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THE POSSIBILITY OF OUR FLEETS AND HARBOURS BEING SURPRISED.

*By Commander the Right Hon. the Lord ELLENBOROUGH, R.N.
(Retired).*

Tuesday, 9th May, 1905.

Admiral Sir R. H. HARRIS, K.C.B., K.C.M.G. (President Royal
Naval College, Greenwich), in the Chair.

I AM very grateful to the Council of this Institution for the honour they have done me in asking me to read a paper on the subject of the possibility of our harbours and fleets being surprised during the last few hours of peace, or the first few days of a war, and for the opportunity that has thus been given to me to express my views and to reply to criticisms that may be uttered by those who do not agree with me—an advantage which the rules of debate in the House of Lords did not give me.

In my speech in that House I touched on a great many points, some of which, being rather technical, were not reported in any newspaper. I hope, therefore, that those present will forgive me repeating what I said on that occasion, even if they have already read such portions of my speech as appeared in the daily Press. I do this because I am never likely to find myself at any future time before an audience containing more competent critics than those I am now facing, and I am very desirous of having this subject adequately discussed.

On the 3rd March I asked Lord Selborne if he and his naval colleagues were of opinion that the present laws of the country were such as to enable them to check, if they wished it, the dissemination of news, and to take all other precautions, not only against attacks that might be made on our men-of-war or on our harbours for the purpose of closing them, but against invasion; and if not, whether he would consider the desirability of bringing the subject before the Committee for Imperial Defence, with the view of appointing a committee of specialists, partly composed of naval and military officers, to consider what alterations should be made in our laws for the purpose of securing our own coasts and harbours against surprise, before the commencement of hostilities and during the earlier days of a war, such committee to have power to hear evidence both with closed doors and in public, and to report confidentially as well as publicly.

I went on to say that if what is now called the Blue Water School have their own way, and if in consequence of this we only keep up a small Army, we shall be running a far greater risk of an invasion during the last few hours of peace or during the first

few days of a war, than when the war is in full swing, when our scouts and cruisers may be expected to be in their proper stations, backed by battle-ships held in reserve in positions unknown to the enemy.

I took the opportunity of congratulating the noble Earl and his naval colleagues on the improvements that have recently been made in the stationing of our fleets, and in the constitution of the Reserve Squadron, which will now be more rapidly available in case of emergency. These changes will have the effect of lessening the dangers to which I am about to refer.

The failure of Admiral Togo's attempts to bottle up the Russian fleet in Port Arthur with sunken merchant-ships, and of the American attempts to close the harbour of Santiago, has shown that it is by no means easy to block the entrance of a fortified harbour by sinking vessels in certain selected spots while under a storm of shot and shell, and that it would be much easier to perform this operation in time of peace.

Portland and Portsmouth are particularly exposed to this form of attack. Anywhere between the Point and Southsea Castle the sinking of a single ship would block the entrance to Portsmouth Harbour so that no large vessel would be able to enter or leave that port. Of course, such an obstruction could be removed in time, but a great many important events might happen in the interval. For instance, the enemy's ships might obtain the command of the sea.

There are other methods by which an unexpected attack may be made and which would be attended with but little danger to the assailants in time of peace. For instance, vessels with the appearance of merchantmen might very well enter such estuaries as the River Thames, steam up as far as Tilbury, turn round again, and strew mechanical mines on their way down. The Solent might be blocked in a similar manner from the Needles to the Nab. A vessel might enter Portland Roads, look as if she wanted a pilot, throw mines overboard, and steam out again.

The French papers say that their submersible vessels can remain under water for 12 hours without causing discomfort to their crews. This means that during the winter months they can remain beneath the surface all day, and only come up to breathe at night. The North Sea is probably quite broad enough to protect us against their incursions, but the Channel certainly is not.

The question also arises as to how far submarines may be allowed to make use of neutral bases, such as Ostend or Flushing, and what methods could be adopted to prevent them from creeping about in neutral waters among Dutch and Belgian islands within a three-mile limit. Some modifications in International Law will probably have to be made.

Port Arthur experience also shows that ships at anchor at roadsteads such as Spithead or Plymouth Sound, would be very liable to be attacked by torpedoes. The 18-inch torpedo now coming into general use is a far more effective weapon than the 14-inch torpedo used at Port Arthur on the 8th February. The 18 inch torpedo has a greater range, and would, I think, probably sink any battle-ship it might strike, instead of merely disabling her for a time.

We are, I think, in far greater danger when all our fleets are assembled at Spithead for a naval review than on any other occasion.

The positions of all our ships are shown on charts that can be bought for a few pence. A night attack made by 50 or more torpedo-boats might sink all our available battle-ships and destroy our naval supremacy at a single blow. At the very time at which we feel most inclined to be vainglorious and to boast of our strength, our very existence is dependent on the forbearance and good faith of our neighbours. The celebrated attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur was made by 12 torpedo-vessels, and the Russians have not yet got over the results of it. It is, I think, a great mistake for us to shut our eyes as to the possibility of such an onslaught and to its consequences.

Whether we are at war or whether we are at peace, all the forts that protect our naval anchorages should be constantly kept on a war footing, as ready to open fire as if they were ships in commission. Precautions that were not required ten or twenty years ago, have become indispensable now that new weapons and new methods of warfare have been invented. When war does come, it will probably give as little notice as an earthquake.

I do not, however, wish it to be understood that I think it necessary to keep all our sea coast forts bristling with 12-inch guns. They are very expensive and take a long time to build. After the war had lasted a fortnight the fear of anchored mines would probably deter an enemy from directly attacking any of our naval bases with battle-ships. An intermediate type of gun, such as the 7·5-inch or 6-inch would have power enough to pierce unarmoured vessels, and if mounted in sufficient numbers would prevent him not only from removing or destroying our mines or laying down explosives of his own, but from reaching any narrow channel which he might wish to block by self-destruction. It would be absurd to wear out the bore of a 12-inch gun in doing work that could be done by a lighter weapon.

The fittings and gun mountings of the heavier guns on shore, should be of exactly the same pattern as those used on board ship, so as to be interchangeable. Spare guns should not be kept in store, but should be mounted in sea coast forts ready for immediate action before hostilities commenced, ready to replace the worn-out or damaged guns of battle-ships as the war progressed, or to be sent abroad for use in a siege. If when the war began the Japanese had not had 11-inch guns in their sea coast forts, Port Arthur would have held out much longer.

I may say here, however, that I think that when the war has lasted a fortnight, if no great naval disaster has happened to us by that time, that our existing fleet, thanks in a great measure to Lord Selborne, will be found strong enough to deal with almost any hostile combination. We may have to endure much suffering and heavy losses, but I feel assured that we should eventually get the best of it.

If a naval surprise of the description I have referred to was successful, and our battle-ships were blocked up or destroyed, we might expect to have to meet an invasion. Many of our countrymen form their opinions of the number of ships, and of the quantity of tonnage required to transport an army from the amount made use of when we had to send troops to the Cape. This I look upon as quite a mistaken estimate. On a long voyage, overcrowding would injure the health of the troops, but on a short trip there is scarcely

any limit to the amount of overcrowding that infantry can undergo without impairing their efficiency. Besides, the same steamers could cross the Channel several times in a day, using the fire-hose to clean the ship on the return voyage.

During the South African war, some ships such as the "Bavarian," carried close on 2,000 men. Such vessels could easily carry 5,000 men or even more across the North Sea or Channel. See what numbers are carried in fine weather by excursion steamers.

It has been said that in case of an invasion that the enemy would be able to bring very few horses, and that he would therefore have to fight at a disadvantage with his infantry unsupported. I think that he would bring his guns, and that at first he would endeavour to occupy a large extent of country, so as to be able to seize horses, carts, and saddlery, mount his staff officers, and scouts, and relieve his men from the toil of moving their guns with drag-ropes.

The mobility of such artillery, would, of course, be very much less than that of ordinary field batteries, but the guns could be moved by captured horses quite as fast as our heavy artillery was moved during the South African war. In these days of long range, it is not necessary to change the position of guns in action as often as it used to be in the days of short range.

It is also a fallacy to suppose, that it would be necessary to assemble a large army in any one place, before embarking it. Continental nations keep large garrisons in many of their sea-port towns. Troops mobilised for autumn manœuvres in the vicinity of a large harbour would attract but little notice in this country.

Detachments could leave different ports and arrange to meet on our own coasts so as to act together. If they chose they could land in different places and meet and support one another afterwards.

In the olden days it was almost impossible for sailing vessels to work in concert, when out of sight of one another. But at present, full-powered steamers, with the help of telegrams, Marconigrams, and other modern inventions, can assemble, make a sort of Clapham Junction at any previously selected place, and time their arrival to a minute. All ships now carry chronometers, whose error on Greenwich mean time is known to a few seconds.

Of course fogs and bad weather may interfere with their meeting, but after all fogs and bad weather are the exception and not the rule. It is unsafe to rely on them alone, when in presence of an adversary who is prepared to run risks.

Our torpedo-vessels and submarines would undoubtedly do their best, but their unsupported efforts might not be very successful.

Troop-ships full of men are not quite unarmed in presence of a destroyer. Splashes from the stream of lead that they could pour out from the men's rifles would be very likely to enter the conning tower and the sighting holes in the shield, interfere with the aim, and disable the officers in charge. In fine weather, they could make use of any artillery or pom-poms that might happen to be on board. Under the electric light, night becomes as day. I think that I am correct in saying that during the present war, with the exception perhaps of the "Asahi," which has since been repaired, no ship under full steam has yet been struck by a Whitehead torpedo. 22 or 24 destroyers appear to have been at Port Arthur. They have all been accounted for. But not one of them ever succeeded in breaking

through the screen of fighting-ships that formed the escort of the Japanese transports.

The theory that a fleet of escorted transports would certainly be scattered or sunk by a squadron of unsupported destroyers, that was in vogue before this war began, would appear to require some modification.

In 1866, the King of Hanover received an ultimatum, giving him 24 hours' notice in which to answer. When he inquired where his troops were, and where those of Prussia might happen to be, he found that Prussian officers had asked and obtained permission to send troops through his territory from Schleswig-Holstein to Minden. By the simple process of stopping on the road, the Prussians had seized the town of Harburg and several other important positions in the very heart of his dominions. There was nothing to be done but to endeavour to march the Hanoverian Army out of the country as quickly as possible. After a most gallant fight the Hanoverians were forced to capitulate. The kingdom of Hanover came to an end.

A similar catastrophe may await us if we do not take sufficient precautions. Steamers full of concealed troops might take up berths one after another in some of our harbours and commence to disembark at a predetermined time in different places.

If simultaneous attempts to sink our battle-ships and to block our harbours were successful, the enemy might then be able to protect his transports from torpedo attacks, and so reinforce the invading army.

A lost battle between London and the sea-coast would inflict untold misfortunes on the inhabitants of these islands, both in their public and private capacity.

Such an event must never take place. If we keep up our present armaments, I do not think that it ever can take place, unless our Navy is surprised at the commencement of a war.

If defeated, we should have to accept a dictated peace, the terms of which would probably include the transfer or destruction of the rest of our fleet, the payment of hundreds of millions of money, and the surrender of the greater part of our possessions beyond the seas. Once theegis of our protection was withdrawn, the conquest of such dependencies or colonies, that the enemy might happen to want, could be undertaken by him at his leisure. Our adversary might even insist on retaining a portion of the county of Kent or of Yorkshire. Such an idea may appear to be preposterous to some people, but it is not more preposterous than the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine by Germans would have appeared to Frenchmen before 1870.

Now I am sanguine enough to believe that an attempt at invasion would probably fail. Still, I do not think that the odds against it are 30 to 1. Supposing that it did fail, and that the enemy lost 100,000 men, that is less than one-thirtieth of what France or Germany claim to be able to put in the field. Such a loss would have but little effect on the result of the war, while if the enemy succeeded it would be *death* to us as a nation. The stakes would not be equal. We should be in the position of the Athenians after the battle of Aigös-Potamos.

It is said that even Homer sometimes nodded, but our Admiralty must never be caught nodding. I believe that it is pretty wide-awake, but the Admiralty routine should be such as to ensure that it should never be taken unawares.

Considering that a lieutenant or a sub-lieutenant is always on duty when a flag-ship is in company with the squadron that her admiral commands, and that the Admiralty at Whitehall is a sort of glorified flag-ship, the supreme flag-ship of a fleet of flag-ships, I do not think it is too much to expect that a post-captain should always be on duty at the Admiralty, both night and day, whether in war or peace. I do not mean to say that he should always be walking the quarter-deck, but that some one of that rank or above it, authorised to act in the name of the Admiralty, in cases of emergency only, should always be on the premises, ready to ring what I may call the Admiralty fire-bell.

Proper living and sleeping accommodation should be found for such officers, just as is done at the Foreign Office for those clerks whose business it is to attend to despatches in cypher that may arrive at night.

I look upon the habit of taking an occasional week-end holiday as a very good one, for I think that change of air and scene enables many men, especially those who are advancing in years, to retain their health and capacity for work for a longer period than would otherwise be the case. Therefore, I do not wish to interfere with the week-ends of the Naval Lords of the Admiralty.

I think that the Intelligence Department, with the addition of some officers specially appointed, should undertake this work, and that space should be found to lodge them at the Admiralty. I also think that if possible, the two Senior Naval Lords should have house-room at the Admiralty, not for their own convenience, but for the convenience of the Service.

Unfortunately, however, the week-end absence of nearly all the officials who are connected not only with public departments but with all large private enterprises, gives a grand opportunity to an enemy who might commence his operations late on Saturday night, or early on Sunday morning, more especially if that particular Sunday was succeeded by a Bank Holiday.

Some of the railway telegraphs, those for instance that are in use with the object of facilitating traffic, would still be open, and if they are kept in connection with our Government offices, dockyards, principal harbours, camps, garrison towns, and also with such anchorages at which our men-of-war may be temporarily lying, we should have a much better chance of being forewarned and prepared. I have heard that some such arrangement has lately been made with the railway companies. If so, I think that it ought to be generally known.

If a possible enemy, while meditating on the chances of war, felt quite certain that any attempt to obtain some initial successes by surprise would result in failure, it would remove a temptation to commence hostilities, and make for peace. Therefore, I think it desirable that the world in general should be acquainted with some of our precautions against surprise. But many of our preparations to resist sudden attack should, of course, remain State secrets.

Some military men are desirous of handing over the garrisoning of our naval fortresses to the Admiralty. The Navy is, I understand, taking over the mining operations. It might also be of assistance in the lookout and signalling departments, but with those exceptions, I am strongly opposed to any further change. The sailors would be wanted at sea. In the meantime, however, I think that the Navy

has a right to expect, that the Army will always look upon the forts that surround our naval bases as frontier fortresses, ready to open fire on a possible enemy at a very short notice. A 20th century sea-coast fort should always be as ready for action as a man-of-war at sea. The last person likely to be deceived by a sham or empty fort is an enemy who has had the opportunity of studying it in time of peace.

Whenever a foreign squadron enters any of our harbours, it would appear discourteous to make special preparations by manning and arming forts. There should be no need of preparation. The forts should always be ready.

The Admiralty and the War Office have power to make regulations dealing with most of the points to which I have alluded. But there are, I think, many precautions that ought to be taken, that are beyond their powers, and which would require special legislation. Last year the progress of science rendered it necessary to pass laws relating to wireless telegraphy. If similar special legislation concerning the publication of news is required, it is better that it should be carefully considered in time of peace, lie dormant until wanted, but ready to be brought into operation without a moment's delay whenever war might appear to be imminent. The Admiralty is, I think, the proper department to have these powers, because it would probably take longer to issue a Royal Proclamation or an Order in Council than an Admiralty notice.

When a crisis arises, Parliament may not be sitting, and even if it is, we all know that laws cannot be passed with the same rapidity that was possible a few years ago. Besides, hurried legislation is generally bad legislation. The law might not be altered until it was too late. In other words, it would be a case of locking the door after the horse was stolen.

There ought also to be some local regulations for guarding our harbours against surprise. If the existence of such regulations were known to pilots and to seamen frequenting the port, less annoyance would be caused when such precautions were necessary. By annoyance, I mean that our own ships would be less likely to be fired at by our guns. These regulations should have the force of law, when called into existence by the Admiralty.

No pilots except those who are British-born should ever be allowed to exercise their profession on our coasts. I do not think that even naturalised British subjects should be permitted to act as pilots. Such naturalisation would often be only skin-deep. We should rely on the real, and not on the electro-plated article.

The doctrine of "*Mare Clausum*" will have to be partially revived in our next naval war. The Japanese have, I believe, already done so to a certain extent by cautioning ships to keep clear of the Pescadores. To protect us against invasion, and to save our battle-ships from destruction, the three-mile limit must be extended to the enemy's shores. It would be scarcely possible for our admirals to protect the country properly if they are not allowed a free hand, both in the North Sea and Channel. We ought also to be able to deal in a summary manner with neutral yachts and merchant-ships, that might act as scouts, on a real or pretended voyage.

During this war, the Japanese have been wonderfully successful in concealing the positions of their battle-ships and larger vessels. Whenever the Russians made a sortie from Fort Arthur, the Japanese

battle-ships always turned up from somewhere, before the Russians had got very far. We do not yet know for certain what ships were engaged in the various actions. The Japanese Press laws must be worth studying; while not permitting the publication of certain war news, they appear to allow considerable freedom of criticism.

Should we be equally successful in keeping secret the whereabouts of our ships under our present laws?

When the Dogger Bank incident took place, we played our cards face up, exposed to the view of a possible enemy. It was perhaps well in that case that the Russians should know that we were ready to strike. But if we had wished to act otherwise, if we had wished to play our cards unseen, that is, if we had wished to move our ships without its being known, could we have done so in the present state of the law? I doubt it very much.

I have not got a cut and dried bill of my own, dealing with all the problems to which I have alluded, for I do not consider that any one man in Great Britain is capable of drafting such a document in a satisfactory manner. Such a bill, I think, would require to be drawn up with the assistance of two naval officers well acquainted with the details of the Russo-Japanese war, and with our own manœuvres, in conjunction with two military officers of similar standing and experience. They would require the aid of a lawyer of repute and ability, and of a Parliamentary draftsman before a bill could be produced, which would be likely to be of practical use.

Such a committee before reporting would have to examine harbour-masters and other persons with local knowledge, such as managers of docks, railways and telegraphs. It would also have to call before it gentlemen of the Press, as cases might occur when it might be necessary to check dissemination of news, and this would have to be done in such a manner as to give the minimum of annoyance. As it would be most undesirable to give any possible enemy information which might disclose the weak points in our armour, the committee should have power to hear evidence, not only in public but also with closed doors, and to send in a confidential as well as a public report if it thought proper to do so.

I have seen some complaints in the German Press about the changes in the stationing of our fleets. The writers of these articles take quite a wrong point of view. The alterations in the stationing of our ships are a compliment to the efficiency of the German Navy, and ought to have the effect of augmenting the respect that the two nations feel for one another. Had we, on the contrary, taken no notice of the increase in magnitude and efficiency of the German Fleet, I could well have understood that some German naval officers would have felt hurt at our self-satisfied complacency.

I am also glad to see that the manœuvres for 1905 and 1906 were to take the practical form of exercising our fleets in the oceanic strategy of passing from peace to war. I regret that it has been necessary to postpone them. I am now asking that equal attention should be paid to the tactics of passing from peace to war on our own coasts and in our own harbours.

There is unfortunately, a belief in this country that some premonitory growls will always give us time to prepare for the tiger-spring of war. We may feel the claws and teeth first. The growls will come afterwards.

In reply, Lord Selborne said that he was not fully prepared for the great extent of field over which I had travelled, and that he did not propose to discuss several of the questions that I had raised. He considered that I had greatly underrated the difficulties which would face an invader, and that anyone who had followed the Russo-Japanese war in its naval aspect must have seen the paralysing nervousness that haunted the Japanese so long as there was a Russian fleet in being, and they had troops they wanted to support. He also said that the Japanese never took any serious risk in the matter at all.

Now on that point I differ from Lord Selborne. The Japanese certainly interposed a screen of men-of-war between their transports and Port Arthur, but they took the chance of that screen being pierced or destroyed in an unsuccessful battle. On the 6th February, 1904, they embarked some thousands of troops, before a shot had been fired and before they had damaged the paintwork of a single Russian ship.

Lord Selborne also said that during the critical period of suspense before war, Governments will be most anxious to take no step that would precipitate a war that might be avoided. It is for that very reason that I ask for more preparation for immediate danger in time of profound peace, and for constant watchfulness and complete garrisoning of our sea coast forts. The other precautions to which I have referred should also become matters of permanent routine. Such preparations, if made in a time of crisis, might have the effect of bringing on a war. It is best to be always ready.

In referring to the question of dissemination of news, Lord Selborne said:—"I know I am confronted with a problem of the greatest difficulty, and a matter of the most serious import. I entirely agree with the noble lord that it is a question which, as much as any that I know of, must command the study of the Committee of National Defence; but I would go much further than that: it is a question not only for the Committee of Imperial Defence or for the Government of the day, it is a question for the Opposition of the day, for the whole of Parliament, and for the whole of the Press also. This is not a question which, in my opinion, can be settled by any Government on its own responsibility, or by Parliament acting as a Parliament and distinct from any party lines; it is a matter on which Parliament must invoke the patriotic co-operation and collaboration of the Press. And it is from that point of view that I ask both Parliament and the Press to begin to study this question, and to think of the solution to which we ought to look forward, because I am not exaggerating when I say that the patriotic journalist, without a thought that he was doing his country any harm, might in the day or two which precede war publish news which might mar the whole issue of the naval campaign of this country. That is the position of the law as it at present stands. It is a position with which no body of public men of this country, whether politicians or journalists, can be content; and I thank the noble lord for having given me an opportunity of trying to impress upon my fellow-countrymen the importance of a question which has hitherto been too much neglected in this country. Again I would point to the experience of the Japanese war. I believe—I am not in the confidence of the Japanese Admiralty—that if you were to ask them with regard to the command of the sea which they have obtained, and on which

the whole issue of the war for them must eventually depend, they would say that what they have done could not have been done unless they had full powers to prevent the dissemination of news affecting the movements and the positions of their ships. And it is with that object-lesson before my fellow-countrymen that I ask them to study this question." (Lord Selborne's speech is quoted verbatim from the *Times* report.)

Two days before making this speech Lord Selborne was present at a meeting of the Committee for Imperial Defence, which lasted two hours. As notice of my question had been given several days previously, I think that I may fairly infer that Lord Selborne was on this occasion proclaiming not only his own views but those of his colleagues, both on the Committee and at the Admiralty.

Now, the loyalty and good sense of 99 editors out of 100 may prevent them from publishing news that ought to be kept back, but the folly or sense of rivalry of the 100th may cause our plans to fail and involve us in great disasters. Once a war has begun, a wave of public opinion would probably carry a bill dealing with the Press; but such a bill might become law ten days too late, and I am therefore desirous that the particulars of such a bill should be worked out in detail in time of peace, ready to come into operation when required without an instant of unnecessary delay. As we spend millions every year in providing scouts and cruisers to bring us news of the position of a possible future enemy, it is only reasonable that we should be prepared to undergo some little inconvenience to prevent his getting information as to our own proceedings.

The Russians have not been as successful as the Japanese in keeping their movements concealed. The *Times* says that:—"When the Vladivostok squadron attempted to co-operate with Admiral Viteft, in accordance with instructions telegraphed by the "Reshitelni" from Chifu, the news of its having put to sea was published in the London papers the same evening, in spite of the most stringent censorship of all telegrams, and thus Admiral Kamimura was fully informed of its movements." The result showed how essential secrecy of movement is to naval success.

For the purpose of educating public opinion, I think that the Japanese Press laws and those of some other nations ought to be translated and published in a Blue Book or in some other accessible form.

Our Home and Channel Fleets ought never to be sent far away for exercising purposes. Distant manœuvres should be left to the Atlantic and Mediterranean Fleets. The troops that form the garrisons of our naval bases should never be allowed to abandon their stations for the purpose of being trained at Aldershot or on Salisbury Plain. Staddon and Maker Heights are of more importance than the efficiency of any regiment.

Since this lecture was written I was glad to see in the *Westminster Gazette* of the 3rd May that on the 11th of this month it is intended to close Portsmouth Harbour for some hours in order to place the booms that are to be used for its protection. This is as it should be; but the same paper says that it is some years since the boom defence was tested as a whole. It ought to be tested at least once a year, if not oftener.

I am sorry to find that a good many of my fellow-countrymen do not believe in the possibility of a surprise to the same extent that I

do. I would ask all those who differ from me to read the little book that I hold in my hand. It was compiled in 1882 in the Intelligence Department of the Quartermaster-General by the present Major-General Sir Frederick Maurice, R.A., K.C.B., in answer to a question put by Sir Thomas Farrer when on a Channel Tunnel Committee.

I think that all commissioned officers in both Services, all who write in the Press on naval and military subjects, and all members of both Houses of Parliament should make themselves acquainted with its contents. It contains less than 100 pages, and its price is two shillings.

Sir Thomas Farrer's question was worded as follows:—"Looking at all that we remember ourselves, is it probable that war would be declared against us, as we might say, out of a clear sky, without any previous strain or notice that a quarrel was impending? Has that happened on any single occasion within the last 50 or 100 years?" (p. v., Preface.)

In answer to this Sir Frederick Maurice dealt with the commencement of all wars that have broken out between the years 1700 and 1870—in all 107 cases. He omits, however, the case of Hanover, in 1866, to which I have already referred. Sir Frederick writes that as far as he has been able to trace it, the Franco-German War of 1870 was the only case during 170 years in which a declaration of war preceded overt hostilities.

I see that there are short-hand writers present. How much of what I have said they may think it worth while to report I do not know; but I hope that the newspapers which they represent will be able to print verbatim the following extract from Sir Frederick Maurice's work:—"The fact is, at any rate in far the greater number of cases here recorded, the surprise which overtook the assailed country was as complete as would be the effect if *to-day*, or at any time during the last year and a half, a foreign Army had landed on the shores of England. The popular excitement, the indignant remonstrances are all features of the time, which in case after case startle one who is making such an investigation by their constant repetition." (p. vi., Preface.)

The Government of a country that attempts to surprise another will never be without a colourable pretext of some sort. If the intention is there, some excuse will be found. The usual newspaper war and the exchange of despatches gradually increasing in bitterness will be avoided. Some wretched frontier question, some alleged interference with a ship, or pretended belief in a secret treaty will be sufficient to save its face with its own people. If once the principal part of our fleet was disposed of, the opinion of the people of Great Britain would no longer count.

If our battle-ships are surprised at the beginning of a war, as the Russian ships were surprised at Port Arthur, it will be as if a bullet had gone through the heart of Great Britain.

Admiral Sir NATHANIEL BOWDEN-SMITH, K.C.B.:—In the few remarks which I shall offer on the paper that we have just heard I shall not allude at all to the question of invasion, but confine myself to the heading of the paper, which is, "The Possibility of our Fleets and Harbours being Surprised." I think the danger of our fleets and harbours being sud-

denly surprised has been somewhat exaggerated by my noble friend, Lord Ellenborough, who has brought the matter under our consideration this afternoon. It will be in the recollection of many of you that he brought the subject before the House of Lords on a recent occasion, which led to an interesting discussion, and he was somewhat fully answered by Lord Selborne, who was then First Lord of the Admiralty. It has been thought by some people that the somewhat sudden attack of the Japanese torpedo-boats on the Russian fleet anchored outside Port Arthur on that memorable night of the 8th of February last year lends some colour to the fear that our ships might be destroyed or torpedoed in a similar manner by some Power which, up to the last moment, had been in friendly relations with us; but I do not think the circumstances of the case justify such a conclusion. I would call to your recollection the fact that very serious negotiations had been carried on between the Russians and the Japanese for many months previous to the outbreak of the war, and that the attack on the Russian ships outside Port Arthur did not take place till three days after the Japanese Minister was recalled from St. Petersburg; therefore I consider the Russian Admiral ought to have been prepared for any emergency. But although I think the danger of a sudden attack on our fleets has been somewhat exaggerated, I am glad the noble lord has brought this question before us, because there are other matters in connection with a sudden rupture of peaceful relations between us and a European Power which may be considered with advantage. In the first place, there are the many thousands of foreigners living in London and others of our big cities as hotel waiters and in such-like occupations, whose presence might prove inconvenient on a sudden outbreak of war, and many of whom might be utilised as spies. Secondly, there is the serious question of the 40,000 foreign white seamen serving in our Mercantile Marine, which I consider a danger to the State and a reproach to the nation, so long as we have many thousands of our own people unemployed. There is also a third matter to which his lordship has alluded in his paper, namely, the question of alien pilots. In a statement quite recently issued by the Channel Pilots Committee, it was said there were fifty-nine aliens serving as pilots in various ports round our coasts. Fifty-nine pilots may not seem a very large number, considering the great quantity of shipping which uses our ports; but besides those fifty-nine pilots actually engaged there are probably a great many others who are retired, but whose services could be bought in time of war. I understand that British ships going in and out of foreign ports are obliged to take pilots belonging to the ports they use; I am told they are not allowed in many cases to pilot their ships themselves. Why should we be so much more confiding than other nations? I should like to see a law passed, such as has been proposed by the lecturer, that no alien should be granted a pilotage certificate for our coasts who was not a British subject or a *bona fide* naturalised subject living in the country. As I said before, I do not agree with the lecturer as to the danger of a sudden attack on our fleets and harbours; but it is well to consider the possible sudden outbreak of war in all its bearings. There is only one way, in my opinion, of being prepared for war, both on land and by sea, and that is to establish some sort of national training, to be followed by national service in time of emergency. Such a movement would ensure the security of the Empire, and it is difficult to suggest any other plan. Before sitting down I venture to express a hope that my old friend and shipmate, Lord Ellenborough, will continue to take an interest in naval matters and in the defence of the Empire generally.

Commander W. F. CABORNE, C.B., R.N.R.:—In the first place I should like to thank Lord Ellenborough for his paper, so replete with truths, and conceived in such a patriotic vein. Mention has been made of the Blue Water School, and doubtless all right-minded British men and women are members of it, so far as it advocates the maintenance of an overwhelmingly strong and thoroughly efficient Navy; but when we come to the extreme section of that school—which argues that the Navy is ubiquitous and invincible, that an Army is not required for home defence, and that fortresses are obsolete and useless—there may be a considerable divergence of opinion. The extremists themselves do not seem to repose absolute confidence in their own doctrine. For instance, an apostle of the new cult a few weeks ago attacked the Council of this Institution in the columns of an illustrated daily paper, owing to that body having accepted a generous offer made to it and undertaken to award prizes for a special essay upon a subject, selected by the donor of the money, which, in the opinion of the writer in question, somewhat clashed with those celestially-evolved tenets which he then appeared to look upon as cardinal articles of faith. Yet now we see that same correspondent expending his energies, and a considerable amount of ink, in the not too successful endeavour to prove that the primary armament of certain of our battle-ships is defective, and that in consequence the offensive and defensive power of the Fleet is not what it should be: If it were not a serious matter the situation would be ludicrous; as it is, it is illogical. The granting of pilotage certificates to aliens is a custom which we should protest against heart and soul. Recently two Dutchmen applied to the Bristol pilotage authority, under Section 599 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1894, for pilotage certificates to enable them to navigate their own vessels in local waters; but that authority, fully recognising the dangers and evils attendant upon the present system, declined to examine the applicants. The Dutchmen then had recourse to the Board of Trade, and that Department, in the exercise of powers conferred upon it by Section 600 of the before-mentioned Act, instituted an examination, and granted a certificate to one of the men, the other being unsuccessful in passing. Fresh legislation in respect of this matter seems to be urgently called for. With regard to alien seamen and naturalised seamen in the British Mercantile Marine, my sentiments upon that point are tolerably well known to many of those present—at any rate, they are to those who study the JOURNAL of the Institution, and so I will not trespass longer upon your time this afternoon, the more that we are to have a lecture in this theatre two days hence upon an important subject connected with our merchant service, when I hope to be afforded an opportunity for reiterating and emphasising views which I have frequently expressed.

Admiral F. ARDEN CLOSE:—I wish first of all to congratulate and thank the lecturer for his most interesting lecture, every word of which is gospel truth. A great deal of it you will find in days gone by under my signature in the *Morning Post*. The public are slow to learn, so it cannot be too often repeated. I congratulate you and the nation that we have such a naval man in the House of Lords as the noble lord, and I only wish that we had his equal in the House of Commons, because, with all due deference to the Lords of the Admiralty (who are all good men), still there is nothing perfect under the face of the sun. For instance, if we had had a naval man in the House of Commons, I do not think all the third-class cruisers would have been put on the scrap-heap. If there

was a period in the naval history of this country when we were in danger, I am of opinion that there is greater danger now than ever; and for this reason: the Committee of Defence have issued an edict to say that the invasion of this country is "impossible." Mr. Balfour said so in the House of Commons; Lord Selborne said it at the Dolphin dinner at Bristol, and he confirmed his statement by the fact that it had taken forty-eight hours to land 14,000 men at Clacton-on-Sea. I do not blame those two gentlemen, they are landmen; they cannot know much about it, and they are therefore obliged to take the naval and military opinion of others. I do not blame those military officers who made that Report, because they had no experience. There is no officer now in the Army or in the Navy who has any experience in landing troops on a bare beach; but this I do blame them for, that when they wrote a report upon the landing, they did not say: "We beg to remind you that 60,000 men were landed in the Crimea in one summer's day." Perhaps you or they may have forgotten their military history, so I will remind you of what was done by the combined fleets of France and England on that occasion. I made a statement in a letter to the *Morning Post*, that 40,000 men were landed in the Crimea in one summer's day, speaking from memory. A few days afterwards the JOURNAL of the Royal United Service Institution was published, in which the writer of the Gold Medal Essay on Invasion said that 60,000 men had been landed, and that they did not begin landing till nine o'clock in the morning. So that between nine o'clock in the morning and nine o'clock in the evening they landed 60,000 men. Is not that a warning of danger to this country, which is only too willing to go to sleep over all dangers, and requires to be roused up by the noble lord and others who will take the trouble to come here and lecture? It is a wonder to me that the merchants of London do not rise up, as they did some years ago, when they called upon Admiral Hornby to tell them what their danger was, when they saw all these third-class cruisers sent to the scrap-heap. Surely that should have been a warning to them. Where are the cruisers to come from to protect our Mercantile Marine? It is true that these third-class cruisers could not fight, and they could not run away; but every fleet requires half a dozen or a dozen such cruisers, who are not wanted to fight or run away, and who are the eyes and ears of the fleet. Now these vessels are gone we shall have to use our fast cruisers for service with the fleet, which ought to be protecting our merchant ships. With regard to Portsmouth Harbour, many years ago I published a letter in which I compared Portsmouth Harbour to a trap, and said that even the wily rabbit had his bolt-holes, so that when the ferret comes in at the front the rabbit got out at the back; it is not so at Portsmouth, where there is no second entrance, though enough money has been spent dredging in other directions to make a second entrance to Langstone Harbour. When we spoke of "the enemy" in years gone by, we always meant the French. The consequence is that our south coast is better armed than any other part; but how is it on the east coast? That is where we are threatened now. It is no use mincing matters: the Germans threaten us; why should not we answer them with schemes of defence? as Portland was created as a defence against Cherbourg. What defences have we on the east coast at the present moment? *Nothing*. If we want to prevent war, we must have as many battle-ships on the east coast as the Germans have at Kiel; and if they have between twenty and thirty, we must have our Channel Fleet at its new base in Scotland and the Atlantic Fleet at Dover. I had not the courage single-handed to refute the arguments of the great men who insisted that the coast of

the enemy was, in regard to our Navy in time of war, our frontier. Now I am glad to see such tall tactics refuted by another admiral. Nelson tried it for a year off Toulon, until his battle-ships were well-nigh worn out, and then he left his frigates to watch, as we should do now, with our new base in the north, where the battle fleet should be, fully coaled and ready, waiting for information from the cruisers that the enemy had put to sea.

Vice-Admiral Sir T. S. JACKSON, K.C.V.G.:—We have listened to a very interesting lecture and to some very interesting speeches. I do not propose to go into the question of invasion, because I think it is a little beyond the subject of the paper, which is: "The Possibility of our Fleets and Harbours being Surprised." What the effects of that surprise would be are beyond what I intend to touch upon. We may take it for granted, I think, that on the outbreak of war with any enterprising naval Power, some attempt will be made to close our ports and to make an attack on the fleet. The question is, in the first place, What is an enterprising naval Power? We were in the habit some time ago of counting the Powers simply by their battle-ships and the number of cruisers and torpedo-boats—by their material strength. But when we find that, with a considerable paper strength of fleet, a Power shows no initiative whatever, we wipe that Power off the list, and say that she is entirely negligible for the time. I do not think if you go back to history you will find that these sudden raids, or raids of any description, have ever been attempted by anybody but ourselves. Our coasts in the old wars (which, in times of fair wind, must have been very open to attacks of the raiding sort) were severely left alone, because the number of our ships was so great as to make it too risky. I think we may be perfectly certain that unless a war breaks out without previous notice, which is almost impossible, there will be sufficient time given for preparation. It would not be time for preparation for any other nation; but you must recollect that our Navy in commission is always on a war footing. We do not require any considerable notice; we are absolutely ready. It is out of the question to imagine such a case as the Channel Fleet, for instance, being surprised or caught in a hole or corner, when there was any warning whatever of differences with a foreign Power which was at all likely to attack us. My idea of the danger (and it is a very great danger) is not an attack on the fleets nor an attack on our military harbours, but the possibility of some attempt to close the mercantile harbours, and thus strike at our money-getting power by dropping mines outside the mercantile ports, where there will be practically no cruisers and nobody on the look-out. That undoubtedly is a danger which will have to be considered, and I have no doubt has been considered. Then there is another question the lecturer touched upon on which I cordially agree with him, and that is the necessity of our having some power to restrict the publication of news concerning the movement of ships. Under the present circumstances, I believe that practically we have no power to prevent such publication, and it is absolutely useless, in my opinion, to trust to the patriotism of journalists. It may be a very hard thing to say, but you might as well trust a cat-killing fox-terrier to follow at your heels when a cat runs handy for it. Although an editor might love his country, the temptation to publish the first news of a particular incident would be too strong for him. We have seen a little of that kind of thing on the part of enterprising correspondents in South Africa. There should be some power to absolutely prevent the publication of the

ordinary naval news we see in the papers. It would be absolutely necessary in time of war to at once discontinue the publication of such news.

Vice-Admiral W. F. S. MANN :—The previous speakers have said the subject of invasion did not come within the scope of this paper. I do not agree with them. The synopsis of the paper has a considerable amount to say on that subject, and it is on that part of the question that I should like to make a few remarks. We hear very much nowadays of the Blue Water School. I do not belong to that extreme Blue Water School which thinks the Navy can do everything. I have always been taught to believe that the proper place for the Navy is the coast of the enemy. If I was in command of the Channel Fleet I should feel in an uncomfortable position if I was sent away off the coast thinking of what might be behind me. The word "impossible," used by Mr. Balfour, and repeated by the Minister of War, was therefore, I think, a very unfortunate word. What is impossible nowadays? I do not see any of the foreign naval or military attachés here this afternoon, but I should like to know what they think about the possibility of the invasion of this country. What is it to a foreign country, as the noble lord said, if they get 100,000 men into this country? They do not want to get them out. If they get them in they have the country at their mercy. If we go to history you will find that no Navy, however powerful, ever finished a war. We must have a powerful Navy, but to finish a war we must have troops, and plenty of them. Except that she has no need to keep up a voluntary Army for India and Colonies, we are in much the same position as Japan. After obtaining command of the sea, how could she have carried on the war without a large Army? She prepared for this by training her population compulsorily, with the results we see. I entirely concur with Sir N. Bowden-Smith in believing that for the safety of this country we must have some form of compulsory national service. With the nation trained to arms there would be no fear of invasion, and this country would then be a valuable ally. At present, under the "impossible" policy, our fleets are tied to our coasts, instead of being free to attack.

Admiral the Hon. Sir EDMUND FREMANTLE, G.C.B., C.M.G. (Rear-Admiral of the United Kingdom) :—I did not intend to take part in this discussion, but there are just a few points to which I should like to direct attention. In the first place, I do not propose to go into the question of whether invasion is possible or probable. I entirely agree with Sir Nathaniel Bowden-Smith that the assumption of the lecturer on the question of surprising our fleets and harbours is put too decidedly, and there is not sufficient evidence in connection with what took place on the 8th February last year at Port Arthur to warrant our suspicions to that extent. If we are to act on every occasion in times of peace as if a bolt from the blue is likely to fall we cannot carry on any business at all, because our ships would not be able to go to the Mediterranean for a summer cruise or anywhere else; we should always have to keep our ships handy in the Channel; we should have to keep them well prepared on every possible occasion; we should have, in fact, to act during peace as if we were at war—an impossible state of affairs. We must take some risks. If it is the case that the comity of nations is so changed that that sort of thing can take place, all I can say is that we are in a very parlous state; but I do not think that is so. Putting that on one side,

I should like to say a few words with reference to what Sir Thomas Jackson said about the possibility of raids. We must recollect that during the French war there were a certain number of extremely successful raids, in so far as going across and landing, or being able to land, troops was concerned. I need only mention the fact that Hoche might have landed his men in Bantry Bay, but fortunately the weather and a little wholesome dread of the British Navy prevented him. We know that Humbert landed in Ireland, and had to surrender; and in Fishguard Bay it was said the Welsh women with their red cloaks frightened the Frenchmen, and they surrendered to the Militia. I simply wish to dot the i's of some of the questions which have been referred to by his lordship. I am very much obliged to him for having brought this question before us, although perhaps his views in some respects are a little exaggerated. Still, if there is a little of the "scare" about them, perhaps it is a very good thing, because so many of us are apt to go to sleep, as Admiral Close said, and to take it as natural that all will be well. There is one point that occurs to me in connection with the question of loose mines. Surely our Government should take some steps to prevent this practice; at all events to get some sort of international arrangement with reference to the practice, which we know was so generally adopted in the Gulf of Pechili, of dropping mines about here, there, and everywhere. If they are to be dropped about in that sort of way, it will be a great danger, not only to the ships of the country which is at war, but to all neutrals. Surely under those circumstances it might be possible to have an international agreement on the subject. Then there is the question of the dissemination of news, which is really a most important one. I am extremely glad it was brought before the Government the other day, but I do not think the answer given was entirely satisfactory; in fact, I do not think it was satisfactory at all. The answer made by Lord Selborne, if I recollect right, was that we should trust to the good feeling of the newspapers. I am afraid I would not trust newspapers a bit. It is absolutely the breath of their nostrils that they should get early information which is of interest to the British public. It would be, under those circumstances, of the greatest interest to the British public to know exactly what was going on; and even if some of them were reticent and were patriotic—even if the majority of them were patriotic—there is a certain number who would be only too glad to be the bearers of important news not only to our own people but to people all over the world, including our enemies. There is no doubt some step ought to be taken in regard to that question. Then there is the subject of alien pilots. I do hope his lordship will hammer away at that subject, because it is a most important one. It is perfectly monstrous, except that we look at these things from the Free Trade, happy-go-lucky point of view, that aliens should come into this country and be certified pilots in our ports. But, in addition to that, I dare say some of you, if not most of you, know that it is not at all necessary that even the captain of a merchant-ship should be an Englishman, and captains of ships can, in certain ports, be their own pilots. Therefore, we may have German or French captains of our ships piloting their own ships, and taking them in and out of ports, who would be available, if we were at war, for the purposes of the country to which they belong. Then there is another important point to which I should like to refer. In the old wars it was the rule that three of the Lords of the Admiralty (the First Lord and two others) should have houses at the Admiralty, and the object was quite clear. Many of us remember that when Lord Nelson, while in the West Indies, guessed

that Villeneuve had started on his return to Europe, not long before Trafalgar in 1805, he detached a brig, the "*Curieux*," to convey the news that the French were making their way towards Europe. The "*Curieux*" was fortunate enough to come across the French fleet, and so was able to confirm what was practically a good guess on the part of Nelson. As is narrated by Mahan and various other authorities, the captain landed at Falmouth and travelled post haste up to London, arriving at the Admiralty in the middle of the night, at one o'clock. The First Lord of the Admiralty, Lord Barham, an old naval officer, was not disturbed till about six o'clock in the morning, and he then abused his people for not calling him sooner. Although he was only called at six o'clock, by nine o'clock the orders were going down to Portsmouth, which resulted in the English fleet under Sir Robert Calder intercepting Villeneuve off Cape Finisterre. That shows the necessity of acting promptly in case of war. It may be equally necessary on such an occasion as that to which his lordship has referred, a Saturday and a Sunday following and possibly a bank holiday on the Monday. Under those circumstances it might sometimes be extremely difficult to get hold of the responsible man who could act. There always ought to be somebody at the Admiralty, or within a stone's-throw of the Admiralty, who would be capable of giving emergency orders. I will conclude by again thanking Lord Ellenborough for having brought this subject before us. I am sure that if we had a few more what I venture to call "scaremongers" like him among us it would be an advantage, especially if they are in such a position that they can bring their ideas prominently before the public.

Colonel T. M. SANDYS, M.P. (1st V.B. The Loyal North Lancashire Regiment):—It is with some hesitation that I venture, as a soldier, to make any remarks on this particular occasion. I came here as a Member of Parliament, wishing to hear the opinion of distinguished naval officers upon the important question which has been raised by the noble lecturer. I must say that I have received much information, and various opinions which I held before have been strengthened by the remarks which I have heard here to-day. I do not propose to speak at any length on the question, but I feel sure we are all grateful to the noble lecturer for the way in which he has brought forward this most important question of our national defence. I agree with him thoroughly in being somewhat of an alarmist, for I think that our national characteristic is always to shut our eyes to the danger unless it is upon us. Speaking to a professional audience of this kind, I feel sure that officers will agree with any measures which are taken by the Legislature for the purpose of being forewarned, because that means being forearmed. I do think that, in our measures for the protection of the country, much as we trust to the Navy, and highly as we hold it in our esteem, it is not entrusted entirely with the defence of these islands in any emergency which possibly may occur. The noble lecturer has referred to the necessity of treating the sea forts much in the same way as a battle-ship—that they should always be ready for action. They will be manned naturally by soldiers, for I am one of those who do not hold with taking sailors away from their duties on board ship. I think the land forts should be manned by the land forces, and that they should be ready for action at a moment's notice. With reference to the question of foreign pilots, although I have not the privilege of being a sailor, I have a large constituency where a great number of my constituents are seafaring men—the port of Liverpool. I have attended pilots' meetings at

Liverpool, where English pilots have complained bitterly that their means of livelihood are taken away from them by the admission of foreign pilots to navigate our vessels; and their Committee went so far as to formulate a Bill for introduction to the House of Commons on this very question of the admission of foreign pilots, and they did me the honour of asking me to support it, which I promised to do. I regret very much that that Bill has not appeared during the present session. I do not know why, but I trust that it will appear, and I hope if it ever reaches the House of Lords that the noble lecturer will be there to give it his support. With reference to that question, I think we shall all probably be in accord. The question of the Press is also a most important one. I must say as a soldier that I think a Press correspondent in the field is a curse, and not a blessing; and if I were a general in command of a force—which I never shall be, because I am retired—I most certainly would never allow any Press correspondent to be present with my forces in the field, but would send him back to the base of operations. We do require in this country for our own protection that there should be a stringent and sufficient Press law, capable of being put into action by the Admiralty at a moment's notice, or by the Government at still shorter notice if necessary, which would prevent news being given with reference to the movements of the British fleet or the British land forces at any time it was thought desirable. The Press is a great power in this country, but it is not safe to rely upon their patriotism to prevent giving the information which they would do, and which might be of material service to the enemy. I am old enough to recollect the Crimean War, and I remember at that time it was stated that the Russian movements against our forces were regulated by the information supplied to them by the British Press of this country—unintentionally, of course. But still it might be that among the employés on the staffs of our various papers there would be men who would not unintentionally supply information to a foreign enemy. When all that is taken into consideration, I consider there should be an Act passed capable of dealing with this dissemination of news to foreign countries. I do not know that I can say anything further on this matter, except to say that I think it most important that an officer with the rank of captain, or even higher rank, should be at all times, with his hand on the lever of the bell, if necessary, so that he could act in the same way as he would do on his flag-ship afloat. It is essential, when the safety of the country depends on the prompt action of the Navy, that they should be able to get in the first blow, which decides the fate of almost all wars; and I think that that, although it is a minor point, should not be designated as alarmist, and it is one in which I thoroughly agree with the noble lecturer. I again thank him for having brought the subject forward.

Major-General Sir THOMAS FRASER, K.C.B., C.M.G. :—I only rise to express to Lord Ellenborough the conviction I have formed that the views he has expressed, with regard to invasion, are those held by the great bulk of the officers in the Army, and particularly by those who, owing to experience gained in war, are specially competent to give an opinion on the subject.

Lord ELLENBOROUGH, in reply, said :—I am glad to see that many of my ideas are supported by the members who have spoken, and that the only difference of opinion appears to be that some of them think the danger of invasion is not so great as I have put forward. I do not

think very much of the danger of invasion unless we happen to be surprised, but I do look upon a surprise as a possible thing. Then as regards the Blue Water School, I agree with them in a great many points. It is always said, however, that it is best to have two strings to your bow. The Blue Water School should, I think, be called the Single-stringed School. It is a good string; probably quite strong enough to hold its own and to do its work, but still I do not think it is a bad thing to have a second string to your bow. There were some British bowmen, at the battle of Cressy, who had second strings to their bows, which they did not allow to get wet when it came on to rain, and we all know what became of the Genoese cross-bowmen who had not any second strings. Admiral Sir Edmund Fremantle asked if the comity of nations had so changed that sudden attacks could be made. A perusal of the little book that I have referred to will show that it has always been the custom to make sudden attacks. In this book our own country comes out as accused by other countries of doing very wrong things indeed. Perhaps we were not guilty, but still they thought that we were. With regard to an international agreement about dropping mines, it would be very nice if you could get people to draw up an international agreement on paper; but on an emergency I am sure that a foreign admiral would break the international agreement, and that he would say he was doing it for the safety of his country, and that its existence depended upon it. We should rely very little on international agreements that had not got some power behind them. They are of no use in war time. A country which went to war would take all the penalties and risks of breaking them; that is all. There are no policemen with their whistles ready to blow, asking someone to come and help them to "run in" the international house-breaker. I do not think I need trouble you with any further remarks. I think I have answered everything that requires answering, because the speakers did not, as I rather expected some of them to do, differ from me very strongly. Besides, when they did differ, they did not give their reasons for so doing. I have a quantity of notes ready to refer to which would have enabled me to answer any objection that might have been made. I am much obliged to you all for the reception you have given to me and to my paper.¹

¹A great many theories that I consider to be untenable have been deduced from the disembarkation that took place at Clacton-on-Sea last autumn. According to the accounts given by Lieut.-Colonel Telfer-Smollett in the Gold Medal Essay of this Institution, it took 36 hours to land 12,000 men and 3,000 horses. Colonel Smollett also says that the work would have been done much quicker if the men had had some previous experience in the work of disembarking on a coast, and he quotes Field-Marshal Sir Evelyn Woods as saying that many of the appliances made use of were almost as primitive as those employed half a century ago in the Crimea. From these statements I draw the inference that troops trained to embark and disembark would have done the work in much less time, especially if the ships had been equipped with more modern appliances, and that therefore a real invader would have performed that operation in less time.

In the paper that I read I assumed that an enemy who wished to surprise this country would not cumber himself with horses, as he would find plenty in England. If 6 men occupy the space of 1 horse, then at least 15,000 men could be substituted for the 3,000 horses, and a transport

The CHAIRMAN (Admiral Sir R. Harris, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.):—I think we have had a most interesting paper and an exceedingly interesting discussion—one of the best discussions I have heard in this theatre. Nearly all the points brought forward by the lecturer have been dealt with so fully that there is practically very little for me to say. But there is one point that has not been touched upon. Naval officers are brought up to be always on the look out for squalls, as we say in naval phraseology; we have to deal with the elements; and I think it is extremely improbable in time of war, or in time of prospective war, that someone will not be found at the Admiralty ready to act. I do not think we shall ever suffer on that score. I think, as Chairman, it is right to bring such an important point to your notice. I quite agree with the lecturer, that the dangers of an attempted surprise in the present day are very much greater than they ever used to be, on account of the extreme rapidity of movement which takes place everywhere. I also thoroughly agree with him that nations are not more scrupulous than individuals, who, when they want to gain a point, very often do not stick at a scruple.

fleet of the size of that which appeared off Clacton would thus carry 27,000 men with guns.

The disembarkation of such a body of men would I think be effected in less time than that of 12,000 men and 3,000 horses.

The War Office issued instructions declaring that the command of the sea was to be considered as definitely and completely secured, and that no naval opposition of any kind was to be expected. So that the transports off Clacton-on-Sea were not lying there under war conditions.

Had it been a real war and not a make-believe manœuvre, very different tactics would probably have been adopted. My solution of the problem may not be best, but I would suggest that the transports might, one hour after high tide, have been run on shore after letting go stern anchors, not only at Clacton, but also at Little Holland, where they would have been nearer to the shore.

Thus when the defenders' torpedo-boats were ready to make their attack, they would probably have found the transports empty, and even if they were not, the torpedo-boats would have found themselves unable to sink a single ship or drown a single soldier, although they might have damaged some of the ships on shore. If such an attack was made at low water, some of the Whiteheads might have struck sand before reaching the ships. Being unsupported by battle-ships, the torpedo squadron would probably have lost half its number in breaking through the enemy's screen of cruisers, and half of the remainder in trying to return to a place of safety, without having hurt a soldier.

Some of the guns of the invaders would, as soon as landed, have been placed in positions, which would have enabled them to assist in the protection of the transports.

In the case of a real war, the money value of the transports that might be damaged would scarcely enter into consideration. They could be replaced by merchant vessels belonging to other countries without breach of neutrality. In history many cases are recorded in which the invaders have burnt their ships before achieving success. In peace manœuvres the expense of the lost or damaged ships would enter into consideration, and expense is one of the reasons that make manœuvres so unreal. We are, I believe, right to continue them, but one hour of Russo-Japanese experience is worth a month of manœuvres.—E.

If some foreign nations were at war with us and wished to gain their point, I do not think you would find they would be found too scrupulous. With regard to the question of submarines, that is a very difficult question, which will have to be threshed out. There is no doubt the submarine has come to stay, and that it is improving every day. It is quite possible for submarines, as the lecturer said, to lie at the bottom all day and come up at night, and you might have a dozen or twenty of them at the bottom outside one of your harbours all popping up when they were wanted, and you might not be in the least bit aware that they were there. In considering the question of surprise, I think we neglect one important point, and that is that we have now at the Admiralty a very well organised Intelligence Department. The whole of this work at the Admiralty, I am able to say, is very much better dealt with and very much better done than it has been for years and years. We really have steadily improved in that respect, and the dangers, which were very great only twenty or thirty years ago are not nearly so great now in the way of a totally unexpected surprise. I do not think there is anything more for me to say, except to give a cordial vote of thanks, on the part of the audience and of myself, to the noble lord for the most interesting lecture he has given us. I am sure we have all listened to it with the very greatest pleasure.