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### Is our Merchant Service Any Longer a Feeder to the Royal Navy?

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# Evening Meeting.

Monday, January 17th, 1876.

Rear-Admiral G. O. WILLES, C.B., in the Chair.

NAMES OF MEMBERS who joined the Institution between the 1st and January, 1876.

## LIFE.

Hamilton, Tynte F., Lieut., R.N.  
Chamberlain, Henry Lieut., R.N.  
Sharp, W. Granville, Capt., Madras Staff Corps.

## ANNUAL.

Walker, A. G., Lieut., R.A.	Cuttler, Frederick F., Lieut., late 1st W. I. Regiment.
Warry, Alfred W., Lieut., R.N.	Gernon, R. C. H., Major, 9th Regiment.

## IS OUR MERCHANT SERVICE ANY LONGER A FEEDER TO THE ROYAL NAVY?

By Captain J. C. WILSON, R.N.

To the uninitiated, the title of this paper may appear absurd as, in all probability, they accept as gospel the statement so often made in after-dinner speeches, that the greatness of England mainly depends on an efficient Navy manned by seamen, who can never be wanting so long as our flag floats on every sea, and our mercantile marine is the largest and finest in the world. Such statements, made or delivered fifty years ago, as no doubt they were, may have been perfectly true, as then the mainstay of the Navy was undoubtedly the merchant service, and on the Navy, England depended for security at home and respect abroad, but reliance must no longer be placed on the mercantile marine as a feeder to the Regular Service, unless some very radical changes take place, though it still contributes to the Naval Reserve, a corps which bears the same relation to the Navy, that the Militia does to the Army, except that it is very inferior in drill and discipline to that force, and can only be called on to serve *during* war, but not in time to *prevent* a war. Before the Russian War, the Navy was almost entirely dependent on the merchant service for men, but, as that source signally failed, continuous service was introduced into the Navy, with the system of training boys to keep up the supply, thus superseding the old plan so entirely that, for some years past, the entry of men from the merchant service, has been considerably under a hundred per annum. Various reasons are assigned for this falling off of volunteers for the Navy—for it must be borne in mind that the door has always been kept open to them—the most common being the scarcity of men caused by the abolition of apprentices. This, though no doubt one, is certainly not the only, or even the chief cause.

In my opinion, the principal reasons are—first, that as the supply of seamen has fallen short of the demand, wages in the merchant service have steadily increased, whereas the pay of the Royal sailor has not kept pace with it, and for the merchant seamen who may try the Navy, the pay has remained absolutely stationary for the last seventy years. Again, the Royal Naval Reserve has the effect of keeping men out of the regular service, for they can hardly be expected to serve in a man-of-war for £24 a year, when they can get considerably more in a merchant ship, in addition to £10 from Government,—actually given to men for remaining away. The expense also of an outfit on joining, is out of all proportion to the small pay our men receive, and necessarily places them in debt for at least their first year of service, whilst the doing away with the two months' advance, formerly given on joining, renders it often impossible for a man to pay off debts incurred whilst waiting for a ship, and causes that powerful class of land-sharks—the crimps—to be dead against us. These, I believe, to be the chief causes operating against men entering the Navy, though there are many others of minor importance. As I have shown in a former paper, read in this theatre,<sup>1</sup> we have at present, as the result of our training and continuous service system, but 12,000 *able* seamen in the Fleet. Were this the result of the beginning of a system, it might reasonably be supposed that with time the number of able men would increase, but such must not be anticipated, for, though the training of boys has been in full force for the last ten years, we still include amongst our 12,000 A.B.'s, many who joined as *men*, either prior to, or since the introduction of, the present system, and we must be prepared, when these are gone, to see our force of 12,000 dwindle down to probably less than 10,000, which will be about the normal number of able seamen produced by our training establishments. We see now that 3,000 boys have annually to be entered to maintain a force of 18,000 or 19,000 blue jackets, of whom only about half are thoroughly qualified seamen, the remainder being but learners, and in many cases little better than boys.

But is the Navy as at present maintained able to train as *sailors* all the men it requires? Let us see. To keep up the number of men now voted, 4,000 boys, first-class (*viz.*, boys who have passed through the training course) are required, but all our ships put together do not take more than three-fifths of them, the remainder being cooped up in harbour vessels, learning little but evil. It is thus clear we have not nearly the requisite *tonnage* at sea to salt our youths properly—a state of things most detrimental to them, and the service at large; in short, we have to keep more men than the ships of the Navy can possibly make into sailors, and the sooner the fact is boldly faced the better, for no half-measures will remedy this most serious evil. We now come to the question whether, with only sufficient ships at sea to absorb about 1,800 boys a year, it is advisable, so to speak, to swamp the service with 3,000? As the Navy is at present worked, ti

<sup>1</sup> "Seamen of the Fleet, &c.," see Journal, Vol. xix (No. 83) page 604, et seq.

is necessary to enter them, because the profession is self-dependent and with no other source from which men are obtained; but is it absolutely unavoidable that such an unsatisfactory state of things should continue? and is there no solution to the difficulty? There can be no doubt that the Navy should train as many of its men from boyhood as possible, but there is a limit to its power of so doing, and that limit should not be exceeded. Some fifteen hundred boys per annum can be conveniently and advantageously disposed of in the ships usually kept at sea, but any excess of that number only injures the sea training of them all.

How the remaining 1,200 or 1,500 men needed to keep the Navy effective are to be found is a question as yet unanswered, and, as usual, the main difficulty in matters of this sort is *money*; so, unless I can suggest a means by which men can be had as good, and as cheaply, as those manufactured for the Navy, I fear things are likely to be allowed to remain in their present defective condition; but I am confident that men can be got who would, on the whole, be quite as good as the average of our young hands, whilst possessing more *nautical* experience, and who would have cost nothing for training. Seamen now, to be of real value in war, should be (as I have attempted to show in my former paper) thoroughly drilled and disciplined as fighting men, but this cannot be done without barracks, I therefore take it for granted that barracks will ere long be constructed, as they are already recognised as an *imperative necessity*, without which the men of the Fleet never can attain to that high standard of efficiency which the country has a right to expect, and the present exigencies of the service require. With barracks, the great difficulty to entering *seamen* direct will disappear, for in them the young merchant sailor can be so completely disciplined and drilled that he would no longer be looked on as the objectionable character he has hitherto been considered on board of a man-of-war. In entering such men it would not do to be too particular in their nautical examination, as many things required of a sailor in the Royal Navy are not thought necessary in the merchant service; and it should be borne in mind that there are certain parts of a seaman's work which can be perfectly well taught on shore, whilst there are others which must be learned afloat. Two qualities absolutely necessary, but only to be acquired in youth, and on the salt water, are *sea legs* and a *sea stomach*, and a man possessing these might, in considerably less than a year under careful instruction in barracks, be transformed into a very fair man-of-war's man. There are other qualities of course essential to good sailors, such as readiness of resource, self-reliance, activity, and determination, which are so much developed in the man, by actual work aloft, that sea training should always be imperative on candidates for entry. In barracks therefore, I would drill the additional men necessary to keep our blue jackets up to their proper strength, and therein qualify them for their duties as men-of-war's men. I am aware I may be met with the objection, that seamen cannot be got from the merchant service, but this difficulty can, I believe, be overcome. In the first place, to do so we must make the Royal Naval Reserve the *link* between the Royal,

and merchant navy, not leave it, as it now is, the *gulf* which separates them. If we can attract a certain number of men regularly from the merchant service, we should soon find ourselves in a position to insist on a qualifying period of service in the Fleet, before they could pass into the Reserve, thus immensely increasing its value, as those composing it would then be all disciplined, *tried* men, to whom the duties of a ship of war, when they were required to join the Navy, would be neither unusual nor irksome. There should also be easy means of interchange between the two services, so that a man could serve for a time in the one, and then pass into the other, *three* years in the Reserve, counting as *two* in the regular service, towards a *non-continuous* service pension. At present, if a Naval Reserve man joins the Navy, he is a positive loser. For instance, in a Frigate I commanded in South America, I had four Naval Reserve men; they were all stout good merchant seamen, who soon fell into our ways, and were thought well of, but in less than a year three out of the four had deserted, simply because they could not afford any longer to serve Her Majesty on £14 a year, for such was the practical result of giving them £10 whilst out of the service and only £24 when in it. Had these men been allowed to draw such portion of their retainer as would have made up their pay to that of their continuous-service brethren, they, in all probability, would have remained in the service contentedly until the ship paid off, when, if they returned to their former calling, as the chances are they would, they at any rate might be expected to speak favourably of their experience in the Royal Service, and have been a valuable addition, instead of being lost, to the Reserve. I may add that the fourth man rose to be a leading seaman, and, on paying off, I asked him whether he intended to rejoin the Navy, he replied,—“I like the service, but at my age (thirty) it would not pay me to do so.” I hold that nothing short of absolute necessity should induce Government so completely to alienate the merchant service from the Navy. At present, in the Reserve, there is a certain proportion of men who have served in the Fleet for short periods, but unless some encouragement is offered to the merchant seamen these will soon disappear, and leave the Reserve entirely composed of men who know nothing whatever of the routine or duties of a man-of-war. There is a strong natural antipathy in the merchant sailor to the Navy, which is only to be removed by serving in it, or modified by hearing it well spoken of by those who have; but when the whole body is composed of men who know nothing of a man-of-war, it can hardly be expected that the Royal Service will become more popular with them than it is at present. I have heard it said that it is better that the Naval Reserve men should not serve in the Fleet in peace time, as their doing so reduces our resources in case of war. If *quantity* and not *quality* were the only consideration, such an argument might hold good; but *quality* is certainly now-a-days of the first importance, and unless a seaman is *thorough* in drill and discipline he is not worthy of being estimated at anything like full value in the fighting power of the Fleet.

But cutting off the merchant seamen from the Navy is felt in-

juriously in other ways; the good feeling which formerly existed between the two branches of the profession is fast vanishing, the man-of-war's man is no longer looked on by the merchant sailor as a bird of the same feather, but as one of a totally different order, and this feeling extends from them to their Officers, who, in former times, if not interchangeable like their men, at any rate became familiar with the Navy from hearing, in their youth, the experience of the old salts with whom they sailed, and who had seldom passed a long life at sea without having spent a considerable portion of it in a ship of war. I would even go further, and should like to see a qualifying service in the Navy imperative on all future Naval Reserve Officers, such service would be a clear gain to all parties, for the Officer would learn his naval duties, the Admiralty be able to estimate his suitability, and value as such, and thus be in a position safely to reduce the number of Officers in the regular service, which would both save the country's money, and remove to some extent that incubus, "Half-pay," which I have no hesitation in saying, does more harm to the profession, than it is possible to estimate; but the greatest of all the advantages to be derived from the connection, would be the sympathy, and the good understanding engendered by it. At present, merchant Officers look on us, I fear, as mere drawing-room sailors who may possibly know the bow from the stern of a ship, but not much more. This unfavourable opinion would not so much matter were it not, through them, transferred to their employers, and other mercantile classes, and thus diffused throughout the country, till, as a result, confidence in the Navy is shaken, as we too often see by the tenor of the articles, written on naval matters, in the leading journals. If merchant Officers were brought into contact with those of the Navy, they would find such opinions, if entertained, to be unjust and erroneous, and that there are proportionately as many practical sailors serving the Queen as in their own branch of the profession, for though the training in the Royal Service may not be so rough as theirs, still Naval Officers are not only always ready, but quite as able to do any part of a seaman's work as the most hardy Neptune in the Australian trade. The time for keeping the Navy a close borough has past; within proper limits we should put out our hand to those who, like ourselves, follow the sea; for the ranks of the merchant service now hold officers of as good social position as our own, gentlemen both by birth and education. What is required for the Navy is more *light*, nothing should be kept dark, the more the public and Parliament know of it, the better for us all. Now we are principally known and judged of by our shortcomings or unfortunate accidents; but the important services, and hard work done by the Navy, though of every day occurrence, is but little heard of or considered; were it otherwise, we should not be so roundly abused for things which are too often beyond our control. But to return to the seamen.

How are we to induce merchant sailors to join the Navy? certainly not by offering them a bounty, for experience has shown that that does not answer. There appears to me, however, to be another way we may get them to join, viz., by allowing their sea time *out of the service* to count towards a non-continuous service pension, to be earned by a combination

of service in and out of the Navy, and Reserve, for a period of 21 years or its equivalent, *irrespective of age*. Thus, I would allow a *seaman* under twenty-five years of age to count *half* his time served at sea; between that age, and thirty, *two-fifths* of his sea time, and so on to an age limit; but I would allow *all* time served in the Reserve to count as *two-thirds* time. Men entering the Navy with a view of passing into the Reserve should also be allowed a free kit *credit* on the books, equal to that now given to boys on entry and before passing into the fleet, viz., £7 10s. for clothes, and £1 for bedding, which would enable them to commence their service clear of debt, and allow of their drawing pay from the first.

The above proposal may appear at first sight too liberal, but it must be remembered that the country would have the benefit of all *man's* time for the entire period of his service, and have paid nothing whatever towards his training as a *sailor*; in fact we should get a ready-made article instead of having to manufacture it. The Naval Reserve men should be encouraged to come and go as much as possible; when in the Fleet, they should be paid as continuous service men, the only difference between the two classes being the pension. Such a system backed by other minor inducements, such as allowing the men to carry their conduct and gunnery pay with them, exempting them from the re-qualifying course excepting once in three, or five years, but allowing the men to draw their ration money, and considering them eligible for the coast guard, when their *combined service* qualified them for it, would probably induce a number of staid and experienced seamen, (a class of men the want of whom is much felt in the Fleet) as well as younger men, to join, for it often happens that it is convenient for the Reserve sailor to join our ships abroad, and for us to take him. Besides, as these men get older they begin to look ahead, and are then pretty certain to see the advantage of reducing the time between them and a pension, by putting in a few years in the Navy as opportunities offer. It would hardly be fair, seeing how short the mercantile marine is of men, to introduce the proposed scheme unless the Government in some way or other made up for the men which would be absorbed by the Navy; but I think we may reasonably anticipate that the New Merchant Shipping Act will amply provide for this, probably by furnishing ships in which boys can be prepared for service in the mercantile marine; if so, such vessels,—to be thoroughly efficient,—should be put under one system of instruction, and be periodically inspected by some competent person, whose report would enable the Board of Trade, or whatever department they are placed under, to form a proper estimate of the work they are doing.

It is not my intention here to enlarge on the subject of training boys, but there are one or two important points I should like to touch on in passing in view of the establishment of these nurseries for seamen. The best age to take a boy for making a sailor is about 14½, but the most *paying age* is a year or eighteen months older, that is to say, the *bulk* of boys joining at the younger age will stick to the sea, and become excellent seamen, but the older they are taken the larger is the proportion of loss, until we reach those who enter as



young men, and who seldom turn out well, or remain at sea if they can leave it; but the difference of waste between the boys of 14½, and 15½, is not equal to the additional cost of maintaining the younger class for the extra year. Thus the regulation age should be from 15½, to 16½; over, or under these ages the expense is increased. Seamen, now that so few are carried in proportion to tonnage, must be both strong and able, therefore there should be a standard of size, as well as a physical examination before entry, and as young boys are growing fast, they should be well and plentifully fed, so as to develop to the utmost both their bodies and minds. Eighteen months is the *maximum* time a boy should be kept in a harbour training ship, after that they only lose ground, and become discontented. But as lads of between seventeen and eighteen will often be too light to get berths in merchant ships easily, they may have to be sent to sea, rather than be retained too long in harbour, in carefully selected ships, under humane and experienced captains, who might receive in remuneration a sum equivalent to the value of their rations. The custom of carrying premium boys is now becoming so universal, that this course will probably be found imperative; but I do not anticipate that there ever will be any difficulty in competing with them, as they labour under the disadvantage of being entirely uninstructed, and therefore very inferior as compared to the trained youth. After, say a voyage to India, via the Cape, or to Australia, such lads would, as a rule, be quite fit for an ordinary seamen rate, and be much sought after. By sending boys thus to sea, no extra expense would be incurred, as it is obvious that whether retained at home, or sent to sea, they must be fed.

Having roughly sketched out how in my opinion the Navy might be benefited and placed in more intimate connection with its Reserve, and through it, with our great mercantile marine, I will proceed to make a short summary of what I have written:—

1st. The Navy is now self-dependent rearing its blue jackets from boys, numbering 19,000, of whom but 12,000 are able-bodied seamen:

2nd. As sufficient ships are not kept at sea to carry more than three-fifths of them, the seamen-like qualities of our sailors are rapidly deteriorating.

3rd. The sea-going ships of the fleet only carry about three-fifths the boys required to make good the loss on the blue jackets of the Fleet.

4th. It is, therefore, desirable to draw *seamen* from other sources, rather than swamp the Navy with more boys than it can possibly instruct.

5th. That the mercantile marine must again become the nursery from which we should draw a proportion of our *seamen*, to be disciplined, and moulded into men-of-war's men in *barracks*, before being embarked.

6th. That for many weighty reasons it is bad policy to alienate the merchant service entirely from the Navy, and that our present Naval Reserve system has that injurious effect.

7th. There should be established means of easy interchange between the Reserve, and the regular Service, three years in the

former, to be considered equivalent to two in the latter, and a qualifying service in the Fleet required of both officers and men.

8th. That the whole should be linked to a comprehensive system of training boys for the Merchant Service, under proper Government supervision.

These are the main points put forth in this paper; and I trust to the discussion on it to clear up any uncertainty as to my meaning, which from want of detail may not be perfectly clear. Of this, however I am certain, the Navy, if kept at its present number, cannot long continue to make its own sailors without aid from without, and attempting to do so will prove most injurious to the service.

We cannot tell in a naval war what number of men will be required, and therefore if our men were even better, and more numerous than they are, we should do well not entirely to break with the mercantile marine of the country. It must be remembered that if even an inferior naval power gets the start of us in war, by sending out half a dozen fast cruisers to prey on our trade (a contingency for which we certainly are not *always* prepared), our merchants will most surely take refuge under neutral flags; and as all history tells us that the men invariably follow the ships, go where they will, embargo or press-gangs would be equally powerless to touch them. This fact was clearly demonstrated during the American Civil War, when their commerce, second only to our own, passed almost entirely to other flags; their ships-of-war, however, remained without native seamen, though an enormous bounty was offered, and they had to be content with foreign merchant sailors, or deserters from our Navy, supplemented by some twenty thousand landsmen, to man their fleet.

It is no new idea to form our Reserve from men who have passed through the fleet; pamphlets have been written by distinguished admirals; committees, both Parliamentary and departmental, have sat on the subject; blue books have been printed, but still no attempt has been made to do so, or even to secure for the Reserve our ten years' men, who at their prime, and when of most value, pass in considerable numbers out of the Navy, and are entirely lost without any steps being taken to secure their services in case of war. Those best able to judge, consider our Reserve as at present constituted, far from satisfactory, whilst we hear it spoken of as "fictitious and expensive," and doubts expressed as to whether the men "would come forward except by compulsion." At the same time it is but fair to add, that many intelligent officers speak of the Reserve in the highest terms as a reliable force. I believe the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes, and that the Reserve has, with some good, many bad points. At best it is an untried force, very partially trained to arms, and composed of men unused to naval discipline, though undoubtedly good sailors, and physically fine men. If the men composing the Reserve had all passed through the Navy, the very prospect of war would be inducement enough to bring them in crowds to our ships; but for men of a certain age, and of totally different habits, to take to a new life with equal alacrity, is a phase in human nature we have yet to see, to believe in.

Can we, or should we, thus rest contented when a *doubt* on such a *vital question* exists? are we to wait patiently until war solves the problem, possibly by involving the country in some great calamity? I do not doubt the honesty of purpose of our Reserve men, for they probably are quite sincere in their promise to serve in war; but after all they are but human, and are certain to be exposed to great temptations to break their contract. The link between them and the flag they are to fight under must therefore be made stronger, let them all be *proved* men with something to lose; *self-interest* can *always* be depended on, *honour* only *at times*. I have no wish to see new measures made retrospective, indeed there is no reason why, at any rate for a time, old and new should not be *worked* together. It would be no hardship, but much to the advantage of the young men coming on, to pass a few years under the pendant, before going into the Reserve, and the same may be said of the young merchant officers. These gentlemen, when Sub-Lieutenants in the Reserve, should be required to serve for six months in one of our Channel, or Mediterranean ships, before being qualified for promotion to Lieutenant's rank; the report from the Captain they were under to be considered, in combination with their other services, before they received promotion. We could not expect great results at first, but I feel confident that if the matter were taken up with energy, if Naval recruiting parties and rendezvous were established at our principal sea ports, we should in due time succeed in entering all the men we require. The continuous service system should be maintained in full force within proper limits, which I roughly estimate at from 14,000 to 15,000 men, the remaining three or four thousand to be short service men, qualifying for the Reserve. As the time required of a Reserve man to entitle him to a pension is long, I would like to see him allowed to earn a *part* of it, when unable to serve for it all—thus, if a man had, after putting in ten or fifteen years, to leave from any good reason, I would grant him a proportionate pension at the *age of fifty*. The rule about men following the sea whilst in the Reserve might also, with advantage, be somewhat relaxed in favour of those who had served ten years in the Navy, or its equivalent in the Navy, Reserve, and merchant service; if such men lose by remaining on shore—which I doubt—for once a sailor always a sailor, the country would be the gainer, by having a body of experienced men always ready to hand. I do not place any great importance on frequent requalification in drills. If the men have passed through the Navy, and have once been *thoroughly* trained to arms, they can at any time be made efficient in a few weeks, so long as they are physically fit.

If England is really in earnest and jealous of the supremacy of her flag on the sea, if she really believes that on the Navy, "under the good providence of God, the wealth, the safety, and strength of the kingdom chiefly depends," she must, through Parliament, look carefully to it; it will be useless condemning the officers or even the Admiralty, if, when the evil day arrives, the arm on which the country confides be found wanting, the fault will surely lie with the *public*, and not with the *profession*, for is not *vox populi vox Dei*?

Captain WILSON: Before commencing the discussion I should like to add to what I have written a few notes which I made from the report of evidence taken before a Departmental Committee in 1871, but which was not published. From the report itself I take this:—"The total number (Reserve Seamen) removed from "the register by death, discharge, &c., since the formation of the force amounts "to upwards of 13,000. It has been given in evidence that most of the able "seamen of the mercantile marine, who are eligible by the regulations, have "joined the Royal Naval Reserve, and this statement has been confirmed by "the Registrar-General of Seamen." We then go on to evidence given having reference to the question of men passing out of the Navy into the Merchant Service, which some people think is so likely to occur if we allow them to go on the short service pension. Here is the evidence of a Quarter-Master and five seamen—*young men-of-war's men*—who had been educated in the Service, and who were of opinion that young seamen would dislike the idea of leaving the Navy for the Merchant Service. Individually they had the strongest objection to serving in the mercantile marine. A captain in the Merchant Service being asked what he thought of the Reserve men says, "I think they are a very mixed class. I have had them "myself and I have found that some of them are very good men and others quite the "reverse." Then in speaking of *men-of-war's men* passing into the Merchant Service he says, "You can make *man-of-war's men* out of merchant seamen, but you cannot "make merchant seamen out of *man-of-war's men* as a rule; of course there are "exceptions,"—in that I quite agree.

I have also some notes which I am sure will carry very great weight with you all. The evidence given by our very dear and lamented brother-Officer, Commodore Goodenough (and I take the opportunity of offering a humble tribute to his memory, by saying that the Service could ill afford to lose such an able and such a good man) he says, "Again, I think that the present system of "our Reserve is exceedingly expensive, and probably very ineffectual. The real "Reserve should be composed of men who have been trained in the Service, and "have gone through their five or six years in the Navy. Instruction and time is "thrown away in accumulating men on your lists, who are not first rate, in time of "peace." Then I go on to some evidence given by Captain Gore Jones, who is a good authority on these subjects. He says, "The great mistake with us has always been "having no permanent establishment like the army. We see from the Accountant- "General's statistics," and this is a part which is very noteworthy, "that in nine years "the numbers have decreased from 32,000 pure seamen to 19,000, without any "apparent cause." I think that is a very strong point. There is another little item that I draw your particular attention to, evidence given by a very intelligent Officer with reference to the comparative merits of boys trained in the private training ships, and those in the Royal Naval training ships. Captain Cuming served as captain of a Royal Naval training ship, and also as captain of a private training ship. A question is asked him as to the relative merits of the two classes of boys (ignoring gunnery altogether) simply as to discipline, clothing, and their abilities as seamen, and comparing boys of two and half years standing in the private training ship to one year in the Royal Naval training ship.

Q. "Apart from the knowledge of gunnery drill after two and half years with "you,"—he was then commander of a private training ship,—*"and after a year's "training in one of the Queen's ships, what is the actual difference as far as seaman- "ship goes between the two classes of boys?"* His answer is, "A boy from the "Queen's training ship would have a much better knowledge of the theory of seaman- "ship, and certainly of the practice." I want to draw attention to this as I think there is an idea abroad that because these private training ships keep the boys at per 19l. to 22l. a year, their training is cheap compared with what we give in the Royal Navy; this notion I think Captain Cuming's evidence upsets. I will go on to the evidence given by a very noted sailor in our Service, who ought to know what men are, Sir William Mends, now at the head of the Transport Department. He says, in answer to a question about Reserves, "It is certain that you will always "have to fall back upon the mercantile marine in time of need. At present the "mercantile marine and the Royal Navy are quite distinct, the line is cut between "them. You have nothing now to associate the Naval Service with the mercantile

"marine. If man-of-war's men, whom we could not find employment for in our ships of war, went into the mercantile marine, and constantly passed to and fro, so that a certain link was kept up, the seamen of the mercantile marine would gradually lose their distaste for the system of discipline necessary to the condition of the Royal Navy." Then in answer to another question he says, "The merchant seamen see nothing now of ships of war except the outside. The men forming the Royal Naval Reserve are drilled in ships specially set apart for the purpose, and which form no part of the active Fleet. I think the continuous service system is very good for the Navy in its normal condition, but very disadvantageous to the country in time of war." And in speaking of requalifying drills he says, "Those men who have had four or five years on board ship are soon brought up to the work again." The question is also put to him, "The transition from peace to war being momentary, is not that one of the objections, and a serious one to our Royal Naval Reserve?" He answers, "Of the 15,000 men we should not have in the summer time more than 4,000 in England: the others would be on the high seas."

Commander W. DAWSON, R.N.: There is one great advantage to the country in "half-pay" which has been overlooked by Captain Wilson, namely, that we are indebted to "half-pay" for the very able and interesting paper which we have heard to-night. Naval Officers when afloat spend a great deal of what is called "sea-time" in, and devote a great deal of exhaustive "sea service" upon, washing decks and scrubbing hammocks; but when relieved from those intellectual labours and allowed a period of learned leisure on half-pay, or of employment on shore, they can devote their talents to subjects of greater importance to the country than those not very recondite occupations which go to make up "sea-time," and I hope that whatever learned leisure Captain Wilson may have whilst on half-pay, may be devoted to the further development of the principles which he has enunciated in connection with this most important subject, for at present he has but touched the fringe of a very large question, and one which would well repay the devotion of Captain Wilson's talent and experience to elaborate more fully.

The question which he has put before us is, "Is our Merchant Service any longer a feeder to the Royal Navy?"

He appears to restrict this question to peace times and to fixed numbers, and if we are to confine our attention within such limits our reply must be that, "of course it is not a feeder to the Royal Navy;" and I would add, "why should it be?" Why should not rather the Royal Navy be the feeder to the mercantile marine? The Merchant Service at this moment cannot raise seamen enough for itself, and when it has got them it cannot keep them. When they become good and decent men, the first thing they do is to quit the Merchant Service, which, speaking roughly, and ignoring some most praiseworthy exceptions, is so badly managed that no decent man who has any respect for himself can belong to it, unless he gets into one of the more favoured employs, or is driven by poverty to put up with bad food, bad housing, and a depressing mode of payment. Consequently there is a very large secession of good and decent men always going on from the mercantile marine who are taking to employments on shore. There is also another reason why the mercantile marine wants assistance given to it rather than to give away its best young men to the Royal Navy, viz., that steamers are greatly increasing in number, and merchant steamers do not train up seamen, although they use them when trained. On the contrary, large proportions of the crews of a great number of these steamers are made up of Lascars and of the sweepings of mercantile sea ports, so that there are not so many persons under early training for British merchant seamen as we should naturally suppose. If we could in any way persuade men, who have served in ships of war, subsequently to serve in the mercantile marine—which I think is very doubtful indeed, so that I am not very hopeful of the plan proposed in that respect—if we could, however, then I should say the better plan would be rather to make the Royal Navy one great training establishment for the whole marine of the country. But it is answered, "we have not enough ships of war at sea for the purpose of training the boys required for the Queen's Service alone." Well, who else is going to train men for the Navy if the Navy does not do it for itself? and who is best able to pay for Royal Naval training? the country with all the taxes at its back, or the private shipowners? I say at

once, if you have not enough vessels at sea to train your boys, pay off some of the harbour ships which are constantly merely lying round the coast. It would be a great advantage to the Service if the number of harbour ships were greatly reduced. Then as to barracks, I don't think you will get barracks for the Navy till a batch of those demoralizing hulks, which destroy discipline and spoil men-of-war's men, are burnt. Even then decent barracks will not be given to the Navy. Nobody wants to have them in the form of disused old storehouses in the dockyards, without any drill ground or any other decent appliances, such as would enable Officers to discipline and to drill their men efficiently. The real question covers a much larger ground than the title of this paper. Peace time is simply a preparation for war, and the question is not merely how to man the Royal Navy in time of peace, but how to provide such a greatly expanding force as will be required to defend our commerce, our colonies, and our homesteads in time of war. When Captain Wilson asked on a previous occasion, "what are the number of men wanted in time of war?" he was answered by a very distinguished Officer that we have now more seamen than we have ships of war to put them into.

The CHAIRMAN: For the moment!

Commander W. DAWSON: For the moment! But in case of a great maritime struggle there is hardly a single seaworthy merchant steam-ship into which you could not put one or more 64-pounder guns. The Naval architect would not be worth his salt who could not do it. Surely if a heavy gun can be placed upon a raft it could be put into any seaworthy merchant steam-ship afloat. If Naval architects cannot build up a cradle or other framework inside of any gingerbread merchant ship capable of keeping the seas so as to carry 64-pounder guns, all I can say is they have no business to be called Naval architects. Every merchant steamer which has a speed of more than six knots could also be employed as a torpedo ship, therefore every single seaworthy vessel in which there is a steam engine can be used as a war vessel in any great maritime struggle for national existence. Besides, in the last war some of the best fighting ships we had were taken from the enemy, and that is a source to which we must look for getting many of our best fighting ships in time to come. But we want well-disciplined and well-drilled men to fight these ships. Merc seamen without discipline and without warlike training in the arts and arms of war do not form a fighting force, what we want is not mere sailors, whether amongst Officers or men. It is not so much mere seamanship as intelligence that is wanted on the quarter deck, and skilled fighting men before the mast. And fighting men who have the skill to fight in bodies, means discipline and drill. Thus we come round to very much the same conclusion at which Captain Wilson arrives, though they are reached by a different road. Has not Captain Wilson been led into a little contradiction in speaking of the qualities of the present Reserve men? Captain Wilson speaks in the highest terms of praise of the four Naval Reserve men serving in the frigate which he commanded; but since he was afloat he has evidently been reading some of the late Mr. Reddie's papers, and has taken up some notions from those who are opposed to that fighting force. All I can say is, "a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush." You have now in the Naval Reserve, so far as they go, the pick of the mercantile marine. Be they bad or good, they are the best men in the whole Merchant Service. The mercantile marine may contain far too many unseaworthy sailors; but those men in the Reserve are at any rate the best, or if you choose to put it otherwise the least worst of those in the Merchant Navy. And having got these Naval Reserve men drilled, it may be with obsolete guns and with obsolete carriages, still gaining a modicum of discipline and under a certain degree of control, you have a bird in the hand which can be depended upon when the country is in an emergency. It is quite true, that under the conditions made with them the Naval Reserve men cannot be called out till the emergency arrives; but get this other Reserve which you speak of if you can, and do it without breaking faith with the old. We must recognize this fact that we shall want every man and boy who is serving afloat for the defence of the country when the struggle comes for national existence, that death-struggle which must be fought out not on Dorking heights, but on the high seas; and if that be the case, the Government ought to come forward and claim a sort of oversight over the whole of the personnel of the mercantile marine. A great

many abuses which are now driving from the British Merchant Service its best men, and which are demoralizing and debauching the rest, could be immediately stopped as they have been in the Queen's Service by the regulations of a Government, which looked upon merchant seamen as persons who are in process of being trained and qualified now in time of peace for the defence of the country in time of war. In that way Captain Wilson's system might very well be elaborated and made to work out. But it would be silly on our part to expect merchant seamen to come into the Royal Navy unless some very large increase is made to the wages of the men of the Royal Navy. An A.B. of the Royal Navy is receiving 2*l.* 0*s.* 6*d.* per month, while an A.B. in the mercantile marine is receiving in the port of London at this moment 3*l.* 10*s.* per month, and if coming home from Australia he gets 8*l.* per month; and although it is quite true that there are only nine or ten months wages in the year for the merchant seaman, he does not always count up the months; and though there are no twopences or threepences for badges of various kinds to add to it as in the Royal Navy, still there is the plain naked fact, that he will get 1*l.* 10*s.* a month more by remaining where he is, than by entering the Queen's Service. This question of the wages of men-of-war's men has always been treated in a very scurvy way. In the Royal Navy, an ordinary artificer is given 9*l.* a year more than is given to a first-class seaman Petty Officer, or nearly twice the rate of wages given an able seaman of the Navy. Surely an able seaman is a skilled workman who ought to be paid the wages of a skilled workman. A first-class seaman Petty Officer is a man who has risen through two or three grades above an able seaman, and that, even after so rising in trustworthiness and skill, he should be receiving 9*l.* a year less than a shipboard ordinary mechanic, seems to me one of those things that wants rectifying. I do not believe myself that there is any very bad feeling between the Royal Navy and the Merchant Service. The members of the mercantile marine have had nothing to do with the published attacks lately made upon the Navy. Those animadversions are a great deal the fruits of what Naval Officers themselves have sown; they have told the world that Naval Officers were nothing but seamen, mere sailors that knew one end of a ship from the other, and knew nothing more, and that ignorance is the handmaid of seamanship, and that knowledge of affairs or of science was inconsistent with the skill to command fleets and fight battles; and they have been taken at their word, and have been very naturally treated by successive Governments and by the public, as men wanting in intelligence, incapable of holding positions of responsibility, and as, in short, the poor relations of the Army and of the Civil Service. On the contrary, the Naval Reserve has contributed to the growing good feeling which obtains between the employes of the merchants and of the Queen; they see something of the Navy and of its Officers in the drill ships, and this contact contributes a good deal towards mutual good feeling. At any rate, whatever the Naval Reserve are, they are a good bird in the hand, though they are wholly insufficient in numbers. I would, therefore, welcome any broad comprehensive and statesman-like grasp of the question of maritime defence, which would embrace the whole mercantile marine amongst the defensive forces of the country. We do need a much greater and more complete link between the Naval and the mercantile marine than we have at present; we do not need a more fostering, discriminating, and national Government control of that Service. Merchant seamen do not stand in the same national relation to the country that cabmen or colliers stand in, because cabmen and colliers are not men who are placed foremost in the defence of the country; but say what you will, in any great maritime struggle, whenever this country comes to fight for national existence, the Sovereign must have the aid on the seas of every man who has a sea leg or a sea stomach; and every such man should be made competent to give a capable response to the signal, "England expects every man to do his duty." If Captain Wilson will, during the further time he may be on half-pay—though I do not wish him to be on half-pay longer than he himself wishes,—devote his talents and studies to elaborating a system such as he has himself sketched, widening his views so as to bring the whole control of the personnel of the mercantile marine into the hands of the Government in some form or other—if he would devote his intellect and his labours to the elaboration of that great subject, it would be a work worthy of his great talents,

of his energy, and of his patriotism, and one that would confer great benefit upon the country.

Rear-Admiral J. H. SELWYN: I could have wished, Sir, to have heard some one on the other side of the question who might have informed us more of the mercantile feeling on the subject. I think Captain Wilson's paper mainly brings before us the question, "Which are the best seamen for the Navy, and how can they be obtained?" and I think I see a latent idea in his mind, that it would be most desirable to have our men trained from boys in the duties which they are to perform afterwards; that is to say, thoroughly educated in the true sense of the term, which means, a preparation for the life a person is likely to lead, and not a mere teaching in any formal subjects which he may or may not follow up afterwards. A seaman should be educated in those things which he may be required to do at sea during war or peace, and in such habits as can only be inculcated when they are begun from the earliest days of his life. Afterwards, it is not so much how long it takes you to teach, or what you can teach, but it is what you can make the men unlearn—idle, dirty habits, habits of talking when he should be silent, grumbling, and all those things which unfortunately are too rife to-day in the undisciplined services, are much harder to unlearn than the good is hard to be taught. Therefore, I do think, if it were not for the objection which Captain Wilson has stated, that the number of our ships is not sufficient to employ more than a very small proportion of the boys we now train, he would believe, as I do, the best way would be to train the whole number we require. Captain Dawson has shown that such men so trained would be much more valuable to the mercantile marine than any one we can ever expect to receive from them would be to us. They would be men of such orderly habits as every good shipowner desires to see in his ship; they would be less liable to the seductions of the harbour and of crimps; they would be less likely to deceive their owners, and mutiny against their masters, in proportion as you gave them better training. Many years ago I drew attention strongly to the fact that, in France, the *Inscription Maritime*, together with the law that no person should command a ship above a certain size in their mercantile marine without having served a certain period of his youth in the Navy, had had good effects, and might be very well imitated, if it were not for that popular cry which tells us that the British nation would never stand it. Now I deny that that cry, in any case in which it is uttered, is a wise or a true cry. I shall take exception to the maxim with which Captain Wilson concluded his paper—"Vox populi, vox Dei." I should translate that in exactly the opposite direction. My own experience in America, as well as everywhere else, would teach me, if history did not, that it is precisely *not* what is the voice of God which is the voice of the people. I have been a great deal lately in the "Model Republic," and I can only tell you that they do not believe in it. There is another point which is the inducement to be offered to those boys who become men after we have trained them, the inducement to those men to remain with us. There is a very simple and very effectual means of doing that, one which cannot be too strongly insisted on, as it is the only fair and just way, which will not burden the country too much, and it is, to give to those men who serve their country during a long period of their lives, the fair share of public employment which they ought to have, as a refuge for old age. A man is not the worse, he is very much the better, in a public office for having been trained and disciplined at sea or in the Army. And I would say that, on this question of the Navy, the promotion of persons who have not served the ordinary time, which alone qualifies for such promotion in the service to which he is supposed to be added, is a fallacy and a mistake. You may lower the rank, but you cannot raise the men. You may call people, as they do in America, Majors, Generals, and every other grade you please, by the dozen; what is the result? You simply lower the whole title until nobody cares to bear it. That rank which the Navy and the Army is supposed to give, is almost the only inducement to an Officer and a gentleman to remain in the Service, for the pay, certainly, would never do it. If you lower the rank, you lower the inducement to good men to enter or remain in either Service. I have now arrived at an age and rank when all these things do not affect me personally in the slightest degree, therefore I can scarcely be suspected of having a private interest in the subject, but that will be the inevitable result of going forward with any such



shams as the whole nation has been for the last twenty years past pursuing. And besides this, little by little we are induced to pay twice as much for a sham as we need to pay for the real thing. The Reserve was held out a great many years ago as the great means for allying the merchant marine with the Navy. Now we are told it is not so, and that it has operated positively in the opposite direction. There is an old friend of mine here who has been long a distinguished member of the Naval Reserve, and I think he will say that there never has been a feeling in the mercantile marine against the Navy. They have always worked together as brothers whenever they have met; but, very naturally, a man who has been brought up in the comparative comfort of a man-of-war—the elegancies of life, I may almost say, on board a modern man-of-war—is not prepared to engage later in life in the rough work of the mercantile marine, and you cannot persuade him to do it. Neither can you make use immediately in war of the mercantile marine at your disposal. The enactments within the last twenty years have led to a most lamentable state of things with regard to the flag. You saw in America, the instant war broke out, one or two fast cruisers were not only able to distress and harass the commerce of that nation, but so to raise the insurance, that practically no goods could pass under that flag. So in the French and German war, the German marine was laid up in port, our harbours were crowded with their steamers; I saw them in Rio Janeiro at the same time. The result was, the whole commerce deserted the flag, left those ships and sailors unemployed, and went to another nation. Each nation must now be prepared for that state of things the instant it goes to war; that flag will cease to carry commerce under it at all, because it cannot do so cheaply with war risk for insurance. (Captain WILSON: The men will go with it.) They would perhaps go into the American Marine. Now, as to the steamers; your fast steamers could be made use of in war as the only ones that can really keep the sea, because they carry ten days' full steam (I should be very glad to see a man-of-war carrying ten days' full steam) they can go fast and far and they can carry heavy guns.

The CHAIRMAN: How long would it take to fit a heavy gun in one of those ships?

Admiral SELWYN: There is not the smallest difficulty; they could carry an 80-ton gun to-morrow if you wish, provided you carry it low enough, provided you will consent to have the proper carriages to utilise recoil to carry the guns low down and only bring them up when required to fire, I mean Major Moncrieff's plan. The pensions for public service have always been a very onerous and disagreeable payment for the nation to make. Men live too long as pensioners, those who pay do not like it and murmur at it constantly, but I do think ordinary pay in such public offices as I have suggested, or in such employment, if it was not in public offices yet obtained by the recommendation of the Department, as might fitly be given, would operate as the strongest inducement to good and lasting service. Why did Captain Wilson's friend of the Reserve refuse to serve any longer in the Navy at the age of 30? Simply because he saw no issue. If he had been told, "If you complete your service in the Navy, you will have a good claim on the Government for a certain pension or reward which will take the shape of an office "in which you can serve," I think his objections would have vanished. But, unmistakably, we can and ought to train, if we look at it merely as a question of public policy, and to educate the vagabonds in our streets to be something better than the sons of crime they now become. It is now allowed that the training given, even in private ships, is far better than that given by the schools and is not nearly so expensive. I think, under these circumstances, we may claim that there should be first the clear and plain recognition of the fact that the training school of the Navy is not only to be sufficient for itself but also for the mercantile marine, and that if ships of the Navy are not forthcoming in which to continue training our men afterwards, there ought to be a wise expenditure during peace for that object in order to be prepared for war.

Captain BEDFORD PRIM, R.N., M.P.: How many men do you estimate are serving in the mercantile marine?

Captain WILSON: I can only go from documents I see printed. I estimate there are about 210,000 *seamen* (but not necessarily *sailors*) but from what I have read

of the evidence given before different committees, and also in the papers, as well as from my own observation, I do not suppose we have more than from 20,000 to 25,000 thoroughly competent *English* able seamen in the mercantile marine.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. STIRLING LACON: A calculation put out from Liverpool to-day, states that there are 202,000 men in the mercantile marine, and they bring down their calculation of able seamen to the figures you now mention, somewhere about 30,000.

Captain DAWSON: It does not include foreigners.

Mr. STIRLING LACON: After deducting foreigners. There is one subject I wish to mention to Captain Wilson, and that is the question of apprentices, for it is quite evident that we are coming round to it; and if we do so, it will render the question very feasible in dealing with the Merchant Service and the Navy. Foreigners are obliged to bring up their own boys in order that they may have sailors, and why should not we? but in this great maritime country for the last twenty-five years, the boys have not been able to get to sea. It is only marvellous to me that we have as many as 30,000 sailors in the Merchant Service, but they are gradually falling off. You cannot have sailors unless you begin with them when boys. From returns which I quoted five or six years ago, 60 per cent. of the shipowners of this country were in favour of returning to the old apprentice system; and I am told to-day by the Chairman of Lloyd's Committee, that the mercantile marine are now all but unanimous in favour of a return thereto: but it must be compulsory; unless it is dealt with by the Government as compulsory it is useless, what is obligatory on all is a hardship to none. Ships in which it may not be convenient to take boys should contribute an equivalent in money. If the mercantile marine are in favour of returning to the old apprenticeship system, which I am told is the case, it simplifies matters very much, if the Government will take the matter in hand, and deal with it in a comprehensive spirit.

Captain BEDFORD PRIM: You estimate 30,000 as the number of pure blue jackets in the mercantile marine?

Captain WILSON: Might I be allowed to read an extract from a letter which appeared in the *Times*, of Friday, the 14th instant, written by Mr. John Williamson, Honorary Secretary of the Committee of Inquiry into the condition of our merchant seamen. He says, "The total number of hands employed, according to the Registrar-General of Seamen's Returns, is about 202,000; but an analysis will show about the following *bonâ fide* seamen of all sorts, including apprentices and foreigners, 153,000; but of this number the genuine A.B.'s, including foreigners, are about 40,000. This amount is arrived at from the almost universal testimony of ship masters, that not more than one-fourth of their forecandle hands know the ordinary duties of a seaman. Deduct foreigners, 20,000; leaves British able-bodied seamen 20,000; and as nearly all the foreigners are able-bodied seamen, the proportion of the best, or able-bodied seamen in our forecandle, is one-half foreign, and one-half British. These are startling figures to ponder in view of a war with a Naval Power; the foreigners would undoubtedly return to their native country; our Navy would require its Reserves out of the above able-bodied seamen, the carrying trade would be placed in a serious position. So the sooner something be done in the way of 'inaugurating an extensive national system' of training seamen, and that in connection with the Royal Navy, the better for both the material and national interests of our Empire."

That, I think is a very important paragraph.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Experience shows that only about one man in four is a *skilled able seaman*; we may therefore conclude, that out of the 210,000 or 220,000 seamen, not more than 55,000 are really qualified sailors; but of these we may reckon that from 20,000 to 25,000 are foreigners, for unless they were good seamen they would not be employed in preference to Englishmen; the number must again be reduced by some 6,000 or 8,000 negroes, before we come to the total of *English* skilled sailors, who do not, I believe, exceed 25,000 in all!—J. O. W.

<sup>2</sup> If the above be true and the Registrar-General's evidence goes to confirm it, our shipping interest should take it to heart and observe how it will affect them in war. In war, out of the 20,000 skilled native seamen, 16,000 the very cream of them, are

Captain R. A. E. SCOTT, R.N.: I should like to make one or two remarks with respect to Captain Wilson's valuable paper, and first as to the means of obtaining men at the present time. I think, from what he says himself, it is very clear that what we must look for, is the training of more boys for the Navy. There is a further point that has not been touched upon, nor will Captain Wilson perhaps do so, but having been very much connected with this part of the Service, I would remark that except men are trained when boys, I do not think that they ever will become thorough gunners. As for the great mass of men at sea at the present time, to call them "gunners," is absurd. They are badly drilled, they are unable to take true aim, and hence they miss when they ought to hit the mark; I am speaking now as an old seaman gunner, formerly of the "Excellent," and I affirm that what we require for boys is early and intelligent training, teaching them the reasons why and wherefore, and giving them to thoroughly understand the machinery with which the guns are being worked, because all these later ponderous guns *must* be worked by machinery; then, whether they go into the Navy or into the Merchant Service, such boys would have an interest in the guns, for we know how fond all boys are of mechanism. Unfortunately our present system of drill, whether in the Royal or in the Mercantile Navy, does not teach the boys the use of machinery, and does not aim at teaching machinery to men, until they are too old to learn, but if we at once adopt a wise national system of training for boys, we shall be in a far better position in case of war. What Admiral Selwyn has said is quite correct as to the ease with which very heavy guns may be mounted in merchant ships, and steam tugs also would be found very valuable for coast defence, supplementing torpedo boats with very considerable efficiency. I feel strongly that in order to maintain our naval supremacy we must have more boys. We have boys in our principal towns, who are now learning mischief and going into evil, who could instead be very usefully employed; they would soon get a liking for the Navy and would also be valuable for the Merchant Service, and such boys could be utilised in time of war after being trained to the sea and to the use of machinery; for whatever their subsequent occupations were, we should be able to put our hands upon them: in fact a war would at once bring them to the Navy. It is not sailors only that are wanted in war time, but we should rather want men who can use the latest improved weapons thoroughly. We ought, therefore, to hold out much more encouragement than we do at present. A first-class Petty Officer now fires the guns on board ship. In the "Inflexible," where there are only four guns; fancy a man with 30*l.* or 40*l.* a-year firing these guns—firing away more than his annual income at each round! We ought at once to give a much higher salary, and secure specially trained marksmen and skilled Officers to uphold the honour of the country, or else we may find ourselves distanced by some of our friends over the water whose discipline is better than our own, and whose intelligent training is superior to ours at the present time.

Mr. STIRLING LACON: Captain Wilson spoke of naval barracks, I may mention that I have been round France at L'Orient and at Brest, and I was quite astonished at what I saw in their naval barracks there. They drill the men at single stick, and gymnastics, and the use of weapons, but we have nothing of that kind at present.

Mr. BULLIVANT: I wish to speak upon one point in Captain Wilson's lecture, and that was that he rather disparaged the training that is given in our private training ships as compared with that of the Navy. I do so as having taken a great interest in these ships, being one of the Committee of the "Chichester" and the "Arethusa," and having started the "Worcester," and since acted as Honorary Secretary to the "Worcester," though I do not wish to make any remarks applying to the "Worcester" (which is more of a floating training college for gentlemen's sons, and does not come under the same category as what are usually meant by training ships) but more particularly to the poor boy ships. The age at which the

to be withdrawn for the Navy, leaving hardly any to manage their trade which must either be placed in inefficient hands, or under neutral flags, or laid up, or in the hands of foreign seamen, who may be bribed to carry their valuable vessels into an enemy's port.—J. C. W.

boys are taken into the naval ships is 15½ to 16; the age at which we are obliged to take the poor destitute boys is very often 12, 13, or 14; therefore, I hardly think the comparison is fair when you take the boy's time out of one ship where they commence training at 15½, and then compare it with those we have commenced to train at 13½ and 14. With respect to the training of boys, I can only say that there is not the slightest difficulty. We only want in our training ships funds found us; we are training boys in those ships at the cost of about 22*l.* a-year. There is not the slightest difficulty in getting them, and the way in which they turn out is most satisfactory. Taking these boys off the streets of London, we find that about 75 per cent. turn out really thoroughly good boys, and as to the system of training, I could give instances in which boys, after having been at sea six years, trained in these ships, are now serving as chief Officers of ships. Therefore, I do not think the training that we give on board these private training ships can be at all disparaged, or that I can grant that the training given in the Navy is better than we are giving in our private training ships.

Captain DEXT, R.N. : There is one point I think very necessary to be mentioned when asking for the mercantile marine as a backbone, and that is, for the Navy to consider whether it is capable of being so, as it was in former years; and I say unhesitatingly it is not so. I know, from observation of seafaring people that are going through or detained in the refuge port of Holyhead, and from a very large experience at Liverpool, that whereas, twenty-five years ago, a Captain with fourteen men thought himself unlucky if he had two men who were not able seamen, he now thinks himself very lucky if he has two able seamen in the same number; and the great problem shipowners want to solve now, is how to be able to get good men. As to the question of apprentices, there is very great difficulty, for this reason: Many of the great companies, if they would be perfectly willing to take apprentices, could not train them. In the line I am conducting, I must take a ready-made seaman. I cannot make them. A boy comes in, I can teach him nothing. I should be willing to subscribe for training ships, but I could not take compulsory apprentices, because I could not make sailors of them, our vessels being full-powered steamers, with only pole masts. There is another point I have noticed very much with regard to the Navy and the mercantile marine, viz., whenever they are thrown into contact together, true sailors, whether seamen of the mercantile marine or of the Royal Navy, are always drawn together and always work well together. But, as at present constituted, the Navy are under one department and the mercantile marine under another, and there is a good deal of jealousy between these departments which tends to keep these people apart, and you find it is very difficult even for naval Officers who would like to find employment in the merchant service to get such employment. If they were all thrown under one head that might be done away with. There are a large number of appointments under the Board of Trade filled with people picked up in highways and byways which might be filled very advantageously by naval Officers. There is something to be learned on both sides of the question, that is to say, speaking generally, the Navy knows as little about the Merchant Service as that service knows about the Navy. But I say unhesitatingly at the present moment, under the present régime, with the Merchant Service under one authority and the Navy under another, the tendency of the departments is to keep them apart instead of to amalgamate them. I have got in my own employ a great many seamen from the Royal Navy who are pensioners, and are very good men. They are the backbone of the Service when once they have got thoroughly settled down into it. But there is one thing which has been said to-night more than once, and which is perfectly true, viz., that in the present state of things in the Navy, a man-of-war's man is so very well cared for, that it is not until he has been on shore a little time that he will undergo the hard work in the Merchant Service. Those men have to work very much harder, and really when it comes to the question of pay, if a man gets a pension there is not so very much difference between the Merchant Service and the man-of-war after all in pay, that is putting the Navy pension against the sum a merchant sailor would have to put by to secure a similar provision. I have many men-of-war's men who consider they were far better off on a man-of-war than in the Merchant Service, and had more money to spend.

The CHAIRMAN: I see a gallant member of Parliament, who brought forward a very important Bill last year; I hope he will give us the benefit of his experience to-night. I allude to Captain Pim.

Captain BEDFORD PIM, R.N., M.P.: I certainly brought forward a Bill, and I believe a very important one last year. I shall bring it forward again this year, and I hope and trust it will be the means of giving us plenty of seamen in a few years. At the present moment I am afraid Captain Wilson's scheme is practically useless, because we have no merchant seamen to enter the Naval Reserve at all. He himself remarks that he was told every really good merchant seaman was now in the Reserve; how, therefore, can he hope to get any more? From that source they are all gone, and, as far as my experience of merchant seamen, as seamen goes, and I have seen a good deal of them, they are a very different class of men to what they were, besides you have so many foreigners in the mercantile marine. I have seen ships coming down the river with certainly 75 per cent. of the crew foreigners, and in a return I moved for last year it was shown that there were no less than 1,700 foreigners, captains, mates, engineers of English merchant ships, who are going about the world under the British Flag at this moment. Nearly 1,000 foreigners in command of our merchant ships; there is something rotten in that I think. Of course in the event of war we know what would become of those ships, and we can form a very shrewd idea where those ships would go to.

With regard to obtaining men, my Bill proposes that the scheme of the industrial school at Feltham should be extended to every single county in the kingdom, but for boys who had not come under the law. At Feltham we turn out 100 excellent boys every year and send them to the mercantile marine. If we could have such a school in every county in the kingdom, and from the vast number of letters I received from all parts of the country I believe the counties would be very glad to form such schools, we could train every year something like 10,000 boys at least. I am sure this meeting will be horrified to hear that in England and Wales alone there are no less than 100,000 pauper boys at this moment under 16 years of age likely through life to be a burden on the rates, and yet these boys can be made admirable seamen. Judging by our experience, Captain Dawson knows the Rev. Mr. Scarth in my borough at Gravesend, he or one of his curates boards every ship passing through the port at Gravesend, and he says he can put his finger upon every Feltham boy at once as very far superior to the boy from any training ship. By our return 90 per cent. of those boys now in the Merchant Service are doing very well. If we could extend that system through every county in the kingdom, and I believe they would gladly do so, we could turn out more than sufficient boys to supply both the Navy and the mercantile marine. Another thing which, perhaps, gentlemen in this room are not aware of is, that the waste of men in the mercantile marine per annum is 16,000, and this year we have had more collisions and wrecks, in spite of Mr. Plimsoll, and last year's legislation than ever before, for up to the end of September 1,973 ships made up the list of casualties. It is something horrible when you think of it.

Then as Captain Wilson has pointed out, the seamen are really so very bad, they are put on board more than half drunk at Gravesend, and they just know one end of the ship from the other and that is all. If a captain can get a couple of real A.B.'s with him he is very grateful. I did not intend to address the meeting, but with you, sir, rests the blame for calling upon me.

Mr. STERLING LACON: Is the support of those schools to be a charge on the county rate?

Captain PIM: Entirely. Our Feltham school is supported by a county rate in Middlesex, and I want to see every other county doing its duty in the same manner.

Admiral SELWYN: May I ask Captain Wilson whether he thinks that there is any objection to the apprentices being taken by way of a reward rather from those who are trained in the training ships?

Captain WILSON: I think I show pretty clearly when apprentices are carried, if you go back to the apprentice system, there is no use talking about training ships at all.

Admiral SELWYN: They object to take apprentices unless they are trained.

**Captain WILSON:** The objection is that they won't take a boy unless he is physically fit to do a man's work, unless he is a good stout ordinary seaman. I say if they won't carry boys voluntarily, pay a fee and let them be trained at sea. I do not approve of sea-going training ships at all so long as you have the real thing itself. If you can send a boy to sea to make a passage to Australia or India, in a sailing vessel or an auxiliary screw, he will learn more in that voyage than he would in ten times the time by reefing topsails in a calm for exercise in a training vessel. I found, when out with the brigs, if I got one good stiff breeze of wind, if I had once to take down a couple of reefs in the topsails, it was a bit of a struggle sometimes with the boys, but after having done so the work went as light as a feather, once having to do a thing from necessity is worth all your reefing topsails inside the Plymouth breakwater. A stationary training ship is a good thing and you teach your boy all he can learn except by experience there. Whenever he has arrived at that stage that he is fit to go to sea in a sea-going training ship, send him away to sea in a merchant ship. It is better to pay his fee and let him go through the whole thing itself than any imitation of it. That is my idea. In the Navy we are obliged to have training ships simply because we have not the ships at sea to send them into. We have always 1,500 to 1,800 boys waiting for ships, therefore we must have training brigs to put them through instead; if you had the vessels in the fleet they would go direct from the stationary training ship to the fleet.

**Captain FITZ ROX, R.N.:** (In answer to the call of the Chairman) said, as you have called me on my legs, I should like to ask Captain Wilson if he read a letter from a well-known shipowner in the *Times* a few days ago, John Burns of Glasgow. It appears to me everything he stated in that letter, except perhaps some of the financial questions, meets the case as nearly as possible. It is a great national subject, and if it is a national subject it ought to be a national question and a national system of training for the use both of the Merchant Service and the Navy.

**Mr. BULLIVANT:** There is just one fact I should like to mention. The apprenticeship system is certainly now very much more on the increase than it has been for some time.

**The CHAIRMAN:** I did not know it existed at present.

**Mr. BULLIVANT:** Oh, yes! I may say three-fourths or seven-eighths of our boys on the "Worcester," leave and go as apprentices.

**Admiral Sir FREDERICK NICOLSON:** They are trained for Officers.

**The CHAIRMAN:** There are no legal apprentices at sea.

**Mr. BULLIVANT:** They go as legal apprentices.

**Captain PIX:** There are certain firms that never send a ship to sea without apprentices.

**Mr. BULLIVANT:** A very small proportion of our boys go as midshipmen; they go as apprentices and are bound for three years as apprentices to the sea with indentures. There is not the slightest difficulty as far as our other boys are concerned.

**Captain DAWSON:** Without paying premiums?

**Mr. BULLIVANT:** They pay premiums too, but still they are bound as apprentices to the sea and have indentures in the ordinary way. And there is this advantage in it, a boy if he goes as an apprentice to sea, all his time counts, that is to say, he goes to sea for six months and is on shore three months, and if he is apprenticed all that time counts. They pass after three years' service at sea instead of four as second mates, but if they were not bound as apprentices, all the time they are on shore does not count, it is merely actual sea time, so that it is a great advantage to the boys going as apprentices and not as midshipmen. Many of our destitute boys would only be too happy to go as apprentices, but the fact is they cannot afford it, they have no fund to fall back upon at home. If by any system our destitute boys could be supported when on shore, they would far rather serve their time as apprentices than be changed from ship to ship.

**Captain WILSON** was then called upon to reply. He said: Captain Dawson began by touching on half-pay, and was good enough, in passing, to pay me a compliment which I the more appreciate, coming as it does from such a very intelligent as man himself, especially on a subject on which he has written so ably. I sus-

pected that if Captain Dawson was here he would touch on the question of half-pay, as I know his views on the subject. At the same time, though apparently there is some difference of opinion between us, I think there is in fact none. I quite admit that a term on shore for a naval Officer is a first-rate thing—we become civilised, rub off the whitewash and coal tar—we mix with people on shore, have our minds expanded, and we get a little polish put on us of which we had little before. I know myself from the time I went to sea at 12 years of age, till I was a post captain, I was but three months on shore, the whole of the rest of that time was served on foreign stations; therefore, not having been on shore, I did not know much of the manners and customs of people we have to mix with. But half-pay does not remedy the evil. Half-pay naval Officers are as a rule poor, our young fellows are thrown on shore as lieutenants, as young commanders, and even as captains on their half-pay, which is too small to allow them to mix on equal terms with those amongst whom they were born, and they are placed at such a disadvantage that instead of being able to go and associate with their friends, live in country houses, stay with this person and shoot with that, and thus acquire the manners and the really important part of an English gentleman's education; they are unable even to visit our own or foreign dockyards, or to go to a foreign country to study a language, or indeed do anything towards improving themselves, but are obliged to be satisfied, unless their friends choose to keep them, with hiding themselves in a garret, and spending all their time and thought in contriving how they can make five shillings go as far as ten. That is the objection I have to half-pay, and you may say what you like, if you gave Officers a certain amount of full-pay time on shore, the country and the Service would benefit by it. Do away with half-pay, but I do not say do away with shore service. Therefore, I do not think we differ very much though we differ on the question of half-pay.

Captain Dawson also said I only touched on the fringe of the subject, that I am aware of. The subject of manning the Navy, when you come to think what it involves, the number of kindred subjects:—Reserves, training ships, supply of men and boys, merchant service, &c.—it really is so boundless that it could not possibly put it into a paper, at least I could not even if I had the brains to do so. I, therefore, simply wrote this paper and the one that preceded it as a skeleton, to which I hoped the discussion would add the flesh and muscle; I only pretend to throw out certain suggestions for my brother Officers to discuss.

The number of men for some years considered by Parliament as absolutely necessary to be kept up for the Navy is something between 18,000 and 19,000. As we are only keeping enough ships at sea to carry from 10,000 to 11,000 out of that 19,000, it comes to this, that a man, instead of having a fair amount of sea-service, has very little indeed. Every man-of-war's man has two phases: when you divide him he is a sailor first and then a fighting man, the two qualifications making the man-of-war's man. I hold that you must make him a sailor somehow. The best way of doing so for our purposes is to put him in a man-of-war on a foreign station and he will in three years become a very fair sailor; to finish him off, I would put him into barracks. But when you cannot get that sea training, I say get men that have had some sea training, however rough it has been; give me a young sailor of 23 or 24; he has faced all the contingencies of sea life, he knows what it is to reef a topsail on a dark night, how to furl a topgallant sail, he knows what peril is and how to be calm in an emergency, he has confidence in himself; all these qualities are developed in the man by the work he has to do at sea, are the really important elements in a sailor's character. I do not care how rough he is, how wanting he is in discipline, give me that man, and I cannot, for the life of me, see why in barracks he should not be made into as good a gunner and as good a man-of-war's man as a marine artillery man; why a man who has been five years at sea should not be made as good a fighting man as a marine artillery man, who has been made out of a plough boy in a year, I cannot understand. Of course, the number of men we require when it comes to war, is a question beyond my paper. On a former occasion it was estimated, I think, that we had somewhere about 74,000 seamen, on paper; that number we never could find in the first three months of a war. The men we have to depend on are our 3,500 coast-guard men—I am speaking only of sailors; add to these a couple of thousand

naval pensioners, making 5,500; and as we see by the evidence given before committee, that we cannot depend, during the first three months of a war, on getting more than 5,000 naval Reserve men, we make the total 10,500, which added to our fleet men gives us under 30,000 blue jackets all told. As the loss upon these men would be at the rate of 5,000 a-year, allowing about 15 per cent. which we find is the average waste in a fleet, the naval Reserve men coming home at the rate of 500 a month, would only be sufficient to keep your number up to the 30,000. Therefore, 30,000 sailors are all the men we could ever expect to have available in case of war for the British Navy.

Sir FREDERICK NICOLSON: As able seamen?

Captain WILSON: I am speaking purely of blue jackets which includes all classes of sailors. As has been observed, every ship which could carry a gun would be commissioned, so the question of the number of ships actually in the Navy is a matter of no importance. Look at the American Navy; vessels of all sorts, sailing vessels not excepted, were pressed into the Service. Therefore, the number of men we should require for these ships would be enormous, and, as has been said, we should hope to take some from the enemy's fleet. I may mention a curious fact, which many of you will remember. During the old war, when one of the Georges went down to Devonport he saw a new dock they had commenced to lengthen, the work on which was stopped. His Majesty asked the superintendent why they did not finish it, and he replied:—"Oh, your Majesty! the fact of the matter is, we have been waiting for instructions, because the French have just launched a new ship, ten feet longer than it was intended to make this dock, and we want to know whether it shall be made long enough to hold her;" and strange to say, she was the first ship that went into that dock. That shows our ancestors looked a-head in these matters.

I wish to dispossess your minds of the idea that I raise any objection to the Naval Reserve; and when it is said I rather contradicted myself, because I spoke highly of the four men with me, it must be remembered I spoke highly of them as *sailors*. Sailors are one thing, and men-of-war's men are another, totally distinct; these men were excellent sailors, and in a short time they became very good men-of-war's men, but they were not so when we took them. They knew something of drill; but all know that the drill even of men-of-war's men is very indifferent. If so, what must it be in the Naval Reserve? their knowledge is very crude indeed. I do not wish to depreciate them, but what I wish to point out is, if we can, with advantage, take 1,500 men who have had an average of four or five years at sea in the Merchant Service, and put them into barracks and turn them into men-of-war's men, the five years' sailing that these men have had would be so much clear gain to the fleet. We must link ourselves more with the Naval Reserve, and let the two (Reserve and continuous Service) run together. Captain Dawson thought I wished to depreciate the Reserve, and said a bird in the hand was worth two in the bush. I particularly say in my paper let the two run together, but let the future men for our Reserve, as far as possible, percolate through the Navy. Let us have our 1,500 men coming in every year; instead of having 1,500 boys bottled up in hulks about the coast, there to ripen into what are called "pure blue jackets," learning nothing but vice, let us have 1,500 young sailors from 19 to 25 brought from sea placed in barracks, trained there, and passed into the fleet. These young fellows would in two or three years return to the Naval Reserve, and by and bye half of it would be composed of such men. You must also remember we lose an enormous amount of training-power in our foreign ships. The papers say our ships on the Pacific stations are only half manned; I never was on a foreign station where my ship was always filled up, therefore, when occasion occurs, why should not we be able to enter Reserve men when they choose to come, and why should not their time count towards a pension? Why should these men if they choose to come to us be out of pocket by it? It seems to me to be wrong; I know it is said the 10*l*. does not keep the men out of the Service, but it certainly tends to do so; if you let Reserve men have some equivalent, if, in the first place, they get the same pay as continuous service men, and a certain amount of time allowed for the period they are with you towards a pension, then they will be willing enough to enter when it suits them, and we have vacancies.



It has been said I wished also to depreciate the private training ships. Mr. Bullivant very naturally misunderstood me. I was simply drawing a comparison between them and the Royal ships, because it has been a custom to compare the expense of the two, and I wished to show that before a committee, a very experienced Officer, when asked by a gentleman who wished to show that the private training ships were as good, and very much cheaper, than the Royal Naval training ships, if 2½ years in a private training ship was equivalent to one in the Royal training ship (that was because the expense was about the same in the two cases). Captain Cuming (then commanding the "Cornwall," and who had also commanded one of the Royal training ships) said that a boy having had a year in the Royal training ship was a better theoretical sailor, and certainly a better practical sailor, in addition to being a gunner. I have gone over some of the private training ships and have no objection to them, excepting that I think they are conducted on wrong principles—I do really; they do an immense amount of good but they are conducted on wrong principles as training ships. If you want these vessels to train sailors, and our gallant friend here has told us, there are 100,000 boys in England available for that purpose, then why, when you have a limited number of ships, should you take a boy of 10 when he is not fit to go to sea till he is 16? Why should you have him there for three, four, or five years uselessly when one year is sufficient? The comparison I wished to draw was, that though in the Navy you pay a larger sum per annum for your boys, you in fact, train them cheaper, you make the sailor lad cheaper per head than in your private training ship, and infinitely better.

MR. BULLIVANT: We never take them at 10.

CAPTAIN WILSON: Boys were pointed out to me of 9 years of age. I am putting an extreme case, you have to say "How quickly can we turn out a sailor boy?" Of course, if you have any amount of money and ships, and it is only a question of charity, then it does not matter whether you take a boy at 10 or 20, but if you have only a certain amount of money to expend on a boy you will train him cheaper and better if you take him at a proper age. The private training ships have instructors drawn exactly from the same class as those in the Navy, the Officers who command them are Officers on half-pay from the Royal Navy, therefore these conditions are alike. Then boys are insufficiently fed to develop the bone and muscle required; a boy in a Royal training ship gets four pounds of food per diem, and you can take more work out of them in one day than you could out of yours in a private training ship in a week. I believe it to be true economy, and you will train boys cheaper if you increase your staff and take them in at an older age and only keep them for one year. Of course, I do not in any way refer to the "Worcester." The "Worcester" is a totally distinct vessel and one that I think is admirably conducted. I have had the pleasure of going on board several times, and was very much struck with the instruction and the style of young Officers brought up there, and it was there the idea entered my mind which I have tried to bring forth here, that these young Officers ought to be passed through the Navy, say for six months, to qualify them for the duties which sometime in war they may have to perform in the fleet. It would also give them a greater interest in the Naval Service than they have at present.

THE CHAIRMAN: We have to thank Captain Wilson very much for his valuable paper. I think I have the right to make a few remarks, but at this period of the evening I will be as short as possible. The first point is about Officers on half-pay and there Captain Dawson has rather forestalled me. I quite agree with what he said, I regret of course very much that the half-pay is so small. (CAPTAIN DAWSON: By the term "half-pay," I really meant employment on shore.) Captain Wilson, to my surprise, suggests reducing the number of Officers in the Navy. I cannot agree with him. I do think, looking to our probable requirements in the event of war, that our active list now is reduced to the very lowest minimum possible. (SIR FREDERICK NICOLSON: The active list, of course?) I really believe that if war broke out to-morrow, we should have to call upon some of my worthy friends whom I now see to-night, who have been forced by circumstances to be placed on the retired list. How, then, Captain Wilson can suggest reducing the number of Officers further, I cannot quite understand. I now turn to

the Naval Reserve. To judge of that force fairly we must go back to 1861; looking at the state of affairs at that time, I consider it was a very wise measure to establish the Naval Reserve. Having established it and having kept it up fifteen years, I believe that any idea of abolishing it would be wrong; we have sunk large sums of money, and I think we ought to try and make the force as efficient as possible. I think the training should be carefully watched. Now comes the proposal for training sailors. I cannot think of any scheme more feasible than that suggested by Sir Frederick Grey. I do not consider for one moment we can look to the mercantile marine for seamen in large numbers in the case of war. Sir Frederick proposes, by State aid, to establish a large number of training ships round the coast, make every boy or young man serve one year in a man-of-war before he becomes an able seaman in the Naval Reserve. To establish this we must have money and more ships. It is utterly ridiculous to think of carrying out this measure with our present naval estimates. We must increase our training ships considerably, we must have unarmoured ships in greater number than at present: and no one knows better than Captain Wilson that we have not enough ships to train the boys for our own Service.