassell, Petter, Galpin & Co, 187-?), 454. Wylie was a Scottish religious historian and Presbyterian minister.

²⁹⁹ Wylie, 455.

cultivated, critical, capable; but these are not the men who kindle their fellows. He only who is glowing in his own soul with the fire of conviction can be a leader of his fellow men, inspiring their enthusiasm. Surely we need something to fan the flickering embers of our national and personal zeal. God grant that some fresh kindling of them may come from the memory of Nelson's fiery spirit!³⁰⁰

The Bishop of Stepney, like many others, saw decay in the British race, and in the process of finding its way back toward the extreme example of Drake's fervor, Nelson provided a useful marker as an example of an utterly devoted patriot who died for his country. The Lord Bishop went on to plead that "[the] Empire needs this service. On the morrow of Trafalgar the sun rose on a new epoch in the story of our British race. The battle had given us the command of the seas; the Empire became possible. To us it is now a heavy, though inspiring load of privilege and responsibility. We are proud of our Empire!"³⁰¹ This was the responsibility that Nelson had bequeathed them in allowing the British to expand and consolidate a great Empire in addition to Nelson's securing the British state against Napoleon's invasion aims. The Lord Bishop then segued into accusing the British of not living up to that responsibility:

But although we are proud of our Empire, though we are anxious to defend it, do we really as a people set over it some clear light of a high and noble ideal? The defence which we need more than any other is defence against the moral laxity and materialism which threaten to corrupt us. The Navy which we need for the defence of our Empire is a Navy of seafaring men who remember that into every port they bring the honour of their country, and an example which either hurts or helps the life of other races.³⁰²

The example of the Navy was now seen as having the power to reach across class lines and reshape the morality of society. The Bishop was calling for a change in who the British aspired to be, and for a check on the forces of racial degeneracy:

³⁰⁰ Stepney, 8-9.

³⁰¹ Stepney, 10.

³⁰² Stepney, 10.

Far more important than any question of Imperial policy is the vital question of an Imperial race, a race fitted for Empire by character, a race with the fire of zeal within it, not chiefly to extend its dominions, but rather to sink deep its foundations in truth and honour and God...England, the old country, needs this service of zeal. There is little gain in extending our Empire, If there be degeneration in its heart. Can we, for a moment, think that our England to-day is what God meant it to be?³⁰³

But after denouncing the current status of British society, he asserted that it was worthy of saving:

It is still worth helping, this old country of ours; and help it needs in difficult days coming, days then it must settle its future social conditions and structure. The help which it needs is, that as a people we should set our faces against lust, gambling, drink, dishonesty in trade, recklessness in finance, the growth of pauperism, declension in our birthrate, the poverty and squalor of our towns and villages. We need to face all these things with something of that spirit with which Nelson faced the fleet when it came before him, with something of his fire of courage, and of faith that victory is the will of God.³⁰⁴

This was the most potent example of the attempt to manufacture a societal fable from the example of a great naval event and naval hero. Britain was again in trouble, but it was because of internal threats associated with degeneration of the British race and society. The Lord Bishop told his audience of Trafalgar Centenary patrons that Nelson held the key to rebuilding and rejuvenating their race. There were also hints of this need for racial rejuvenation in the literature on the Spanish Armada, with the most overt call to action coming in Sladen's later poem:

But her pulses with peace are sluggish, and her arms are rusty with rest,/ And she, who has fought the world over, no longer is ready to fight/...We have money enough and to spare, we have men of the fibre we need,/ We have forges for work lying idle, and smiths who are starving for food;/ There are warnings the blind might start at, if our Rulers would only heed;/...O rouse ye, our Rulers, and see that the joints of her armour are sure;/ O sharpen her sword for the combat, and have a good steed in the stall/...I have sung you an olden story! St. Paul's,

³⁰³ Stepney, 11.

³⁰⁴ Stepney, 11-12.

where the bells were rung,/ In the Fire of London was swallowed two hundred
autumns ago; And over the burnt old minister her veil hath oblivion flung;/ And
we- are forgetting how England, of old would have met a foe.³⁰⁵

Specifically, the poet charged the British people with “forgetting how England, of old would
have met a foe,” and implied that Britons must take conscious action to prepare themselves to
fight again, and in doing so reverse their own continuing slide toward degeneration.

References to moral depravity also appeared in the Tercentenary literature (referring to the
300th anniversary of the Spanish Armada, in 1888), as this passage from Robert Anslow’s poem
illustrates:

Now herein lies a lesson plain, and he that reads should run,/ In the same
patriotic ways by which our fathers won/ That freedom and security from which
have slowly grown/ The triple British diadem of Empire, Faith, and Throne./ True
Knights, Fair Danes, Associates, while yours is the defence/ Of these, should
foreign foes again upon them war commence,/ ‘Tis also yours to crush and foil all
homebred Treason’s snares/ And Atheist and Separatist to chase from sowing
tares.³⁰⁶

Atheists and Separatists were referenced in this warning as targets in the next great struggle of
the British race, which should be used as an opportunity to purge the disreputable elements of
British society that were dragging it down into immorality and thus into decline. Returning to
old British virtue was the only way to stop the slide into degeneracy, and Nelson was a shining
example that the British could emulate as they reinvigorated their society.

In addition to a sense of fear of decline due to racial impurity and immorality, there
were some who felt that British society, while succumbing to materialistic forces, had also
allowed itself to become stagnant and unyielding. Just as the British conceptions of the
Germans reflected British anxieties over their lack of racial energy and zeal, one Navy League

³⁰⁵ Sladen, *The Spanish Armada: A Ballad of 1588*, 14.

³⁰⁶ Anslow, *The Defeat of the Spanish Armada: A Tercentenary Ballad*, 39-40.

author's jibes against the Spanish in a summary at the beginning of Drake's biography were indicative of fears about British stagnation and inflexibility. This author hid this fear, or rather tried to compensate for it, by accusing the Spanish of being worse than the British:

The Spaniards [of Phillip II's era] still to a great extent trusted obsolete craft, and to antiquated tactics; they believed in vessels propelled by oars, and in boarding; they neglected gunnery, and imagined that battles could be won without it. This will explain in great measure the defeats which they suffered. In the sixteenth century, as in 1898 [the latter of which saw their fleet annihilated during the Spanish-American War], they had failed to grasp the importance of new ideas, and clung to routine.³⁰⁷

The cautionary hint given by the author of Nelson's career story reproduced in this passage gave voice to this fear of stagnation:

There is one lesson to be drawn from Nelson's life which should not be overlooked by my brother officers, though it may appear trivial to those outside the service. It is that throughout Nelson's career and in his voluminous correspondence, while duty and discipline are freely referred to as indispensable, uniform is never mentioned, and the very idea of what we now call routine was absent! Does this not show that uniform and routine are mere means to an end, and that in these days we are inclined to attach too much value to them?³⁰⁸

In yet another application of the Nelson legend, the author was using him to lobby for greater institutional dynamism, perhaps in support of Lord Fisher's reforms, which were just beginning when this collection was published.

This chapter will now turn to the more overt agitations made by the Navy League for increased naval expenditure. Beyond sentimental arguments that the Navy and "Britishness" were inherently linked, agitation over the need for an expanded fleet took on a more rational tone. The Navy League argued that the navy was the most important public arm of the empire,

³⁰⁷ *Twelve British Admirals*, 2.

³⁰⁸ *Twelve British Admirals*, 189-190.

and that Britain owed its existence to it. While simultaneously using the cultural themes developed earlier in the chapter, typical middle class Britons would have been more receptive to such arguments because of their already established sentimentality toward the Navy. The Navy League was the principle protagonist in this period for publishing these arguments for naval expansion, and encouraged the celebration of past victories, naval heroes, and the naval culture, in order to make their lobbying more effective. This section of the chapter lays out examples of Navy League propaganda, and particularly examines a Trafalgar centenary pamphlet from the Trafalgar celebration held in New Zealand in October 1905. This pamphlet indicates the wide reach of naval enthusiasm, and shows how British dominions also celebrated their naval tradition alongside the people of the United Kingdom. On the title page of the pamphlet (See Figure 11³⁰⁹) the artist reminded the New Zealand readers of their shared naval heritage with Great Britain, by placing Nelson's portrait in the center, along with the caption "England Expects That Every Man Will Do His Duty"—Nelson's last signal to his fleet before Trafalgar. In this case, "England" refers to the greater England, that of the British race, of which New Zealanders reading this pamphlet would have been encouraged to consider themselves a part. Along with the main messages and iconography of the pamphlet, standard commercial additions were included. These were designed to capitalize on the mass market for products with naval themes, which served to increase the infiltration of the naval cult into the larger populace and increase its immediacy in everyday life.

In justifying the naval expansion itself, high ranking politicians and elites were quoted in the main body of the text, as followed: "It is on the Navy, in the good providence of God, that

³⁰⁹ *Trafalgar Centenary*, 1.

the honour and safety of this land depend...The Navy means for you your existence as an Empire; it means for you the fact that you are free from invasion; it means for you your daily food and daily employment...The Navy is all in all and everything; therefore, though the cost is great, it is little compared with what it brings back to you,"³¹⁰ and immediately thereafter: "The proper defence of our shores lies in prompt and resolute attack on the enemy's naval power, wherever it may be."³¹¹ By incorporating quotes from politicians and other elites, the League attempted to lend its own arguments greater weight.

In introducing themselves, the Navy League authors laid out their mission statement and arguments for expansion: "It was realized that all classes should be brought to fully appreciate the vital fact that the maintenance of Britain's undisputed Supremacy of the Sea is essential not only to the prosperity of the individual, but also to the actual existence of the Nation as a world Power."³¹² This Navy League writer argued that sudden increases in naval power were costly and ineffective, and instead that "*continuity of preparation*" was the only way to ensure Britain's continued naval superiority.³¹³ Further passages continued this line of argument, with each hitting on a different aspect of the need for naval expansion, or at least restating the arguments in different ways, as in this article entitled "The Nation and the Navy League, by an Englishwoman:"

The two great objects for which the Navy League is working may be described in the words of the Times, as an 'invincible Navy and an instructed nation.' The first cannot be had without the second. The need of an invincible Navy has never, perhaps, been plainer than at the present time, when everyone feels how suddenly the quick flame of war may spring up out of apparent peace. British

³¹⁰ Lord Selborne, *Trafalgar Centenary*, 9. He was the First Lord of the Admiralty when this was produced.

³¹¹ Sir F. Pollock, *Trafalgar Centenary*, 9. He was an English jurist and law professor at Oxford.

³¹² *Trafalgar Centenary*, 10.

³¹³ *Trafalgar Centenary*, 10.

confidence in the Navy is amply justified- but only because of the men who have toiled, and are still toiling in the face of contempt and abuse, to expose and remedy naval weaknesses. The attitude of mind typified in the song that says 'We've got the ships, we've got the men, we've got the money, too' is somewhat superficial, and does not pause to consider *how* it is that we've got the ships and the men.³¹⁴

The League writers used explicit references to naval memory in this passage as a preface for stating their main purpose: "The main work of the League has been [with a] view of bringing home to the minds of all British throughout the world the fact that our Naval Supremacy is a sacred heritage handed down to us by generations of British seamen."³¹⁵ Therefore these elements were all linked: the British Navy was the eternal protector and birthright of the British people, the Navy could not be neglected without endangering Britain, the history of Britain reinforced this conclusion, and the Navy League had set out to ensure that these truths were disseminated as widely as possible. This differed from the more sentimental accounts of battles and heroes, but it still drew upon memory of heroism as a justification for investing in the tools to allow for future heroism.

The pamphlet went on to identify the evils of thrift, compared with the noble sacrifice offered up by the British Tar, and emphasized the League's role in ameliorating this injustice:

British naval officers and bluejackets are always prepared to fulfill their side of the bargain with the utmost gallantry, but under the conditions of modern war their personal bravery and skill can avail little unless provided with efficient weapons, with fast and well-armoured warships. But these things cost money- a great deal of money- and the Treasury is always anxious to economise. Therefore, when there has been no immediate prospect of war, naval expenses have been pared down...Now this kind of thing was both wasteful and perilous, and the Navy League was founded to create such a strong current of instructed public opinion that the Navy might never be neglected and [naval scares be made] impossible. [The League's] paramount aim is to drive home a fact so

³¹⁴ *Trafalgar Centenary*, 9.

³¹⁵ *Trafalgar Centenary*, 10.

simple and plain...that the Navy is all that stands between us and national annihilation...Should the trident slip from the slack hand of Britannia, other countries are waiting with terrible eagerness to seize it. But we are not going to let the trident slip – we mean to hold it and wield it.³¹⁶

Rhetorical flourish aside, this passage restated arguments that were frequently repeated in other literature - Britain was perpetually in mortal danger, and the Navy was the only thing that compensated for this peril, which meant that the Navy deserved the unswerving financial support of the Britons who benefited from its protection. This could only be achieved by continuous rather than occasional naval expenditure, and the members of the Navy League were doing their patriotic duty to ensure that this policy of continuous expenditure would be adopted and sustained by Parliament.

The League's writers then took pains to emphasize the universal nature of the navy and its importance to British identity, again blending rational argument with sentimentality: "The efficiency of the Navy is the personal concern of each English man and woman, for if the Navy ever broke down there is not one person in the British Empire who would not suffer from that unthinkable calamity. It has been truly said, 'The Navy of England, when it no longer reigns in the hearts of people, will soon cease to reign on the waves of the ocean.'"³¹⁷ The League's sacred duty was to correct this: "There are thousands of our people who are utterly out of touch with the Navy, and it is these people we want to get hold of, to show them that the Navy belongs to them, is their protection, and should be their pride."³¹⁸ It finally moved from proselytizing to recruiting, so that the reader of the pamphlet could be a part of this great cause:

³¹⁶ *Trafalgar Centenary*, 10.

³¹⁷ *Trafalgar Centenary*, 10.

³¹⁸ *Trafalgar Centenary*, 10.

The Navy League has done much during the past ten years in rousing public opinion as to the paramount importance of an invincible Navy; but if much has been done, much remains to do. It is not to the past that we look, but to the future. This is no time in which to relax our efforts; the most efficient Admiralty is better for outside pressure. The year of the centenary of Trafalgar will surely see a great stirring of the national spirit on the subject of the Navy. With such a past behind us, such a future to work for, we cannot hesitate in our determination that, cost what it may, we will never willingly yield up 'our heritage the sea.'³¹⁹

This was a call to action. It linked the glory of the past with the promise of an equally glorious future. But, it reminded readers that such a glorious future could only be guaranteed if the British people ensured that their Navy was not neglected through fiscal restraint.

Collectively, these speeches, sermons, and pamphlets illustrate how the British, particularly the middle and upper classes, remembered these events and the people involved, and what those memories meant to them. Drake was a prototypical Briton, possessing all of the coarse zeal that would later be brought into check through evolution and sophistication of the British race and society. Nelson was the end result of that development, the nation's finest achievement, and a reminder of what the British were capable of. Nelson was also a transformational figure. While he suffered from moral failings, he was able to redeem himself through his patriotic fervor, and this zeal and devotion, along with self-sacrifice, had saved the British nation from conquest. In both instances, these commemorated events were climactic watersheds that allowed for the continued survival of British society. These rich legends provided ample material with which to create moral instruction for the population. It was the duty of all Britons to emulate Nelson's example, to transform themselves and adopt the "fiery zeal" that had made Nelson so effective. They were also required, as part of their patriotic

³¹⁹ *Trafalgar Centenary*, 10.

duty, to support the navy politically and financially, which was Britain's first and last line of defense, and which was central to British identity.

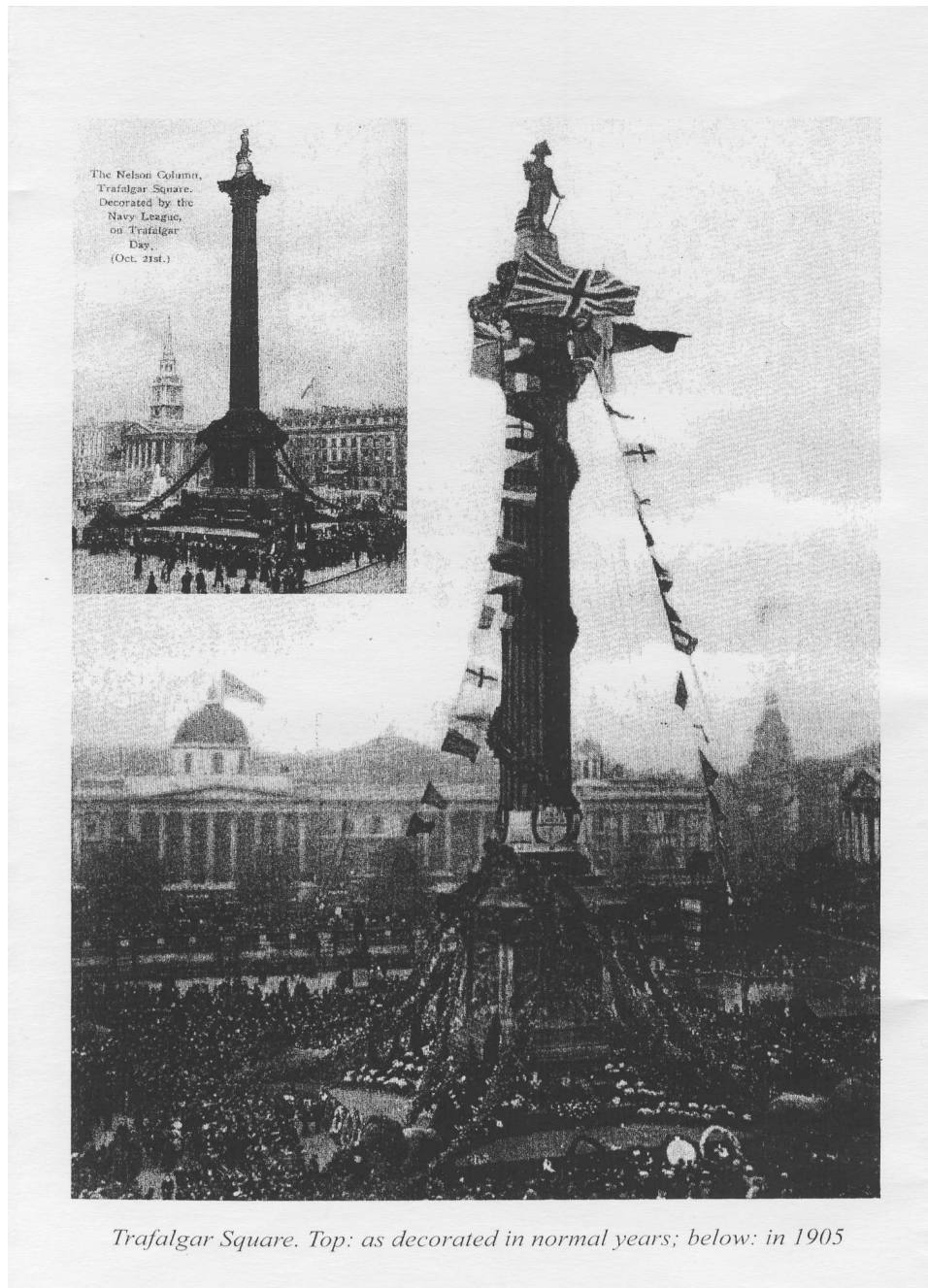


Figure 8

Photo taken of the Nelson Memorial on Trafalgar Day, 1905. The smaller inset photo is of the monument during a typical Trafalgar Day.

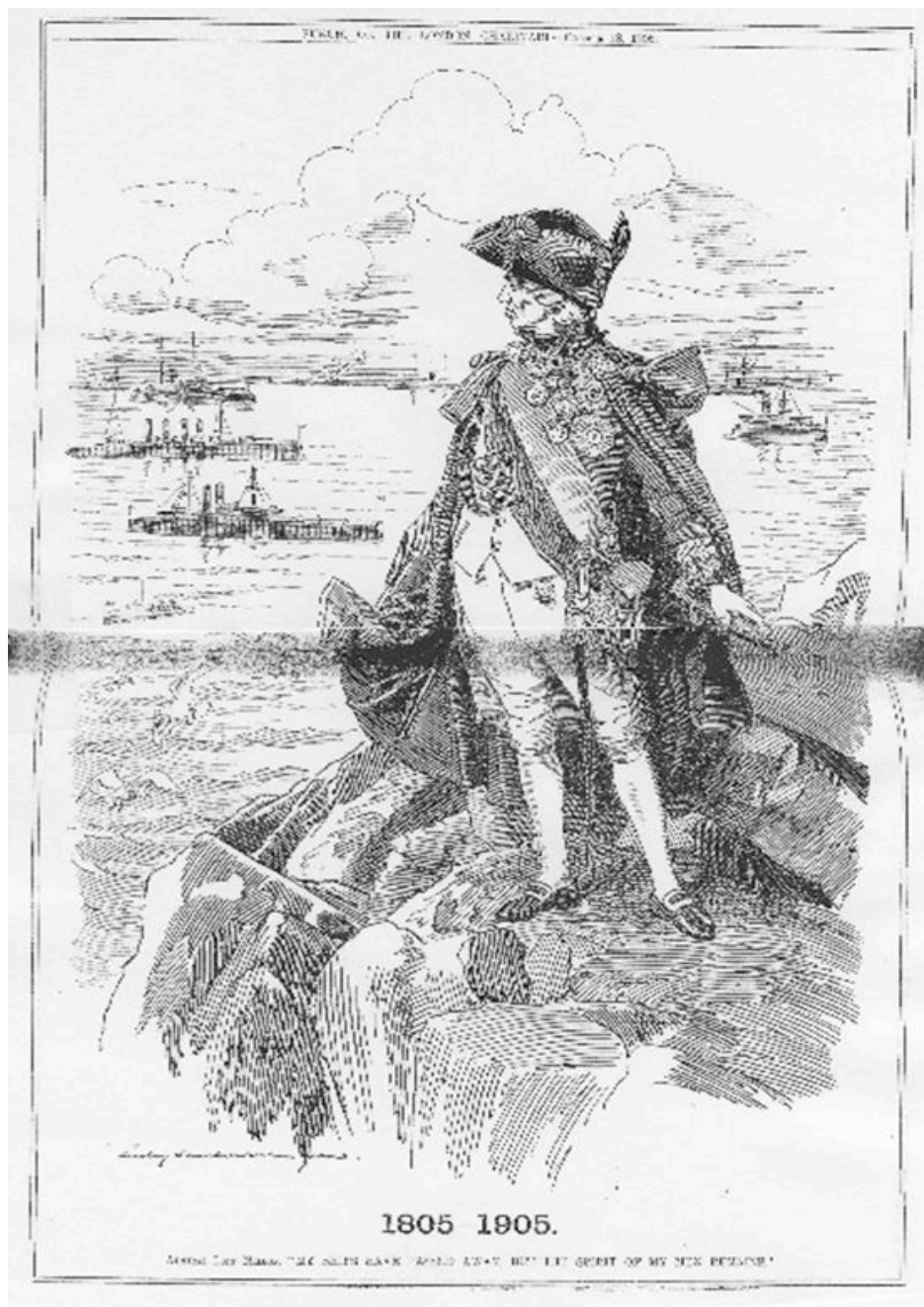


Figure 9

Shade of Nelson: "My Ships are Gone, But the Spirit of My Men Remains."



“ENGLAND EXPECTS—”

SHADE OF NELSON. “I SEE YOU’RE HOISTING MY OLD SIGNAL.”

BRITANNIA. “YES. ONE OR TWO OF MY ADMIRALS SEEM TO HAVE FORGOTTEN IT.”

Figure 10

Shade of Nelson: “I see you’re hoisting my old signal.”
Britannia: “Yes. One or two of my admirals seem to have forgotten it.”

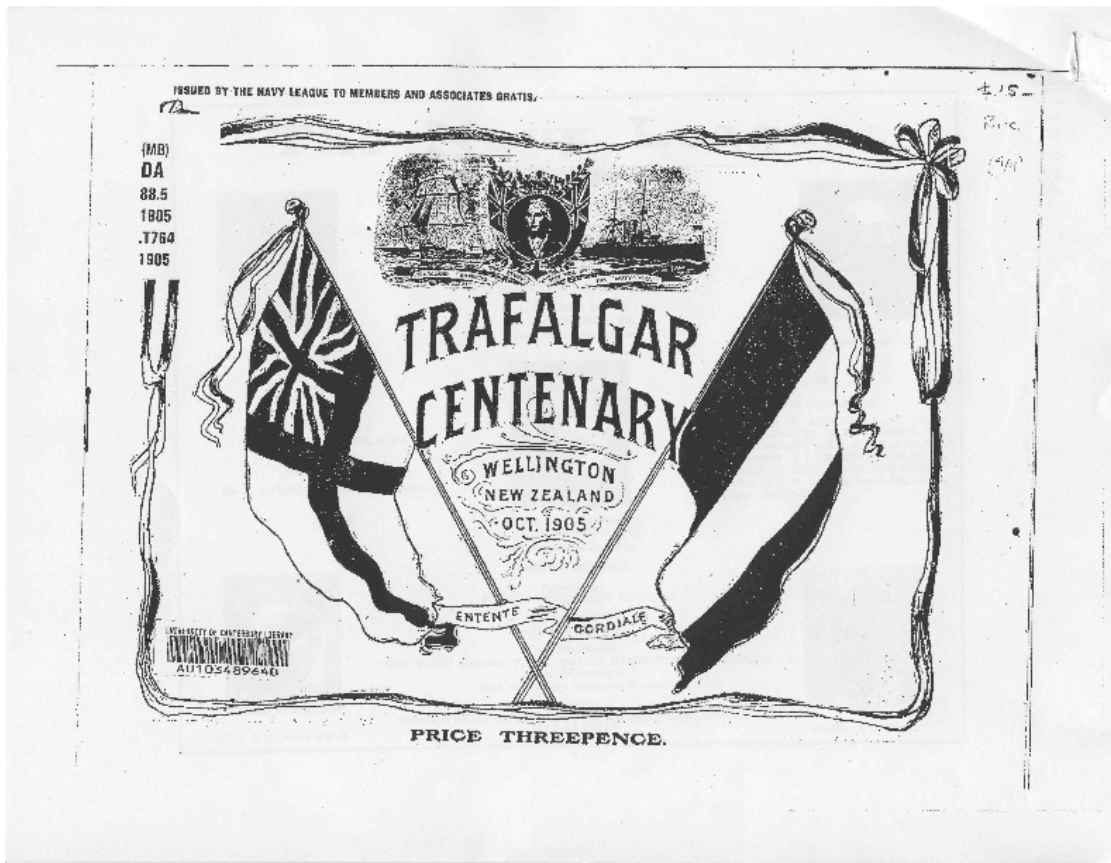


Figure 11

Nelson's picture is in the top center, with "England Expects that Every Man Will Do His Duty" written below his portrait.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHIELD OF EMPIRE

Having explored the meaning of naval commemorations in Great Britain in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the meaning of the sacred memory of naval events and naval heroes that the British people devoted considerable resources to developing, this chapter will explore the nature of and significance of representations of existing strength, as well as the discourse that surrounded these representations. In particular, this chapter will explore the forms these representations took (particularly fleet reviews), the contributions these reviews made to fleshing out a popular British sense of naval ownership, and the increasing commercialization of naval events during this period. It will then discuss the use of these occasions of celebration to urge further action and vigilance by the British people, the construction of teleologies (specifically relating to the Diamond Jubilee of 1897), and the role these occasions played in compensating for a growing sense of unease among the British people.

This chapter will proceed thematically rather than chronologically. Whereas the discourse generated by the commemorations explored in Chapter Three was usually associated with the inspiring memory of past events, and the desirability of emulating heroes of the past, the discourse discussed here was mainly about reassurance and celebration, self-congratulation and the unassailable virtues of British identity. The British public had been compelled to devote increasing financial resources toward building a strong navy, and the fleet reviews were their reward. They were designed to show the British public how powerful and impressive their fleet

was, and thus to show them that their financial sacrifice was not in vain. They were “spectacles of power and pride, with hundreds of thousands regularly turning out to watch.”³²⁰

Fleet reviews and inspections date back at least to the reign of George III in the late eighteenth century.³²¹ Originally these rituals were strictly functional, as they had allowed the monarch to assess the readiness of his naval forces. Between the eighteenth century and the outbreak of World War One, however, they grew both in complexity and in frequency. Between 1773 and the occasion of Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee in 1887, there had been eight Royal Navy fleet reviews. From 1887 to 1914, there were eleven.³²² Moreover, the review of the fleet in 1887 involved a paltry 128 ships, arranged in two rows. By the Diamond Jubilee ten years later the review contingent had grown to 165 ships that required six rows to accommodate them all. The review in 1907 numbered 173 ships, and the review in 1914 included a staggering 205 ships, arranged in eleven rows.³²³ Figure 12³²⁴ compares the size of the fleet review in 1887 and the one in 1914, taken from Admiralty records on the planning of the festivities.

Jan Ruger’s description of the 1909 fleet review provides a glimpse of the spectacle that British patrons would have been privy to:

On 17 July 1909 Britannia came to town. The Thames was ‘thronged with expectant people’ when the bascules of Tower Bridge opened at 1pm to let the procession of warships enter. Small cruisers and destroyers anchored opposite the Tower of London and at London Bridge. A line of black torpedo boats went

³²⁰ Jan Ruger, *The Great Naval Game: Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire* (London: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 1.

³²¹ Ruger, 16.

³²² Ruger, 20-21.

³²³ Ruger, 21.

³²⁴ Reprinted from Ruger, 22-23.

further up the river...Then the most modern and intriguing vessels of the fleet followed, the submarines...watched by the crowds with 'awe' and 'quiet fascination'...At the same time the fleet's big battleships, including the latest Dreadnoughts, anchored down the river at Southend in two long lines...They were reportedly greeted by 'a pressing, eager mob of sightseers.' By 3pm a grand total of 150 warships, almost the entire Home Fleet, had assembled in the Thames, stretching from the very heart of the capital eastwards towards the sea, a floating chain of forty miles.³²⁵

This elaborate blend of frontline vessels and support craft of all sizes and functions was carefully orchestrated in order to maximize public exposure to the ships that the British people had indirectly purchased through taxation. In 1909 the fleet remained in the Thames River for a full week.³²⁶ The activities during the fleet's stay included "mock-fights, illuminations, / fireworks and searchlight displays. Naval marches and parades passed through the streets of London, the most spectacular on 21 July, when 1,200 men and 40 officers marched from the Embankment to the Guildhall, dragging an artillery of 12-pounder field guns behind them."³²⁷ All of the ships were open to public visitors, except for the submarines.³²⁸ Even the dreadnoughts themselves were available for tours on three separate afternoons, for four hours each day.³²⁹ Newspapers reported that four million people had visited the British fleet and engaged in the spectacle during the week of July 17th to the 24th, 1909.³³⁰ The number of people attending these events had increased dramatically since the late eighteenth century, and those people were increasingly willing (and able, because of expanding railroad networks) to travel long distances to participate. Patrons of fleet reviews in the late eighteenth century

³²⁵ Ruger, 12.

³²⁶ Ruger, 12.

³²⁷ Ruger, 12-13.

³²⁸ Unknown Author, *Navy League Guide to the Thames Review, 17th to 24th July 1909*, (London: The Navy League, 1909), 48.

³²⁹ *Navy League Guide to the Thames Review*, 47.

³³⁰ Ruger, 13.

could be expected to travel up to a few miles to attend the spectacle. By the early twentieth century, the spectacles were drawing people from hundreds of miles away.³³¹

The apex of the naval visit to the Thames was the royal review itself, which involved the passing of the Royal Yacht between the rows of warships, met by throngs of cheering sailors and the firing of salute guns to the sovereign. Once it had passed through the lines of warships the yacht would anchor, and the monarch would host the commanding officers of the ships that had participated.³³² Jan Ruger argues that: “this elaborate maritime procession showed that the function of the fleet reviews had changed fundamentally. This was clearly no longer an ‘inspection’ in the original sense of the word. The distance at which the royal yacht passed the warships during the procession precluded any meaningful appreciation of the state material and personnel were in.”³³³ The end result of the “inspection” was always the same. The king or queen would report to the fleet that “His [or Her] Majesty is greatly pleased with the efficient condition of the Home fleet,” little more than an acknowledgement that the review had been a successful spectacle.³³⁴ Admiral Reginald Bacon, in his 1925 work on the Battle of Jutland, noted that these reviews had become ends unto themselves, and had little to do with showing off the fighting proficiency of the fleet:

Of all our public services the Royal Navy is probably the one that for the last hundred years has been the most honoured by the confidence reposed in it by the people of this country; but at the same time it has been throughout this period the least understood. Banished from view to the sea, where its life is spent in constant maneuvers and training, our fleet is only conspicuous on the special occasions of official parades and functions, when the work of a fighting

³³¹ Ruger, 57.

³³² Ruger, 18.

³³³ Ruger, 18.

³³⁴ Ruger, 18-19.

service is paralysed, and the essential life of a navy is hidden under a cloak of artificiality.³³⁵

As Admiral Bacon pointed out at the end of this passage, the Navy and the Government had consciously created a fiction for public consumption. The public's increasing thirst for this fiction compelled the Navy to put on even more elaborate and impressive spectacles. This increasing public interest in naval spectacles also fueled increased naval expenditure, which in turn provided the navy with the resources to provide for the greater spectacles that the public desired.

Swelling participation in naval spectacles at the end of the nineteenth century and the increasing scope of attendance from all corners of the country both encouraged and were reinforced by "the unfolding of the political and cultural mass market."³³⁶ The British public increasingly consumed "naval" products, and advertisers increasingly used the navy as a means of selling their products.³³⁷ The fleet reviews included, along with the shows themselves, "advertisements for chocolates [in the official programs that] employed the theme of 'naval manoeuvres,' showing a sailor talking to an officer while slipping the officer's wife a bar of chocolate behind his back" (also see Figure 13³³⁸). There were model Dreadnoughts fashioned as children's toys. Biscuits and other foods with naval themes were available at these reviews. Spectators could ride in "Dreadnought Trams," which were decorated to look like battleships, and included imitation guns on the sides. Local vendors also capitalized on the symbology. One

³³⁵ Reginald Bacon, *The Jutland Scandal* (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1925), 1.

³³⁶ Ruger, 9.

³³⁷ Ruger, 50.

³³⁸ *Navy League Guide to the Thames Review*, back cover.

tailor shop's advertisement read "Dreadnought and Wear British Clothing."³³⁹ Other items sold both at the sites of reviews themselves and as a part of the general mass market included "rum, soap, sweets, perfume, clothes and men's grooming products. Picture books, guides, charts, postcards and other memorabilia were sold...all over the country."³⁴⁰ In the official program for the 1909 Thames review, the advertisements included enamel paint (see Figure 14³⁴¹), wine, spirits, and tobacco (See Figure 15³⁴²), and clothing (see Figure 16³⁴³), all with naval themes. This allowed the public to increasingly associate their daily lives with the Navy. They were able to bring little pieces of the fleet home with them, whether they were in the form of models and toys, food products, smoking tobacco, or other more indirectly associated items. In effect, Britons celebrated their naval heritage through this consumption of the fleet in effigy.

The naval market found a niche for home versions of war games sets, with extremely elaborate rules. Most notable of these was the game developed by Fred T. Jane, which allowed children of all ages to engage in mock naval battles with their siblings and friends, familiarizing themselves with "armour protection, endurance, [and] layout of engines and magazines" of the various fighting units in their games.³⁴⁴ The positive impact that these games had on children was expounded upon in an article in the journal *The Engineer* in December 1898:

Mr. Jane was not the first person to invent a naval Kriegspiel, and he will not be the last. But with him lies the honour of first achieving success...In the first place...we must remind our readers that the naval Kriegspiel is a game only in name. In reality it is a most instructive lesson in the capabilities of different

³³⁹ Ruger, 13-14.

³⁴⁰ Ruger, 58.

³⁴¹ *Navy League Guide to the Thames Review*, xxxiv.

³⁴² *Navy League Guide to the Thames Review*, 16.

³⁴³ *Navy League Guide to the Thames Review*, ix.

³⁴⁴ Donald F. Featherstone, *Naval War Games: Fighting Sea Battles with Model Ships*, (London: Stanley Paul, 1965), 22-23.

types of ships to withstand or carry on attacks; in the practicability of evolution and of their usefulness; in the value of gun fire, and of the vulnerability of ships. In short, it puts very fairly before the players the actual problems which would face them were they commanding squadrons in times of war, and if played in seriousness cannot fail to instruct them.³⁴⁵

According to the author, these games could have positive societal benefits, in terms of educating Britain's youth and giving them the inclination toward strategic and tactical thought. These games would also have been seen as familiarizing children with the navy as an institution and as a cultural artifact, perhaps making them more inclined to aspire to a career as a sailor. At the very least, these games would have taught children to admire those who did serve, and to think of the navy as being something that belonged to them as their British birthright.

The growing British consumption of naval spectacles and demand for products with naval themes indicated the desire of the British people to identify with the navy. These desires were encouraged and cultivated by the Navy League and the Admiralty. Sentiments associated with the need for British people taking ownership of their navy were expressed in the official programs of the naval reviews and in newspapers. A powerful example of this is a passage by Rudyard Kipling, printed in the *Illustrated London News* in July 1909, on the first day of the fleet's visit to the Thames:

And the whole thing was my very own (that is to say yours); mine to me by my right of birth. Mine were the speed and power of the hulls, not here only but the world over; the hearts and brains and lives of the trained men; such strength and such power as we and the World dare hardly guess at. And holding this power in the hollow of my hand; able at the word to exploit the earth to my own advantage; to gather me treasure and honour, as men reckon honour, I (and a

³⁴⁵ Featherstone, 145-146.

few million friends of mine) forbore because we were white men. Any other breed with this engine at their disposal would have used it savagely long ago.³⁴⁶

With this sentimentality over the sacred virtue of the most powerful navy ever created, Kipling tied the power of the Navy to the continued vitality and virtue of the British race. He congratulated the British on maintaining such a powerful force, and for using that power toward just ends. In addition to sentimental views of what the navy meant as an essential part of being British, the official program of the same naval review pointed to the fundamental difference in public perception of the army and navy, and the role of each:

It is clear, then, to hold command of the sea England must have a Navy far larger than any other nation. Not an equality, but a superiority so great that other nations will think twice before disturbing the peace and prosperity which we now enjoy. We have so far made no mention of the British Army. The reason of this is that we have been dealing solely with blows struck at the heart of the British Empire, and in encounters of this kind a Navy, and a Navy only, can protect us. No nation can dispense with an Army. Even a naval nation like the British has weak points in her empire, such as frontiers in Asia, Africa, and America, which an Army only can defend. But we have tried to make it clear that to save us from a mortal wound we must rely on our sea-service only.³⁴⁷

This reinforced the notion, expressed earlier, that the Navy was Britain's truly *defensive* arm, and could only be properly envisioned as a protector of the British people. The navy was the "shield" of their empire, and a birthright to which they owed their prosperity. This was not a new sentiment, but the frequency of expressing it increased with the rising intensity of the naval arms race. To be worthy of this debt, the British people were obligated to sustain the naval institution through further financial and patriotic support. This was their only path to sustainable security.

³⁴⁶ Rudyard Kipling, "A Fleet in Being: Notes of Two Trips with the Channel Squadron," in *Illustrated London News*, July 17th, 1909.

³⁴⁷ Unknown Author, *Official Programme of the Great Naval Review Westminster to Southend July 17 to 24, 1909: Containing Plan of the Fleet and the Story of the Royal Navy*, (London: Gale and Polden, Ltd., 1909), 16.

Critiques of the naval situation also coincided with these naval reviews, just as critiques had been generated in conjunction with the commemorations examined in the previous chapter. These critiques appeared in all manner of Navy League publications, as well as publications like the *Navy and Army Illustrated*. Characteristic of these arguments was a passage published in the *Navy and Army Illustrated* in 1897 by the always outspoken and critical Lord Charles Beresford on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee Review: “It is perhaps just as well that such a spectacle as that of June 26th, affording as it does evidence of past activity, should not be allowed to lull the country into false ideas of what yet remains to be done. It cannot be too clearly realized that defence which is imperfect in any important particulars is almost as useless as no defence at all.”³⁴⁸ In the same passage he went on to rail against such injustices as the creepingly slow promotion system in the Royal Navy which produced older admirals who at “64 or 65 [lacked] that energy, dash, nerve, and quickness of decision which means the whole difference between winning and losing a campaign. Statesmen may be different, but a British admiral needs a personal vigour of body and power of action which a Cabinet Minister need not necessarily possess,”³⁴⁹ and against what he asserted was a widespread ignorance of the British public about the Navy. The latter he proposed to correct by increasing the visibility of the Navy, specifically by creating “a Royal body-guard of Marines” and by arranging visits “by torpedo destroyers and other small craft” to London.³⁵⁰ For Beresford, the consequences of public detachment from the navy had created “apathy that existed before the Navy League commenced its work, and...the want of representation of the

³⁴⁸ Lord Charles Beresford, “Some Naval Needs of the Nation,” in *The Navy and Army Illustrated*, Friday, 25 June, 1897 (London, Kearns, 1897), 85.

³⁴⁹ Beresford, 85.

³⁵⁰ Beresford, 86.

Navy generally, that [caused] the deplorable condition we were in in 1887.”³⁵¹ Whether or not the increase in the size and frequency of fleet reviews was due to Lord Beresford’s agitation, these increasingly complex spectacles surely did make the British public more familiar with their fleet, and this in turn fueled public demand for more elaborate spectacles.

Critiques of naval apathy and ignorance came from other sources as well. On the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee the Reverend Samuel G. Green noted in his work “The Diamond Jubilee and some of its Lessons” that the British Empire was susceptible to the same fate that had befallen the Roman Empire, in that the empire was vulnerable to decline and collapse.³⁵² Additionally, in a thinly veiled stab at those who favored cutbacks in naval expenditures, the authors of the official program for the 1909 naval review cited historical examples to illustrate the folly of those attitudes. These examples reached as far back as the seventeenth century. One anonymous author argued: “Ignorance and extravagance combined to make the Government of Charles II neglect the task of maintaining an effective fleet. ‘They forgot the very lessons that the war had taught, and were content, instead of making the enemy’s shore the English frontier, to entrust the defence of the coast to fortifications, and to lay up the ships in harbor.’ A fatal mistake not to be repeated.”³⁵³ This same author attributed the loss of the war against the American colonists in the late eighteenth century to a lack of naval preparedness: “In 1781...we suffered our greatest disaster, by neglecting to maintain a fleet in proportion to our responsibilities, and Cornwallis, at Yorktown, had to surrender his

³⁵¹ Beresford, 86.

³⁵² Rev. Samuel Green, *The Diamond Jubilee and Some of Its Lessons* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1897), 3-4. The Religious Tract Society that Rev. Green wrote for was founded in the late eighteenth century for the purpose of publishing Christian literature and evangelizing.

³⁵³ *Official Programme of the Great Naval Review Westminster to Southend 17-24 July 1909*, 8-9.

army and America, because a strong French fleet forced away the British fleet that should have supported him.”³⁵⁴ By contrast, the results of effective and adequate naval expansion had borne themselves out positively: “At this time [the eighteenth century] the power of England rested firmly upon a great Navy, and we must not forget that this was a period of peace, commercial activity, and colonial expansion.”³⁵⁵

These history lessons would inevitably give way to direct calls to action, as with this excerpt from the naval review program in 1897: “Are you ready to help us strengthen the splendid fleet you have seen? Then join the Navy League. A strictly non-party organization to urge upon the Government of the day and the electorate the paramount importance of an adequate Navy as the best Guarantee of Peace.”³⁵⁶ Such recruiting pitches were consistent in Navy League literature. The danger represented by the growing German menace appeared in the Navy League guide to the 1909 Thames visit, in which a menacing-looking graphical representation of the naval arms race illustrated the slim lead that the British had in maintaining their naval supremacy (see Figure 17³⁵⁷).

The commemorations discussed in Chapter Three served to link the celebrated past to the present. Old heroes and old victories were presented as being replicable in the present because of the long-standing British virtues that had led to and sustained British greatness. In the discourse surrounding the fleet reviews there were strains that moved in the other direction, that linked the present to the past, creating teleologies that pointed to the present

³⁵⁴ *Official Programme of the Great Naval Review Westminster to Southend 17-24 July 1909*, 11.

³⁵⁵ *Official Programme of the Great Naval Review Westminster to Southend 17-24 July 1909*, 9.

³⁵⁶ Ruger, 97.

³⁵⁷ *Navy League Guide to the Thames Review*, 21.

state of affairs as being the result of accumulated virtue. This sentiment served to create a sense that Britain's place in the world was its natural one, that it was destined to dominate the world so long as the Britons remained true to their inherent virtue and upheld their time-honored ideals. Britain had earned its rightful place as a result of the unique contributions to civilization that it had made over the nineteenth century. This sentiment was most evident in the literature produced on the occasion of the Diamond Jubilee. The Navy of the nineteenth century had fulfilled its purpose well, and the resilient institution of the Royal Navy that had had so much past success was standing ready to take Britain safely into the twentieth century, as John Leyland argued in 1897: "It must be remembered, as a magnificent service rendered to the Empire by the Navy during the Queen's reign, that it has enabled us to exercise, undisputed, our military force wherever the need arose. This silent influence of our sea power for the imperial advantage should be constantly in the reader's mind, though some instances of its exercise may presently be cited."³⁵⁸ The Navy was linked to the improvements in Britain's standing in the world over the reign of Queen Victoria, and was credited with eliminating slavery and curtailing piracy. Reverend Green pointed out that those who lived in Britain at the time of the Diamond Jubilee could look back with satisfaction that since the beginning of the reign of Queen Victoria "slavery [had] been abolished; crime [had] diminished; [and] education [had] advanced."³⁵⁹ The Royal Navy had shown itself as being above reproach throughout Victoria's long reign: "The Royal Navy rendered splendid service alike to the State and the greater humanity during Her Majesty's reign...It has taken a noble and sustained part in the

³⁵⁸ John Leyland, "The Influence of Sea Power, 1837-1897," in *The Navy and Army Illustrated*, Friday, 25 June, 1897 (London: Kearns, 1897), 60. John Leyland is not listed in the publication as having a naval rank as most of the others are, and the volume does not contain biographical information for him. Perhaps he was an officer in the Navy League, or simply a journalist for *The Navy and Army Illustrated*.

³⁵⁹ Green, 4.

suppression of slavery, and piracy. It has never been used to administer punishment or secure compensation when subjects have been outraged or their goods have been destroyed.”³⁶⁰

Therefore, as the Navy had been nothing but a force for good in the world, it was worthy of continued British investment, and could be counted upon to continue to keep Britain secure and to make the world a more moral place.

The thematic strands explored in this chapter culminate in the overarching role that cultural manifestations of naval strength played in British society. This ultimate role was the compensation and mitigation of British unease and doubts about the future of the British Empire and the British people. The navy reassured its patrons in three ways. First, it directly pointed to a future that would be as bright as the past had been. The notion of the Royal Navy as a pillar of stability that would allow Britain to successfully transition to the twentieth century appeared in this excerpt from the *Navy and Army Illustrated* in its coverage of the Diamond Jubilee naval review: “We are now proceeding steadily, and on well-assured lines, in developing our Navy; and its restoration to a position it held at the beginning of the century will hereafter, I believe, be considered the special feature of a reign glorious in every respect.”³⁶¹ The second way was that it seemed to mitigate problems of identity crisis that plagued British society during this period. Jan Ruger argues that the Royal Navy offered a means of stabilizing Britain’s national identity in a way that the army could not:

The navy served as a prime symbol of national identity at a time when ideas of ‘the nation’ were contested both from within and without. While the army and

³⁶⁰ Leyland, 70.

³⁶¹ P. H. Colomb, “The Naval Personnel During the Queen’s Reign,” in *The Navy and Army Illustrated*, Friday, 25 June, 1897 (London: Kearns, 1897), 74. Colomb was a retired Vice Admiral who became an historian and a vocal critic of naval policy after he retired from active service in the 1880s.

its representation were rooted in regional traditions, the navy was a genuinely national institution...Its public celebration aimed to reconcile local, regional and national contexts. The capability to symbolically merge different national signifiers into one potent display made this a unique arena for cultural nation-building.³⁶²

The navy allowed for consolidation of notions of “Britishness” to go alongside and to override English, Welsh, Scottish, and Irish nationalism.³⁶³ Ruger argues that “threats to the British command of the sea...undermined senses of national identity, closely connected as they were to naval superiority in this period. All this meant that a strong sense of unresolvedness characterized the issue of nationhood in the United Kingdom of the late nineteenth century, a kingdom that was increasingly struggling to accommodate its four nations and define their common purpose.”³⁶⁴ Unlike the army, which had local ties, the navy belonged to everybody under the umbrella of the United Kingdom and its Empire. The official program from the fleet’s visit to the Thames in 1909 alluded to this feeling of imperial unity: “In one, and that a thoroughly practical, sense the Navy has always been Imperial. In its distribution and activity there has been no distinction between one part of the Empire and the others. Its ships and their crews have been, and still are, unreservedly at the service of every part wherever situated.”³⁶⁵ Finally, the navy was used to declare the solidarity and masculine virtue of the British race, contesting the notion that the race was in decline: “The ‘one vast machine’ that was the navy was an exclusively male domination, a realm of masculinity in which ‘guns and men’ came together.”³⁶⁶ The 1909 program linked the vigor of British youth to the continued

³⁶² Ruger, 10.

³⁶³ Ruger, 165.

³⁶⁴ Ruger, 165-166.

³⁶⁵ *The Navy League Guide to the Thames Review*, 23.

³⁶⁶ Ruger, 194. This quote was assembled from the language used on the cover of the *Official Programme of the Coronation Review*, 1911, and from an article in the *Daily Express* on July 19th, 1909.

strength of the Navy: “With all the attractions of a sea life in the Royal Navy it is a wonder that any boy prefers a life on shore. For granted that he is physically fit, healthy and ambitious, he not only sees a great deal of the world, but he has a chance of distinguishing himself by his bravery and zeal.”³⁶⁷ Therefore, the flower of the British nation could find its natural place of employment in that most British of institutions: the Royal Navy. The current incarnation of Britain’s youth, still as “fit, healthy, and ambitious” as their ancestors, could realize their full potential through the naval service.

In the years leading up to World War One, Germany became more menacing, and Britain’s position seemed less secure. As the stability of Britain’s position as the premier world power waned, the cultural importance of the Royal Navy increased,³⁶⁸ and this was directly linked to the vast increase in the complexity and frequency of naval spectacles.

In continuity with its heroic tradition, the contemporary incarnation of the Royal Navy was presented to the British public as a source of physical and moral strength, capable of securing Britain’s place in a glorious future. Just as commemorations of past victories served to remind Britons of what they had achieved, these celebrations of their contemporary naval strength aimed to reassure them about their security. Representations of naval strength were used to compensate for a sense of anxiety as Britain’s power was increasingly threatened by Germany. The fleet reviews of the early twentieth century drew unprecedented crowds. With the rise of the mass market, more and more people were involved in the “cult of the navy,” and increasingly demanded greater and greater participation in naval spectacles. As the arms race

³⁶⁷ *The Navy League Guide to the to the Thames Review*, 41.

³⁶⁸ Ruger, 182.

continued and the fleet expanded, the naval establishment had more ships to show off, and did so in order to demonstrate to the British people the results of their investment. Increasing demand for products with naval themes led to the commercialization of the Royal Navy in unprecedented ways. Civilians could consume navy chocolate, navy cigarettes, use navy soap, and buy dreadnought toys for their children. Adults and children alike could recreate old naval battles at home or play out new ones. This phenomenon of increased public demand for naval cultural artifacts fueled the cultural impulse for the arms race as it simultaneously placated the public and provided them with a heightened sense of pride in their invincible battlefleet. This battlefleet would only be used in one significant action after the outbreak of hostilities with Germany – the Battle of Jutland, and this action closed with disappointing results. It is to this single use of Britain's mightiest weapon and the reactions to the results of that use that this thesis will finally turn.

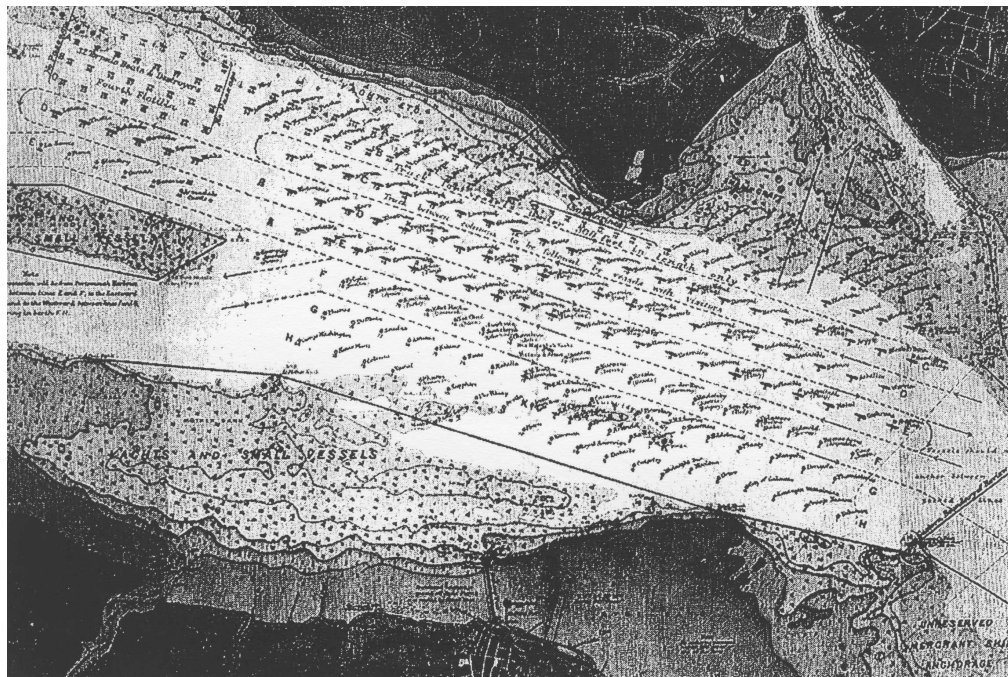
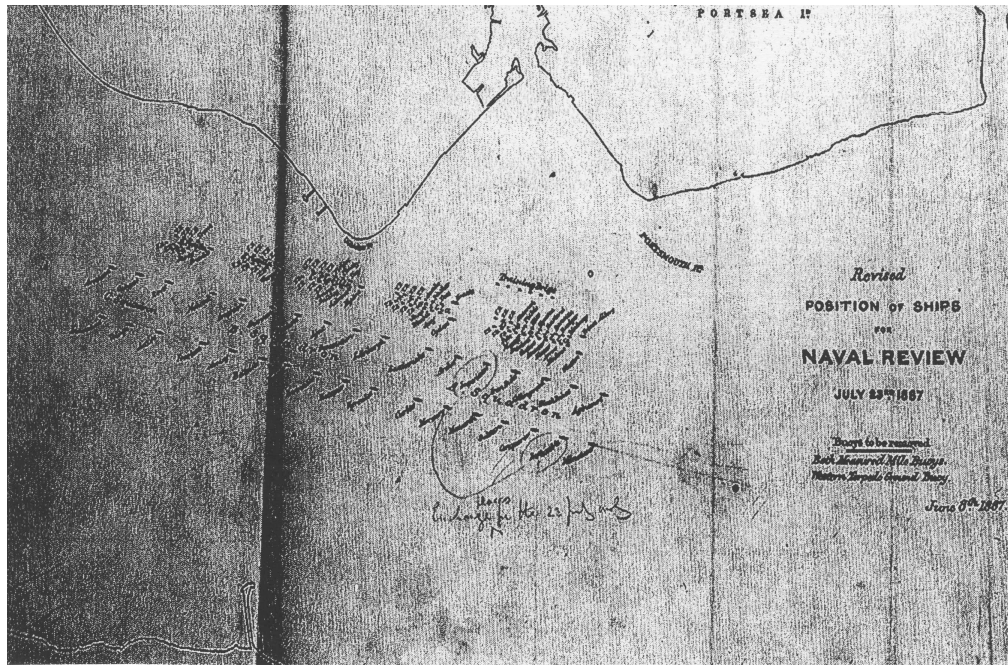



Figure 12

Top: Admiralty plan for Naval Review in 1887

Bottom: a Similar plan for 1914



Natal Manoeuvres

His Majesty's Sailors and Soldiers have found Fry's Cocoas and Chocolates beneficial during campaigning, and know what an acceptable gift is a package of Fry's Milk Chocolate when, in the piping times of peace, they have time for compliments to the fair sex.

Fry's

COCOAS and CHOCOLATES

Have Won More Awards Than Any Others.

Makers to H.M. The King, H.M. The Queen, H.R.H. The Prince of Wales, to several Royal Houses of Europe, and to the People for nearly 200 years.

Harrison & Sons, Printers in Ordinary to His Majesty, St. Martin's Lane, London.

Figure 13

Advertisement on the Back Cover of the *Navy League Guide to the Thames Review, 1909*

PATINOL

THE PERFECT ENAMEL PAINT

is
the product of the experiments and experience of three generations
of Paint Manufacturers,

is
remarkable for qualities of polish, finish, elasticity, and resistance to
atmospheric influences, both on interior and exterior surfaces,

is
therefore specially suitable for marine painting,

is
used by the Board of Admiralty, London, for painting H.M. Ships,

is
made at the North of Scotland Colour Works, Aberdeen, by

———— **FARQUHAR & GILL,** ————
to whom enquiries should be addressed. Established 1818.

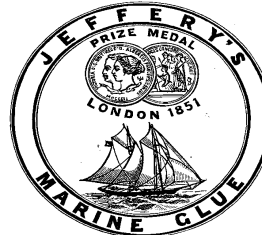
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& CO.'S

PATENT

Marine Glue.

TRADE



MARK

Adopted by H.M. Navy and many Steamship Companies for Deck Seams.
Also for Hospital, Brewery and Barrack Floors, Waterproofing Packing Cases,
and in combination with calico for air-tight cases, sticking lino and canvas
to decks, electrical insulation and other purposes.

LIGHT-COLOURED MARINE GLUES

With high softening-point, for Passenger Decks, etc.

WORKS:—Marsh Gate Lane, Stratford, London, E.

Telegrams—"Marine Glue," London.

National Telephone—357 Stratford.

Figure 14

Advertisement in the *Navy League Guide to the
Thames Review, 1909*

JEROME SACCONI

••••• — AND —

**GIBRALTAR,
PORTSMOUTH,
CHATHAM,
DEVONPORT,
LONDON, AND
MALTA.**

JAMES SPEED & CO., Ltd.



Naval & Military Wine & Spirit Merchants.

Naval Messes supplied **FREE OF DUTY** with their well-known Wines.
 :: :: PRICE LISTS and SAMPLES ON APPLICATION. :: ::

Telegraphic Addresses: "Saccone, Portsmouth." "Saccone, Devonport."
 "Saccone, Gibraltar." "Saccone, Chatham."
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**MORRIS'S
AFRICAN BLEND
MIXTURE.**

**5½d. per OZ. bag.
1/10 per ¼ oz. bag.**

A new mixture containing nearly 40 per cent. of Real Imported African
Tobacco—medium flavoured—smoking sweet with a very fine aroma.

ALL SHOPS AND STORES.

ESTABLISHED 1810.

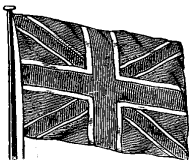
AN IDEAL PIPE TOBACCO.

B. MORRIS & SONS, LTD., LONDON, E.

Figure 15

Advertisement in the *Navy League Guide to the
Thames Review, 1909*

"See the Signal."



Dreadnought and wear British Clothing
made by

ALLAN QUATERMAIN,

The Old British Tailor,

38, WALBROOK, Mansion House, LONDON, E.C.

Telephone: 12066 CENTRAL.

A TIMELY WARNING.

Do you realize the importance of having your clothes **Tailor made**? Cheap factory-made articles can be made in any quantity and at any price, but I venture to say that really **well-cut** garments at moderate prices can only be obtained from a limited number of firms, amongst whom I make respectful claim to be included. I have every known facility for perfection in construction, and possess the "**Know How**" that makes my tailoring valuable and satisfactory.

LET ME MAKE YOU A SUIT.

PRICE LIST.

Trousers - - - from 16/-	Norfolk & Sporting Suits - - - from 63/-	Dinner Dress Suit - from 70/-
Knicker Breeches - ,, 21/-	Flannel Suit - - ,, 63/-	Evening Dress Suit - ,, 84/-
Riding Breeches - ,, 30/-	Reefer Suit - - ,, 63/-	Rainproof Overcoat - ,, 42/-
Flannel Trousers - ,, 13/6	Reefer & Vest - ,, 50/-	Fancy and Tweed Overcoat - - ,, 63/-
Special White Melton Trousers - - ,, 16/6	Morning Coat & Vest ,, 55/-	Ulster - - - ,, 70/-
Fancy Vests - - ,, 10/6	Frock Coat & Vest ,, 70/-	Motor Coat, leather lined ,, 84/-

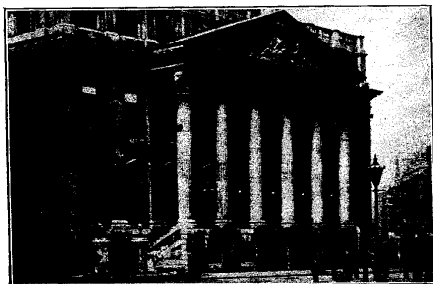
The "A.Q." Distension Coat for Sportsmen.

PRICE FROM - - - **35/0**

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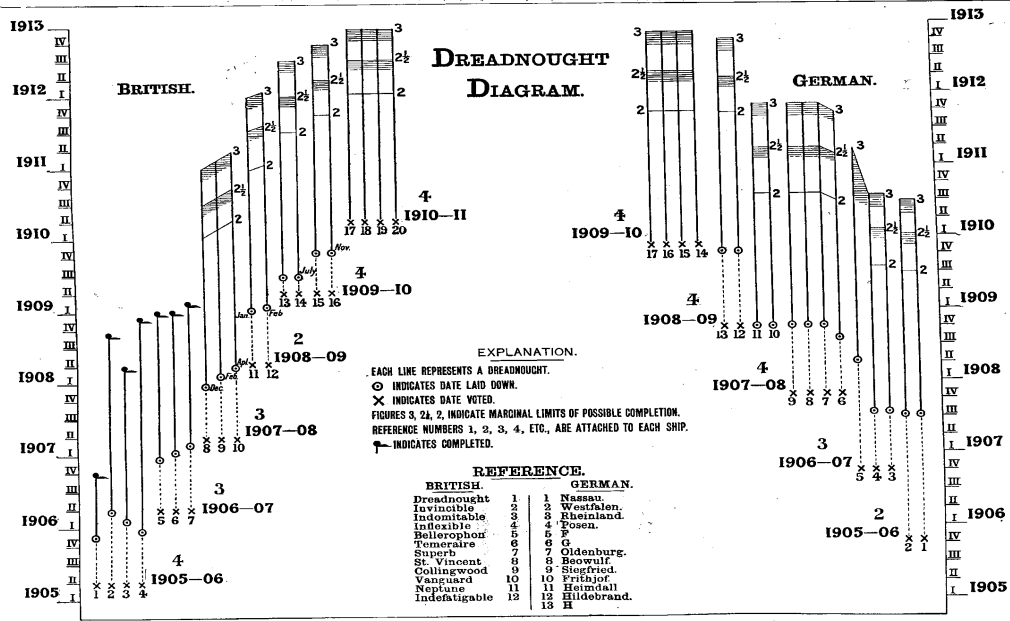
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Figure 16

Advertisement in the Navy League Guide to the
Thames Review, 1909



programme. Of these last four ships, two were laid down some time before their due dates, and arrangements have already been made for the building of the other two. Further, we know that the German Navy League is urging for an increase even on this heavy programme. These facts by themselves are serious enough, but they are not all. Since our naval estimates were presented in March, it has become known that Austria, a country bound by ties of the closest alliance with Germany, is adopting a naval programme which will give her in a few years a strong position in the Mediterranean. Without using the language of exaggeration or of panic, the Navy League wishes to bring these indisputable facts before all of its fellow citizens that it can reach. We ask those who read this Guide to consider and weigh them with care, to appreciate what they mean to the country which we love and to the Empire of which we are so justly proud, and to use their best endeavours to encourage a sound public opinion, which will serve to strengthen the hands of those responsible for the safety of the country. There may be other ways in which this valuable and necessary work can be done, but there is none which will be found more effective than that of supporting the Navy League and assisting to make it a force to which even Ministers of the Crown must listen.

THE TWO FLEETS OF THE ITALIAN RACE.

BY THE RIGHT HON. SIR CHARLES W. DILKE, BART., M.P.

ALL know the admirable courage and discipline that have uniformly distinguished the navy of Austria in her varied historic forms. Few recognise how little Austrian, in the South German sense, is, and ever has been, the Austrian fleet. British passengers by Austrian-Lloyd steamers are always puzzled when they first hear the words of command given in the Italian tongue, and find themselves unable to recognise anything that is German in the commercial fleet which has its headquarters at Trieste. But Trieste itself is a German city (large as is its Italian population) when compared with the ports of the Dalmatian coast, which, whether Austrian or Hungarian, have always been the bases of the Austrian navy. That there is a considerable Slavonic element on that coast no one can doubt, but, just as the Greek tongue and Greek civilisation have affected all the various races of the maritime provinces of Asia Minor, so the Italian tongue and Italian civilisation have treated the Slavs of the North-Eastern Adriatic. The navy which fought against

Figure 17

Navy League Guide to the Thames Review, 1909

EPILOGUE

“WHERE IS OUR NELSON?”

On the evening of March 30th, 1916 Admiral John Jellicoe, Commander-in-Chief of the British Grand Fleet, weighed anchor and put to sea from his base at Scapa Flow. Almost simultaneously, the British Battle Cruiser Fleet under Vice Admiral David Beatty left its base at the Firth of Forth. Both forces steamed east into the North Sea, with orders to deploy in anticipation of the German High Seas Fleet emerging from its protected harbor at Wilhelmshaven.³⁶⁹ There was little enthusiasm among the British fleet personnel, who had been given similar assignments before, which had by this time become dull routine. Since the outbreak of hostilities in 1914, there had been no decisive naval encounter with the Germans. On this occasion, however, about three hours after the British fleets left harbor, the German High Seas Fleet under Admiral Scheer, supported by a German battle cruiser force under Vice Admiral von Hipper, left Wilhelmshaven to attempt to reopen the supply lines to the Atlantic cut off by the British blockade and harass British shipping if encountered.³⁷⁰

The fleets became aware of each other the following afternoon. The first forces engaged were the battle cruiser squadrons under Beatty and von Hipper. What initially developed was a British stern chase of the German battle cruiser fleet, with von Hipper leading Beatty to the west toward the main German force. The two sides exchanged fire at extreme range, and upon taking two German shells the British battle cruiser *HMS Indefatigable*

³⁶⁹ Holger Herwig, *“Luxury” Fleet: The Imperial German Navy 1888-1918* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 178.

³⁷⁰ Herwig, 178.

exploded, racked by numerous secondary explosions.³⁷¹ During Beatty's pursuit of Scheer, the battle cruiser *HMS Queen Mary* suffered the same fate. Her magazines, full of cordite charges, were easily penetrated by the German shells and the ship was completely destroyed. Having catastrophically lost two battle cruisers, Beatty is credited with having said, with stereotypical British understatement, "There seems to be something wrong with our bloody ships today."³⁷² Upon sighting Scheer's main force that von Hipper had led him toward, Beatty turned his own fleet north, ostensibly to lead the whole of the German fleet toward Jellicoe.³⁷³ Scheer and von Hipper with their newly combined forces pursued Beatty for about ninety minutes, at which point they found themselves exposed to Jellicoe's full broadside. Upon grasping the situation, Jellicoe executed a rapid redeployment of his fleet to form an east/west line, "Crossing the T" of the combined German Fleet, which was oriented in a north/south line, and closing range. Jellicoe's maneuver placed the Germans at a considerable disadvantage in terms of the number of guns they could bring to bear, and the British salvos were inflicting heavy damage on the German fleet as it closed range with Jellicoe's line.³⁷⁴

After stumbling into this unfortunate fleet geometry, Scheer quickly attempted to disengage. He turned his fleet away from the Grand Fleet, and was cut off a second time by Jellicoe, who had turned south, recreating the same geometry in a 90-degree rotation from the original scenario. As night fell, Scheer successfully disengaged from the fighting, and by 9pm the hottest part of the battle was over.³⁷⁵ In the darkness, the German High Seas Fleet

³⁷¹ Herwig, 181.

³⁷² Herwig, 182.

³⁷³ Herwig, 182.

³⁷⁴ Herwig, 183.

³⁷⁵ Herwig, 185.

managed to evade Jellicoe, who was hesitant to pursue aggressively because this would have made his fleet vulnerable to torpedo attacks. By morning, Scheer had made good his escape.³⁷⁶

The raw data associated with the battle did not seem to favor the British. They had lost 14 ships to the Germans' 11. They had lost more heavily in terms of displacement, 111,000 tons to the Germans' 62,000 tons. More British were killed, taking 6,784 casualties to the Germans' 3,058.³⁷⁷ This was a far cry from what the British public had been led to expect, in the wake of all of the expectations of "another Trafalgar" that had been raised in the realm of naval theater and commemoration. Britons were taught, through these commemorations and fleet reviews, that the Royal Navy was invincible, and that any encounter with the German fleet would have led to nothing less than the complete annihilation of the Germans. When this did not happen at Jutland, a passionate debate ensued about the appropriate place to assign blame for the absence of crushing victory. This debate evolved over time as passions cooled.

The bulk of this epilogue will study British reactions to the Battle of Jutland in the form of political speeches and writings produced by military elites as they analyzed the battle, and will show how the yawning gulf between expectation and reality provoked a firestorm of criticism and accusation. These high emotions waned as time passed, and more rational analyses of the true importance of the clash at Jutland were published. These reactions are indicative of just how solidly the naval theater had formed high expectations of crushing victory. These reactions varied between criticism of the lack of a decisive victory, and attempts to reinterpret the battle as a victory in order to soothe egos and reassure the public.

³⁷⁶ Herwig, 187.

³⁷⁷ Herwig, 188.

The immediate British reports of the battle came later than their German counterparts. The Germans were quick to point out the larger number of ships they had sunk, and their press spun the battle as a great German victory. Lord Jellicoe's initial report published in the *London Gazette* in early July attempted to put the best spin on the battle without going into too much detail:

The conduct of officers and men throughout the day and night actions was entirely beyond praise. No words of mine could do them justice. On all sides it is reported to me that the glorious traditions of the past were most worthily upheld – whether in heavy ships, cruisers, light-cruisers, or destroyers – the same admirable spirit prevailed. Officers and men were cool and determined, with a cheeriness that would have carried them through anything. The heroism of the wounded was the admiration of all. I cannot adequately express the pride with which the spirit of the Fleet filled me.³⁷⁸

Jellicoe carefully crafted references to the sustaining of naval tradition (“the glorious traditions of the past were most worthily upheld”) and the presence of good British virtue (“cool and determined”). The admiralty also published documents denying the truth of the German claim of victory, as with the following diary published in 1916 by two anonymous sailors who had served at Jutland. One of the sailors wrote that “June 1st saw the British fleet searching for [the Germans] just outside their minefields, and furious at missing them. It saw them in harbour, rubbing their hands – over what? Over a victory? No! but because they had escaped with their lives...The ‘triumphant’ Hun just chuckles because he has met us and not been annihilated.”³⁷⁹ The other sailor echoed that sentiment by saying that “We, indeed, are not triumphant; we are very unhappy because we were not able to annihilate him as we had hoped to; but be quite

³⁷⁸ “Third Supplement to the London Gazette – Tuesday, 4 July 1916” in *The London Gazette, July 4th, 1916*.

³⁷⁹ Unknown Authors, *The Jutland Battle: By Two Who Took Part in It* (London: Burrup, Mathies & Sprague, 1916), 10.

sure that if we had got at him on a clear day; if we had sighted him at 4am instead of 4pm on that day, it would be a very small Hun now, counting not the ships that he had lost but the few that remained to him.”³⁸⁰ Both of these passages underline the frustration felt by the fleet personnel at having not fully realized their culturally constructed purpose.

The public felt this frustration as well, and members of Parliament crafted their speeches to compensate for their constituents’ disappointment. Prime Minister Asquith, speaking at Queen’s Hall in August 1916, said that:

The Navy, like the Army, has been anxious to try conclusions with the enemy. The enemy took good care that their chances of doing so shall be few and far between. Since its glorious victory of the 31st of May the German High Sea Fleet, or what remains of it, has not ventured to emerge from its ports. It has shrunk, apparently, from repeating its triumphant experience. (Laughter) As I said at the time, a couple more of such victories and there would be nothing or very little left of the German Fleet. (Laughter)³⁸¹

Following his mocking of the German claims of victory (claims that were based on relative casualties between the British and Germans), Asquith went on to modify the culturally constructed main purpose of the British fleet. Instead of portraying the fleet as an instrument for the annihilation of the enemy, he pointed to the fleet’s importance as a means of economically strangling Germany:

We are too apt to forget – that it is the Navy, unobtrusive, silent, but always on the watch, with its ever-tightening grip, that is starving the German power of resistance and throttling the life of Germany. There has never in the whole of history been such a decisive proof of the supreme, nay capital, importance of the command of the sea. I think we shall all agree that it was a wise and far-sighted

³⁸⁰ Unknown Authors, *The Jutland Battle*, 10-11.

³⁸¹ H. H. Asquith, “Mr Asquith’s Speech at the Queen’s Hall, August 4th, 1916” in *After Two Years*, ed. Unknown (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1916), 24-25.

policy that has led out statesmen of all parties and schools in the past to insist on the cardinal necessity for us of naval supremacy.³⁸²

This passage was a necessary realignment of expectations. All of the energy and enthusiasm for a crushing naval victory now had to be redirected, because it could not be realistically satiated.

Mr. Bonar Law, the First Lord of the Admiralty, immediately stood up and echoed the Prime Minister's sentiments:

For two years our sailors have kept their silent, their lonely and arduous vigil, upon which the life of this country and the fortunes of this war depended, and when the opportunity came they were glad to allow the German Fleet to win the victory of which the Prime Minister has spoken (Laughter and Cheers). Never in our history has naval supremacy been so great as in this war, and when the war is over it will be realized, as I think it is realized by our Allies today, that without our Navy victory would have been impossible, and that with our Navy victory will be complete.³⁸³

This passage also included an attempt at reassurance about the future, with the guarantee of eventual victory over the Germans, while simultaneously chastening expectations over the Navy's prospects of completely destroying its German counterpart. Arthur Balfour spoke specifically of the Battle of Jutland, and refuted the German claim of victory by offering a favorable analysis of the results of the battle:

It would be an error, however, to suppose that the naval victory changed the situation; what it did was to confirm it. Before Jutland, as after it, the German Fleet was imprisoned; the battle was an attempt to break the bars and burst the confining gates; it failed, and with its failure the High Seas Fleet sank again into impotence.³⁸⁴

³⁸² Asquith, 24-25.

³⁸³ A. Bonar Law, "Mr. Bonar Law's Speech," in *After Two Years*, 38.

³⁸⁴ Arthur Balfour, "The Navy's Part: Fruits of the Battle of Jutland, Mr. Balfour's Message," in *After Two Years*, 43-44.

This completely contradicted the dominant naval imagery, and cleverly re-crafted the publically consumable notion of the battle with the metaphor of the Royal Navy as a prison guard keeping the German fleet locked up. Indeed, it portrayed the Battle of Jutland as having turned out exactly as the British intended.

In spite of the politicians' attempts to put the best possible (though essentially accurate) spin on the significance of Jutland, this was not sufficient to stem the tide of disappointment over the seeming break with the past legacies of Trafalgar and the defeat of the Spanish Armada. The public yearned for a scapegoat. Naval officers lined up to defend either Jellicoe or Beatty, while placing blame for the absence of a total victory on one or the other admiral.³⁸⁵ Most of the blame immediately fell on Jellicoe for not being aggressive enough. The public had become enamored with the popular conception of Vice Admiral Beatty as an aggressive reincarnation of Nelson, as demonstrated by John Buchan's work published shortly after the war ended: "Sir David Beatty was never for a moment in doubt...Naval battles are not won by playing for safety. Hawke pursued Conflans in a stormy dusk into Quiberon Bay, and Nelson before the battle of the Nile risked in the darkness the shoals and reefs of an uncharted sea."³⁸⁶ He also made more explicit references to the tie between Beatty and the old naval heroes: "Sir David Beatty faced great odds and great difficulties in the spirit of... Nelson."³⁸⁷ In a later passage he reinforced this notion of aggressiveness as the cardinal naval virtue, which to some would have been seen as a snub directed at Jellicoe: "It is only the ignorant who imagine that

³⁸⁵ Langhorne Gibson and J.E.T. Harper, *The Riddle of Jutland: An Authentic History* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1934), 373.

³⁸⁶ John Buchan, *The Battle of Jutland* (London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 191-?), 9.

³⁸⁷ Buchan, 43.

the loss of a few ships could mean a weakening of British naval prestige. A fleet, if it is to be better than scrap iron, must be risked gallantly when occasion offers.”³⁸⁸

While recalling Nelson and pointing to his reincarnation, Buchan attempted to quell the sense that somehow the British people had fallen from their earlier state of greatness, and asserted that Jutland, while not as crushing a victory as Trafalgar, had in fact elevated the reputation of the British Tar: “Not less conspicuous than the leadership was the amazing fighting quality of the British sailors. It was more than a century since had had the opportunity of a first-class naval action, and it may be confidently said that not even at Trafalgar did the spirit of her seamen shine more brightly.”³⁸⁹ These passages collectively attempt to placate the British public, yearning for its Trafalgar, by boldly claiming that Jutland essentially *was* Trafalgar. It had its own Nelson (in the person of Beatty) and the British sailors who had fought at Jutland had actually *surpassed* the accomplishments of the sailors at Trafalgar.

In rushing to Jellicoe’s aid, Admiral Reginald Bacon described the nature of the “Jutland controversy” in 1925:

[After Jutland] people asked: “What is wrong, where is our Nelson?” The Public only remained partly satisfied that the cause of the apparent inaction was due to the disinclination of the German Fleet to put to sea...Then [at Jutland] they confidently believed our day at last would have come – Trafalgar would be repeated, and ship after ship of the German Navy would be sent to the bottom. Such were the uneducated hopes of the British nation. In the early months of 1916 the day came – issue was joined and the battle fought. The news of the result spread dismay – apparently our fleet had been more damaged than that of the enemy...where was the victory, the crushing defeat so eagerly anticipated? Surely someone had blundered, and surely some gross mistake had been made?

³⁸⁸ Buchan, 41-42.

³⁸⁹ Buchan, 44.

Time went on; the war was won; but still there remained a feeling that the chapters in Naval History written by our sailors in the war lacked the glory of those handed down by our ancestors.³⁹⁰

It is ironic that Admiral Bacon blamed the “uneducated” British public after the naval establishment and pressure groups had gone to such trouble in the years leading up to World War One to “educate” them. The purpose of this “education” was to convey the notion that a decisive victory was precisely what the British nation could expect in a conflict with Germany, and that all of their tax expenditures devoted to creating a mighty fleet were specifically going toward that end. Having blamed the ill treatment of Jellicoe on an artificial and unrealistic expectation of decisive naval victory, Bacon then deconstructed the memory of Nelson, and asserted that Jellicoe, not Beatty, was the true twentieth century reincarnation of Britain’s greatest naval hero: “Nelson was, and always will be, a unique personality; since much of the picturesqueness of his complex character was due to the conditions of the times in which he lived. Had Nelson lived in the twentieth century he would appear to those writers to be totally different to the Nelson of whom they write, and who lived in the early nineteenth century.”³⁹¹

He specifically asserted that:

The kernel of Nelson’s character would still remain if he were alive today: his devotion to duty and prompt decision, the result of earnest thought, would persist; but the conditions that would govern the use of these qualities in a modern navy would be so different that they would appear to be totally different attributes. The one predominant quality that Nelson exhibited, and which stamps him as a great sea commander, was a swift and unerring judgment and quick determination in a crisis in battle.³⁹²

³⁹⁰ Reginald Bacon, *The Jutland Scandal* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1925), 2-3.

³⁹¹ Bacon, 11.

³⁹² Bacon, 11-12.

This attempted to tear down the notion that Beatty was the new Nelson simply because he was aggressive. Instead, Jellicoe was the new Nelson because of his superior judgment. Bacon reiterated this concept more explicitly in the following passage:

Let us then, above all, correct any mistaken ideas we may have imbibed from sensational writings about Nelson as a sea officer. He was not in any way merely a bull at the gate fighter; there were dozens of such men in the British Navy at the time who never rose above mere passing distinction. He was essentially a thinker and an organizer and a great leader of men. Loyalty and single-mindedness were such marked features in his character that never would he have permitted anyone to let their adulation overstep the limits of propriety and seek to magnify Nelson at the expense of any of his Commanders in Chief.³⁹³

At the end of this last passage, Bacon was chastising Beatty for not coming to the aid of Jellicoe on his own in this very public debate. Bacon completed the transformation of Jellicoe into the new Nelson by claiming that Nelson would have acted precisely as Jellicoe had:

If, therefore, Nelson the great sea officer had been in command of the Grand Fleet at Jutland, we may be perfectly certain of one thing; that he would have done nothing foolish, he would never have allowed any gallery display to lead him to risk the Grand Fleet, he would never have applied Trafalgar tactics to twentieth-century fighting. It is grossly libelous to imagine he would have done so. We may be quite sure that the sound tactic was the one that would have been followed by him instantly and on the spur of the moment.³⁹⁴

This is indicative of the versatility of the Nelson legend, and its ability to be skillfully adapted to advance differing arguments. Bacon used many more comparisons between Nelson's actions throughout his career and Jellicoe's at Jutland in order to demonstrate the comparable quality of the two admirals.

³⁹³ Bacon, 19.

³⁹⁴ Bacon, 19-20.

Admiral Bacon's work was fiercely partisan (he ended his work with the sentence "Thank God that Lord Jellicoe commanded the Grand Fleet both before and at the Battle of Jutland"),³⁹⁵ but his conclusions were largely borne out by subsequent historiography. After passions had cooled, a more rational assessment of the battle— focused on the battle's real impact on the war effort rather than on its lack of romantic parallels to the heroic tradition of the Royal Navy— vindicated Jellicoe's lack of aggression following the disengagement of the German fleet. A work published in 1934 was kinder to Jellicoe: "In the course of minutes, indeed seconds, Jellicoe had to decide on the manner of the deployment of his vast armada into the line of battle. At that moment the fate of the British Fleet, of the British Empire, of the Allied cause, and of civilization depended on the clear tactical vision of this one man. He did the quickest bit of thinking since man became an intelligent creature."³⁹⁶ They later went on to extol his virtue: "Jellicoe's greatness – his power – lay in an essential clarity and directness of thought...Jellicoe was an admiral of the modern age, thinking and acting on a strategic plane higher than that of other naval leaders afloat in his day. At Jutland he displayed every quality of the great commander – he was a courageous, aggressive fighter, a collected and brilliant tactician, and a strategist of the first water."³⁹⁷ While being kind to Jellicoe, the authors did not feel compelled to attack Beatty, which had characterized earlier, more partisan, literature about the Battle of Jutland, and instead treated the two men as equals who had served their country with distinction: "Jellicoe and Beatty, two opposite poles, two historic characters, had each served the nation with all his individual being. Each had contributed an imperishable

³⁹⁵ Bacon, 148.

³⁹⁶ Gibson and Harper, ix.

³⁹⁷ Gibson and Harper, 247.

memory to the Royal Navy- one had carried on the tradition of great strategic admirals- the other had personified the instinctive warrior who flung aside all consideration to come to grips."³⁹⁸ This was indicative of the effect that the passing of eighteen years had on British popular memory of the battle. The shock of disappointment over the lack of decisive results at Jutland had started to wear off. There was no longer the same impulse to accuse the commanders of the fleet of incompetence or squeamishness.

Combined with acknowledging the difficult situation that Jellicoe had been in and how well Jellicoe had performed, Gibson and Harper acknowledged that while Jutland had not led to the total destruction of the German fleet, it had been decisive: "The High Sea Fleet ceased from the time it reached the safe entourage of Wilhelmshaven to have any influence on the war by sea or by land or by air. It was as powerless as though it had been eliminated."³⁹⁹ The authors then reached even further to ascribe the fall of Germany to the battle itself: "The German defeat was the beginning of the end. It infected the nation, which had reposed such complete confidence in the Fleet. The revolution of 1918 was the bitter fruit of the defeat at Jutland – of the pressure of the blockade and not of the reverses sustained on land."⁴⁰⁰ Most striking was the authors' claim that Jutland had not been a decisive battle, which they then contradicted later in their work. The immediate negative impressions of the British people were misplaced, and would be proven incorrect by the subsequent course of the war:

Disappointment and misinformation led the British public to minimize and underestimate the battle. They could not realize that the 'annihilation,' which they had believed their fleet would achieve, had actually been accomplished –

³⁹⁸ Gibson and Harper, 387.

³⁹⁹ Gibson and Harper, x.

⁴⁰⁰ Gibson and Harper, xi.

that the fleet of Germany would never strike, never menace Britain again; never so much as fire another gun in a North Sea battle – would come to its end in total surrender and destruction. Jutland emerged to take its place beside Trafalgar as one of the very great milestones in British naval history.⁴⁰¹

This tendency toward revisionism indicated the still powerful desire of the British to remember Jutland in the way that would most powerfully sustain the British naval traditions and provide inspiration for future generations.

Twenty-first century authors, who are far removed from the emotions of the period, and who do not have the cultural programming that would make them yearn for repeats of Trafalgar, reinforce the notion of Jutland as a decisive British victory, albeit without the emotion of earlier works. Keith Yates's work published in 2000 attempted to justify the lack of a decisive outcome at Jutland: "Jutland was obviously not decisive in the sense that Trafalgar had been. However, in these latter cases the defeated admirals had either chosen to stand and fight it out or couldn't avoid it. These battles also involved opposing fleets and admirals of vastly different capabilities, and thus they are not at all comparable with the situation on 31 May 1916."⁴⁰² Along with asserting the unrealistic expectations that the British had with regard to Jutland, the author is also kind to Jellicoe: "Jellicoe's responsibilities were on a different scale from those of the other admirals. He knew he was the only man on either side who could lose the war in an afternoon, and he was determined not to let this happen."⁴⁰³ This echoes Bacon's sentiments about Jellicoe's superior judgment and appropriate restraint.

⁴⁰¹ Gibson and Harper, 394.

⁴⁰² Keith Yates, *Flawed Victory: Jutland, 1916* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2000), 223.

⁴⁰³ Yates, 223.

Nigel Steel and Peter Hart's work published in 2003 reinforces these sentiments. They praise Jellicoe: "Nevertheless, his natural calmness, intelligence and clear thinking allowed him to transcend these handicaps to achieve his overriding aim safely: to retain for Britain command of the world's oceans beyond the narrow confines of the North Sea."⁴⁰⁴ They point to the misplaced expectations of the British people: "Popular expectations, founded on centuries of naval supremacy, had always been absurdly high. Nothing but the complete destruction of the German fleet would have been acceptable to the British public...They simply expected the Germans to be soundly thrashed. In the harsh light of this view what actually happened at Jutland fell far short of expectations."⁴⁰⁵ Finally, Steel and Hart conclude that Jutland was a victory for the British, rather than a draw. Daniel Allen Butler's 2006 work comes to all of these same conclusions.⁴⁰⁶

It is understandable that the final moment of release of all of the stored energy that had accumulated over the course of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century naval pageantry would have evoked such a storm. The British people had given up so much to build and maintain the most powerful navy on earth. They had been told time and time again that though their position of power and prosperity relative to the rest of the world seemed unstable and increasingly threatened, there was something inherent in the qualities of the British race that would carry them through. Old British virtues, exemplified by Nelson and Drake, and celebrated at commemorations of Trafalgar and the defeat of the Armada, were timeless and eternal. The displays of large, modern battleships in greater numbers than had ever been seen

⁴⁰⁴ Nigel Steel and Peter Hart, *Jutland 1916: Death in the Grey Wastes* (London: Cassell, 2003), 435.

⁴⁰⁵ Steel and Hart, 418.

⁴⁰⁶ Daniel Allen Butler, *Distant Victory: The Battle of Jutland and the Allied Triumph in the First World War* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2006), 5, 220, 223.

before were amplified in the public consciousness by the increased commercialization of the cult of the navy and the rise of the public mass market. How could such a powerful fleet not achieve overwhelming victory? Britain had numerical superiority, superiority in weight of broadside, and the most finely tuned and highly trained naval enlisted and officer corps in the world. How could the public not have been disappointed by the result?

The seeds of a “partial victory” rather than a total one were laid in Britain’s material readiness. The British armor piercing shells did not work correctly. As described in Chapter One, the shells suffered from fusing problems that caused them to explode prematurely, and were especially susceptible to fragmentation when striking an enemy hull at an oblique angle. Following the war, unreliable explosive testing practices came to light that indicated that between 30% and 70% of the British shells fired at the German fleet were duds.⁴⁰⁷ Arthur Pollen’s fire control system had been blocked by bureaucratic stagnation at the Admiralty, and especially by Admiral Wilson and Commander Dreyer, the latter of which had chosen to cash in on the concept with a device of his own. The adoption of cordite explosives had made the British battle cruisers susceptible to secondary explosions, which had doomed the *Indefatigable* and the *Queen Mary*. Luck had also played a role, in that night had fallen on May 31st before Jellicoe could finish boxing in Scheer. Had any of these factors not been present to hamper the Royal Navy, the British might have had the very victory they had lusted after and demanded. The degree to which the Royal Navy almost met the incredible expectations placed on it was itself remarkable. Though such a victory was possible, the expectations cultivated by the naval theater were anachronistic. They were designed to galvanize public support for allocation of

⁴⁰⁷ Yates, 222.

public resources, but they became a cultural force all on their own. The navy was a crucial part of British identity, and the naval theater, both in terms of commemorations and reviews, only intensified this centrality. The concept of the Navy not only served to knit the nation together culturally, but it was remembered as a source of past security, and relied upon as an assurance of future security. The degree to which the concept of naval power was central to what it meant to be a Briton cannot be overestimated.

CONCLUSION

This thesis has argued that the Royal Navy, as a culturally constructed institution, held a central place in the British consciousness during the years that immediately preceded World War One. The numerous and varied ways in which the Navy was represented in British society indicated its reach and importance, and the varying forms of these representations were indicative of the institution's versatility. This all-important culturally constructed institution was in turn used to bolster a flagging confidence in the future of the British race. The British had compelling reasons to be apprehensive about their future during this period. The Great Depression of the 1870s had destabilized their unqualified belief in economic liberalism. Britain's unchallenged position as the "gloriously isolated" European nation was no longer tenable by the end of the century. The shock waves associated with the unification of Germany following the Franco-Prussian War had knocked Europe off balance. As a result, Britain's primary foreign policy aim, which was centered on staying above the fray of the political turmoil on the Continent, was increasingly questioned. This period is illuminating in terms of studying the British self-conception because it is in times of great strife and uncertainty that people and societies turn, or rather return, to their most basic values and sources of identity.

Chapter Two argued that the British cultural caricature of the Germans revealed a significant amount about how the British viewed themselves, as well as how they specifically characterized the Germans as a threat to their national security. Always quietly confident, the British responded to their own growing sense of unease by pointing to their German cousins, who they perceived as being significantly more unstable. This was coupled with an insistence

on “staying the course,” in terms of maintaining the time honored British virtue that had gotten them this far.

In addition to revealing the cultural values that animated British society at this time, this period also reveals those indispensable institutions that were at the core of British national identity. In addition to eternal British virtue animating the British sense of self in their time of uncertainty, the institution of the Royal Navy reinforced and sustained Britons’ sense of strength and power. Chapter Three illustrated how the character of Drake and especially of Nelson served as racial markers that would point the British in the right direction as they searched for ways to reassure themselves about their declining position on the world stage. Memory of a heroic naval past was used to inspire and reassure the public. The heroes of the past were eternal, and remained within the British soul waiting to be reawakened in Britain’s critical hour of need.

Chapter Four showed how energetically the public yearned for reassurance that their fleet was ready to defend them, and how these public yearnings were then translated back into increased expenditure. From all corners of the United Kingdom, people came to consume their mighty battlefleet in the form of fleet reviews, and took pieces of their navy home with them in the form of the increasingly proliferating commercial products with naval themes.

Finally, the Epilogue demonstrated the frustration and belated panic that resulted from the failure of the navy to live up to its culturally constructed purpose. The most powerful weapon in Britain’s arsenal had failed to utterly destroy its intended target, the German High Seas Fleet, and this sent ripples of disappointment through the British public—especially the

naval enthusiasts—and prompted numerous and varied attempts to reinterpret the Battle of Jutland as a victory in order to soothe this public disappointment.

That the navy filled such a critical role in these ways is indicative of how central the notion of Britain as the unassailable master of the seas was to the British people. The most powerful navy in the world was their birthright, their entitlement. It was the instrument by which they would maintain the health and security of the British Empire, which was a force for civilization and justice. The Royal Navy had stopped the slave trade and fought piracy. It had brought prosperity to Great Britain by providing a stable environment for trade and commerce. The British treatment of their navy also provides an example of a people reacting to a sense of decline. Hyper-masculine reassurance of a strong and powerful navy ready to defend them as their world position slipped away provides an illuminating study of the human condition. When they felt threatened, the British returned to those institutions they felt were the most stable and the most reassuring.

There are also recognizable elements in the British story in American society today. When the American people look back on the twentieth century, the picture looks as pleasant and self-congratulating as that of nineteenth-century Britain. The Americans were on the victors' side in World War One, were primarily responsible for the defeat of the Japanese in World War II, enjoyed a relatively prosperous economic boom in the 1950s and 1960s (which was then translated into military hegemony by the end of the twentieth century) and defeated the USSR in the Cold War. At the end of the twentieth century, the Americans had good reason to feel confident about their position relative to the rest of the world. This confidence has not

survived the first decade of the twenty-first century. American confidence was badly shaken in the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11th, 2001. This confidence remains shaky with two wars raging in Afghanistan and Iraq against a nominally religion-based insurgency engaging in asymmetric warfare, to which Americans are not well suited. As a result of this shaken confidence, the Americans find themselves increasingly questioning how they can cling to their position as world hegemon and steward of the American Empire.

By comparison, the British oversaw a long period of economic growth over the nineteenth century, which they translated into overwhelming naval power. In 1904 they managed to remove their most persistent antagonist (France) from their list of potential enemies. But, Britons' confidence in their own superiority did not go unchallenged either. They were badly shocked by the Boer War, and had new reason to question their own security. In an increasingly fragile Concert of Europe, Britons looked with alarm at an upstart Germany and sought to continually reassure themselves that their navy could hold onto their position as a superpower indefinitely.

Just as the British looked to their navy to reassure them, Americans today seek out their own pillars of strength. Americans today are confronted with news reports and other commissioned studies about the unfitness of America's youth for military service,⁴⁰⁸ and with a sense of societal disintegration in the wake of the countercultural revolution of 1968 and the rise of postmodern thought. They have reason to feel a sense of decline just as the British did.

⁴⁰⁸ Committee on Youth Population and Military Recruitment: Physical, Medical, and Mental Health Standards, *Assessing Fitness for Military Enlistment: Physical, Medical, and Mental Health Standards* (Washington: National Research Council, 2006), 178.

I am not arguing that the American position with regard to the rest of the world is directly analogous to that of Great Britain in the period studied in this thesis— to do so would be to deny the historical specificity and uniqueness of each period. I am, however, suggesting that there are certain elements of the story that Americans can empathize with in looking back at their British forerunners in their delicate position as the last remaining world superpower.

The story told in this thesis is that of a society convincing itself to commit vast resources toward militarization in order to defend itself and protect its interests. These expenditures were couched in culturally constructed notions of patriotism and pride in a heroic past, and were a reaction to panic. The largest increases in the British naval building programs immediately followed events chronicled by historians as “scares.” This rapid buildup, in turn, fed the Anglo-German “misunderstanding,” as Germany continued to build up its own navy to try (unsuccessfully) to keep pace with Great Britain. Paul Kennedy argues that the naval question was, for contemporary public opinion, the most significant catalyst for the worsening Anglo-German relations and subsequently for the outbreak of World War One.⁴⁰⁹

An acknowledgement of this phenomenon can allow us in our contemporary society to recognize and dismantle our own culturally-constructed notions of our all-powerful American military. When Fox News lauds even the most trivial gestures or accomplishments of every single service-member, they are playing into this tendency. When Toby Keith writes songs about the American Soldier, whose lyrics are a love-letter to the morally pure but fictitious archetype of the American “race,” he is inciting the public to rally around this construction and

⁴⁰⁹ Paul Kennedy, *The Rise of the Anglo-German Antagonism 1860-1914* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980), 416.

to use it to convince them of their own security. By convincing ourselves that these impossible ideals are true about our military, we fail to see our soldiers, sailors, and Marines the way they truly are. We blind ourselves to the negative— the inefficiency and waste, the individual failures and poor performances, and the misguided execution of unilateral foreign policies that have characterized the first decade of the twenty-first century. By relying on our military to continue to preserve our position in the world, we make ourselves more apt to use military force at the expense of alternative, more cosmopolitan ways of engaging the world. By removing, or at least recognizing, these cultural constructions, we will have a better, more realistic notion of our ideal identity and place in the world relative to the international community and our fellow humanity.

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