

## CHAPTER VI

### PANICMONGERS

“AND he will lift up an ensign to the nations from afar, and will hiss unto them from the end of the earth: and, behold, they shall come with speed swiftly:

“None shall be weary nor stumble among them; none shall slumber nor sleep; neither shall the girdle of their loins be loosed, nor the latchet of their shoes be broken:

“Whose arrows are sharp, and all their bows bent, their horses' hoofs shall be counted like flint, and their wheels like a whirlwind:

“Their roaring shall be like a lion, they shall roar like young lions: yea, they shall roar, and lay hold of the prey, and shall carry it away safe, and none shall deliver it.

“And in that day they shall roar against them like the roaring of the sea: and if one look unto the land, behold darkness and sorrow, and the light is darkened in the heavens thereof.”

— Isaiah.

On February 8th, 1909, the French and German Governments made a declaration of their intentions towards Morocco. This was done so that the two Governments might define the meaning they attached to the articles of the Algeciras Act in order to avoid misunderstanding in future. The German Government recognized the special political interests of France in Morocco, and resolved not to impede those interests. The Germans, pursuing only economic interests in Morocco, promised not to encourage any

other Power which might strive to gain economic privileges. The French Government reaffirmed its strong attachment to the maintenance of the independence and integrity of the Moroccan Empire, and contracted not to obstruct German commercial and industrial interests in that country.

Whether the peoples of Europe will ever again permit any diplomatic traffickings no one can tell; but if they do, then the worst that can happen will be too good for them. Perhaps it is difficult to swallow the perfidy which lies in the statement (in the document referred to above) that the French ambassador at Berlin in February, 1909, contracted with Germany to maintain the independence and integrity of Morocco; when France and Spain, with the sanction of Lord Lansdowne, had secretly engaged that France and Spain should partition Morocco. The secret articles were not published until November, 1911. And in the face of these facts, responsible statesmen allow the public to be told that Germany was the aggressor and deliberately planned a war against Britain! Such infamy is indeed hard to swallow. Yet, swallow it the public must, if democracy is ever to have a chance of bringing about in Europe a state of affairs that corresponds with ordinary mercantile honesty.

But are the influences that use the press too powerful for the people to overcome? When the public are up against such forces as armament rings, military and naval leagues, panicmongers, and the advertising department of Foreign Offices, the task does seem almost too much for the masses. The cunning, the subtlety, the avarice, the nepotism, the caste power, and the secrecy, that shield diplomatic action, are

fearful forces arrayed against the people who have not yet by a long way reached political freedom, let alone economic liberty. Think of the events of 1909, here in Britain, and then try to estimate what the public have to do.

One month after the signing of the German-French declaration respecting Morocco, Mr. McKenna, who had become First Lord of the Admiralty, introduced the naval estimates which showed an increase of two and three-quarters millions. They were met with a contemptuous note of rejection by Mr. Balfour. "Utterly insufficient," he flung out, and immediately the signal was given for one of the wildest orgies of Jingo feeling the country has ever suffered. And what was it all about? The Government's case was laid down by Mr. Asquith, who said:

"The first assumption was that the German paper programme—I think I described it as a paper programme—was one which might not be realized, and certainly would not be exceeded. That has turned out not to be true, because it is undoubtedly the case—I speak with as much reserve as I can about it, because I want to keep strictly within the verifiable truth—it is a fact that during the autumn of last year there was an anticipation with four ships which belong to the German programme of 1909–10 in the sense that orders were given, materials collected, it may be that in one or two cases, possibly in more, ships were actually laid down."

Acceleration of the German naval programme was the cause of the trouble and the reason why our estimates rose suddenly in 1909, so the Government said. But both Prince von Bülow and Admiral von Tirpitz denied the accusation. Indeed, the German Govern-

ment had made a most distinct declaration to our Government that it was not their intention to accelerate their programme. Referring to the declaration of the German Government, Mr. Asquith said:

“As a Government, believing as we do most explicitly in the good faith of those declarations, we cannot possibly put before the House of Commons and Parliament a programme based on the assumption that a declaration of that kind will not be carried out.”

It will be seen, in spite of Mr. Asquith's words, that the declaration was thrown to the winds, and that the Government in a few weeks was swept off its feet by the storm of Jingo feeling in the country. We know now that the abominable scare was the work, not of a German Government whose word could not be relied on, but of a gang of British patriots connected with the armament-ring on the search for orders and dividends, and supported by a large section of the British press controlled by a syndicate. A Mr. Mulliner, once managing director of the Coventry Ordnance Company, was the ostensible instigator. In the habiliments of a patriot, he started a campaign that fostered hatred and hostility in millions of hearts and minds in both Germany and Britain. So early as May, 1906, Mr. Mulliner informed the Admiralty that the Germans were making preparations for increasing their navy to vast proportions. On March 3rd, 1909, Mr. Mulliner gave evidence before the Cabinet in support of the information he had brought to the notice of the Admiralty during a period covering nearly three years. In the *History of a Great Scare*, Mr. Perris says of Mr. Mulliner:

“For three years, in fact, this gentleman gave himself to the work of propagating the myth of a gigantic expansion of Krupp’s works, in particular, and of German acceleration in general. It was an underground campaign; but we gather from subsequent letters and speeches that Mr. Mulliner’s information, sent first to the War Office in May, 1906, ‘was passed on to the Admiralty,’ ‘was discussed by them with several outsiders,’ and then ‘passed from hand to hand so that hundreds have read it.’ Of this ‘information,’ I need now say nothing more than that, as soon as it became public, it was emphatically contradicted by Messrs. Krupp, through Mr. John Leyland, and other correspondents, and after some years it was practically admitted by the Government to be false, and that time has proved that it never had any real basis. It was, nevertheless, propagated with unremitting zeal, in forms more and more lurid, and with the gradual assent of the leaders of the Opposition.”

It was on the information laid by Mr. Mulliner before the Cabinet on March 3rd, that the Government based their case for the enormous increase in the estimates. How deeply convinced the Cabinet was of the accuracy of the information presented by Mr. Mulliner, in spite of the denials of the German Chancellor and Admiral von Tirpitz, is to be gathered from Mr. Asquith’s speech in the House of Commons:

“If any one will refer to the speech I made a year ago, he will see that I said with some confidence that whereas it would take the Germans thirty months to build one of these ships we could do it in twenty-four. I was not, of course, committing myself precisely to the number of months, but I did maintain that we had a substantial advantage in the rate of construction which would always enable us to quickly overtake them when the event occurred.

I am sorry to say it is not the case. I believed it to be the fact at the time at which I spoke, but there has been such an enormous development in Germany—I speak quite frankly to the House, because I am obliged to tell them these matters, and to let them understand why we economists have presented these estimates to the House—there has been such an enormous development in Germany, not only in the provision of ship yards and slips on which the bulk or fabric of a ship can be built or repaired, but, what is still more serious, in the provision of gun-mountings and armaments of those great monsters, those ‘dreadnaughts’ which are now the dominating type of ship. Such an enormous development, and I will venture to say, being most anxious not to excite anything in the nature of unnecessary alarm in this country, such an enormous development is so serious from our national point of view that we could no longer take to ourselves as we could a year ago with reason the consoling and comforting reflection that we have the advantage in speed and the rate at which ships can be constructed.”

The “enormous development” four times emphasized by Mr. Asquith, was a mere figment of the mind of the patriotic Mr. Mulliner. Nevertheless, it shows to what base uses Prime Ministers may be put, and how difficult it will be for the people to grapple with the evils of Jingo imagination. This fact stands out in all the miserable business: the distinct declaration of the German Government was ignored by the British Cabinet, and the myth-spinning Mr. Mulliner was believed instead. Though Admiral von Tirpitz told the Budget Committee of the Reichstag on March 17th, that there would be only 13 ships ready in the autumn of 1912, the British Cabinet figured out the Mulliner acceleration to give Germany 17 ships ready by March, 1912.

Mr. Balfour, who would "o'ertop old Pelion," said 25 ships; or, in any case, 21. Germany had only 13 of these ships in full commission in April, 1914 — *five years* after Mr. Balfour's estimate for three years. Mr. Mulliner had the leaders of the Government and the Opposition scared out of their wits, but Messrs. Asquith, Balfour, and Mulliner were wrong; Admiral von Tirpitz was right. On March 31st, 1912, the Germans had *only nine* dreadnaught battleships and cruisers ready.

Now, what must the German Government have thought of the intentions of the British Government; to whom they had given a declaration which in 1909 was not believed and three years later was proved to have been adhered to in every particular? Did the action of the British Government tend to allay the feeling between the two countries which had already been described by statesmen as extremely dangerous to the peace of Europe?

Animosity, already embittered in a newspaper war extending over at least a continuous period of three years, must have been aggravated beyond all bounds by the events of March, 1909. The solemn warnings of some leaders of political thought in the country had little or no effect on the scaremongers and the armament ring agents. The taxpayers of Britain, and the rest of Europe were groaning under the terrible burden of buying implements of slaughter; in vain, however, they cried to their Governments to reduce expenditure on armies and navies. And the more the people demanded reduction, the more millions the contractors and their agents insisted on spending. Sir Edward Grey, on March 29th, 1909, in the House of Commons, said:

“The great countries of Europe are raising enormous revenues, and something like one-half of them is being spent on military and naval preparations. You may call it national insurance, that is perfectly true; but it is equally true that one-half of the national revenue of the great countries in Europe is being spent on what are, after all, preparations to kill each other. Surely the extent to which this expenditure has grown really becomes a satire and a reflection upon civilization.”

Yes, and any Government that permits any Mr. Mulliner to direct its naval policy is a gross satire and a reflection upon democracy. The enormous revenues which Governments have spent during the past eight years on armaments have been attributed largely to the false information spread about the world by panicmongers. Take Mr. Balfour, for instance, who heard the warning of the Foreign Secretary! Only two days after it was delivered, Mr. Balfour went to the Guildhall meeting, attended mainly by shareholders of the armament-ring, and there he did his best to sway the crowd in the direction of forcing the Government to spend more millions on preparations to kill his fellow-men. Mr. Balfour said:

“The Government plan is four ships this year, and the preparation for a possible four ships on April 1st next year. Do these April 1st ships belong to next year’s programme, or to this year’s programme? If they belong, as I think they ought to belong, to this year’s programme, let us put them into this year’s programme; but if they are really and genuinely intended to belong to next year’s programme, then I ask what your situation will be if you find that next year’s programme proper, I mean next year’s programme irrespective of the April 1st ships, is itself to consist of eight ships, and I think very likely it will have to consist of



eight ships. That will mean you will attempt to build twelve ships next year against four this year. I call that preposterous."

Preposterous, indeed! But what would be the effect of that speech in Germany? No one there would say "preposterous." They would probably think British ex-Ministers must have gone raving mad when, in the face of the declaration of the German Government, Mr. Balfour could tell city magnates and their clerks that he wanted the Government to build eight battleships that year. Whether the Germans were scared or not, he succeeded in scaring the Government almost out of its senses. In the ensuing months both Mr. Asquith and Sir Edward Grey bowed their head to the storm; and then later Mr. Lloyd George talked about ways and means of raising the money. Mr. Asquith assured his audience at Glasgow, in April, that both he and Sir Edward Grey had given the most explicit pledge to the Commons that, if the necessity should arise, four extra ships would be ordered. Naturally the agents of the armament ring took good care that the necessity would arise.

When Mr. Lloyd George introduced his budget of 1909 he said:

"We do not intend to put in jeopardy the naval supremacy which is essential not only to our national existence, but in our judgment, to the vital interests of western civilization. But, in my judgment, it would also be an act of criminal insanity to throw away eight millions of money, which is so much needed for other purposes, on building gigantic flotillas merely to encounter mythical armadas. That is why we propose only to incur this enormous expenditure when the need for it arises. We

must ensure the complete security of our shores against all real dangers, but we cannot afford to build navies against nightmares. . . . However, as it may be necessary to make arrangements for laying down all the eight dreadnaughts on April 1st, 1910. . . .”

Then when he told the patriots how the money was to be raised — by a tax on land-values — a cry of pain arose from landlords and plutocrats all over the land. One hundred German sixteen-inch guns could not have wrought half the panic among the ruling classes that this Budget did. The cries of “invasion,” and “raid,” and “another amendment to the German Navy Law,” were turned to howls of “confiscation,” and “spoliation,” and “robbery.” All talk of wanting eight dreadnaughts was stilled, and fears of a German invasion were lost in the horrors of having to place a value on land. If the Government of 1906 had that year introduced a Land-values Budget the country would have heard little from the scaremongers,— there is nothing like making patriots pay for what they want. But in 1909 they cried before they were hurt. There was really nothing to fear in the Budget for it had not reached a Committee stage; the Whigs had not got to work on it. And, indeed, when they had re-modelled Mr. Lloyd George’s Budget all the vital part of it was destroyed, and the landlords and plutocrats were free to give their attention once more to protecting their acres from a foe they dreaded less than they dreaded the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

The Budget’s salutary effect on the scaremongers may be gauged by the tactics of the Opposition. On April 6th, the following notice was issued by the Opposition Whips to the press:

“Arrangements are in rapid progress for the organization after the recess of a great campaign in the country in support of the claim for the immediate building of the four conditional dreadnaughts. The keynote of the agitation is to be found in Mr. Balfour’s speech at the Guildhall, on Wednesday last, March 31st:

“‘You must not only have power to build, you must build without delay, without hesitation, without waiting for contingencies, for obscure circumstances, for future necessities. You must build now to meet the present necessity. For, believe me, the necessity is upon you. It is not coming to you in July, or November, or April next; it is on you now. And it is now that you must begin to meet it.’”

The urgency of the campaign in the mind of the author of *The Foundations of Belief*, seemed to be overwhelming. But the Easter recess passed away without any signs of the great campaign. The “immediate need” was forgotten in the throes of the panic caused by the Land-values Budget. So the Opposition postponed indefinitely the inevitable war with Germany; and the energy to be used in making preparations to meet Germany was spent in discharging gardeners, gamekeepers, and footmen, which the terrible Budget could not let them keep. Never a shell-game artist at a country fair reached the limits of buncombe practised by the Opposition in the spring of 1909. It was a roaring farce; — that is, it would have been if Germany had not taken it for tragedy.

The amazing position of a world at peace arming huge battalions and launching great armadas, forced Lord Rosebery to make the following comment:

“Without any tangible reason we see the nations preparing new armaments. They cannot arm any more men

on land, so they have to seek new armaments on sea, piling up these enormous preparations as if for some great Armageddon — and that in the time of profoundest peace. . . . When I see this bursting out of navies everywhere, when I see one country alone asking for 25 millions of extra taxation for warlike preparations, when I see the absolutely unprecedented sacrifices which are asked from us on the same ground, I do begin to feel uneasy at the outcome of it all and wonder where it will stop, or if it is going to bring back Europe into a state of barbarism, or whether it will cause a catastrophe in which the working-men of the world will say, 'we will have no more of this madness, this foolery which is grinding us to powder.'"

Lord Rosebery might then have remembered his criticism of the French Agreement; he might have asked if any secret agreement had been made by the Government with France; he might have asked what Germany thought of the French Government since the signing of the new declaration earlier in that year. What were all the sinister designs in Britain and Europe that caused grave apprehension in Germany? There must have been causes other than panics and scares to force governments to spend so much money on armaments in times of peace. Nations (meaning peoples) had nothing to do with it, for foreign policy was kept from them, and in military and naval affairs the people were usually misinformed. Governments, and governments alone, were responsible. A Continent of governments bound by treaties, ententes, and agreements, all for "the preservation of the peace of Europe," should not be torn by quarrels over sums spent on armies and navies; not if diplomacy were worth a rag-man's bag. But, after all, so long as secret diplomacy seeking peace cannot be carried on without armed support, it

is useless making complaint at the expense of the game. The utter absurdity of the position can be realized at once when our Foreign Secretary was moved to make such a confession of failure as the following:

“We are in comparatively calm weather; we are not in stormy weather in foreign politics at the present moment but the excessive expenditure on armaments makes the weather sultry.”

Secret diplomacy keeps the weather comparatively calm, but the armed support of secret diplomacy makes the atmosphere thundery! Was there ever such unmitigated nonsense? “I want to be friendly with my neighbour but he is always so angry when he sees my gun in my hand and the man-trap set in the backyard. Most unreasonable creature!” In the same speech Sir Edward Grey said he agreed with every word Lord Rosebery said on the same question. Agree? Yes,—with anything but the removal of the trap and the gun.

There was another naval debate in the House of Commons in July, 1909, when Mr. Asquith pointed out that there was no other standard by which our programme could be determined than the ship-building facilities and programmes of other nations. He said:

“It is for that reason, and for that reason only, that we are obliged in duty to consider what Germany is doing, what Austria is doing, what Italy is doing, what France is doing — all friendly nations bound to us by ties of intimacy, cordiality, and even affection, and all nations with which I hope we shall never have cause to quarrel.”

Apart from the cant of it, why France? And

why not Russia? Did France at that time stand in the same position to Britain as any one of the Powers of the Triple Alliance? Mr. Asquith knew very well she did not. The terms intimacy, cordiality, and affection, were mere literary tinsel tacked on to give a glitter to an otherwise abject apology for not ordering the four "contingent" ships in March according to the Mulliner-Balfour demands. The First Lord of the Admiralty gave the most preposterous reason for building the ships;—and six months later he referred to the scare of the spring of 1909, and said that it had not the slightest foundation in fact.

During the General Election of January, 1910, the way scares were manufactured caused much discussion, and in the flood of oratory which poured from Liberal platforms some pretty severe criticism came from members of the Government. Mr. Churchill, at Leamington, was in fine fighting form:

"They had obtained the services of an Atheist Socialist in order to work up German scares; they had obtained the services of an Anglicized German, Mr. Ellis Barker, whose name used to be Elsbacher, in order to work up a socialist scare; they were going about spending their days decrying British industry, and representing British workmen as a miserable set of broken-down creatures; they utilized their Tory Admiral, Lord Charles Blatchford—he meant Lord Charles Beresford—to electioneer on their behalf by threatening to reveal naval secrets; they clamoured, the whole crowd of them—from the *Daily Mail* downwards—for 16,000 men more to be added to the navy, and they proposed to pay these gallant fellows when they had been enlisted by taxing the bread and meat of their wives. . . . Their leader went about the country labouring to provoke distrust and ill-will with Germany by what, to quote the

fine-cut phrase of the Prime Minister, was the loose private talk of an anonymous tourist."

As the election progressed the Conservatives found it necessary to resort to the navy again for party ammunition. All the old mottoes and "props" used in March, 1909, were taken from the property room and renovated. The Jingles let themselves go with a vengeance, and their statements reached the high-water mark of infamy. Mr. Burns pointed out how the Jingo press, after the Naval Review, had lauded the navy, and remarked on its magnificent strength. "Now the same newspapers," he said, "talked of a vanished navy and asked if we had a navy at all. There was no language scornful enough to condemn such conduct." Mr. Churchill, at Frome, on January 27th, 1910, had to revert to the campaign of slander of his political opponents:

"The attitude of the Conservative party with regard to the navy has been a disgrace to that party. It was the most contemptible policy ever pursued by a great party; it was a policy of trying to raise a panic without reason, a policy of trying to raise ill-will between two great nations without cause, a policy of decrying and belittling the fleet and trying to get money out of the pockets of the weak and the poor. It was the lowest depths to which any great party had ever sunk."

The denunciation was not a whit too strong. Mr. Balfour seemed to compete with the veriest tub-thumper in out-and-out recklessness. At Haddington, he said: "I understand that the Governments say that we have got a great many ships, and the number is so considerable that we need not fear any

aggression from any other Power. Those ships, of the number of which they boasted, were the ships that we left behind."

The *Times* of January 26th, 1910, gave the following comparison of strength of the naval forces actually in commission in home waters, when Mr. Balfour resigned office, and at the beginning of 1910, when the Liberals entered on the fifth year of office:

	<i>Battle-ships</i>	<i>First-class Cruisers</i>	<i>Smaller Cruisers, Gunboats</i>
1904 . . . . .	16	13	30
1910 . . . . .	44	37	58
	<i>Destroyers</i>	<i>Torpedo boats</i>	<i>Sub-marines</i>
1904 . . . . .	24	16	nil
1910 . . . . .	121	88	59

That was the true position when Mr. Balfour spoke at Haddington, and, if he had taken the ordinary precaution of looking at the figures before the meeting, he must have known that he was not speaking the truth. But the policy of trying to raise ill-will passed all bounds of tub-thumping decency when Mr. Balfour, at Hanley, said:

"Go about at this moment if you will, and consult the statesmen and diplomatists of the lesser Powers, and I am perfectly confident that you will find among them an absolute unanimity of opinion that a struggle sooner or later between this country and Germany is inevitable. I do not agree with them, but that is their opinion. They have watched with the closest interest, but not, I think, always with perfect comprehension, that, to foreigners, most mysterious thing, English public opinion, and they have come to the conclusion, I believe utterly wrongly, that we are not



alive to the sense of our responsibilities, and that nothing can stir us to a recognition of our position, and that, therefore, we are predestined to succumb in some great contest, the occasion for which nobody can foresee, to a country which does face facts, which is alive to its responsibility, and which talks little and does much. And so far has this depreciatory view of the virility of the manhood of Great Britain gone that I have known Germans, not connected with the Government, but men of position and character, men engaged in great affairs, who if you talk to them about the adoption of Tariff Reform by this country, actually say, 'Do you suppose we should ever allow Great Britain to adopt Tariff Reform?' I do not press private and irresponsible conversations more than they ought to be pressed, but the idea of any man of education and character outside this country should have the audacity to say that Great Britain is not to settle its own taxation according to its own ideas, makes my blood boil."

This contemptible exhibition of the "mind-I-don't-believe-it-myself," kind of gossip, led Mr. Lloyd George to say that:

"It is the kind of society tittle-tattle heard at tea-tables where they sandwiched their toast with horrible things about Germany and Radicals, and about their nearest and dearest friends, too. . . . It was not merely the manner and method and style of the worst society scandal-monger of the most cowardly type, but it created bad blood between neighbours."

In such manner the war that was "bound to come," was made to come. The inevitable strife was encouraged in every conceivable way. Money, energy, and brains were not spared in setting up the plant, and in obtaining the raw material, for the manufacture of electioneering goods of a highly inflammable nature. The highest names in the land were

lent to all this despicable trade of making war between two nations. Lord Charles Beresford said, "He did not wish to make the navy a party thing, but one had to get into Parliament somehow." And that was how he got in. To get to St. Stephen's somehow was the main object of the attack, and if relations were strained between the British and German peoples in the attempt then it was an accident of electioneering only to be justified by the defeat of the Government's Land Budget.

After the General Election, magazines and reviews continued to publish articles on naval affairs which drew comparisons between Britain and Germany. No one who followed closely the trend of events could come to any other conclusion but that Germany was the one Power in all Europe we had to arm against. In the summer of 1910, a particularly belligerent class of Jingo in the clubs talked freely of the war that was "bound to come." "Smash 'em now," was the phrase heard in certain quarters. The British amateur Bernhardis, when they were not magnifying the German navy tenfold, were saying the empire had gone to ruin under the management of Messrs. Lloyd George and Company. In the debate in the House of Commons on the navy, July, 1910, Mr. Asquith said:

"There is another point, a very important point, which was raised which I agree is a matter for great regret. I mean that the increase in our naval expenditure should have been associated, in so far as it has been associated, with the notion that we are in any sense hostile to or entertain hostile designs against the friendly nation of Germany. Nothing is further from the truth. I can say with most perfect sincerity that our relations with Germany have

been, and at this moment are, of the most cordial character. I look forward to increasing warmth and fervour and intimacy in those relations year by year. I welcome, as every man on both sides with any sense of true patriotism welcomes, all the various agencies and movements by which the two peoples are getting more and more to understand each other. I do not believe the German Government would in the least subscribe to the view which has been imputed to the German nation in the article just quoted, that our naval preparations are directed against them, any more than I subscribe to the view that the German naval preparations are directed against us. Germany has her own policy to pursue, her own interests to safeguard."

This extraordinary statement was made in a debate which positively reeked with comparisons made against Germany. It was said about twelve months after the Prime Minister preferred the declarations of the unutterable Mulliner to the declaration of the German Chancellor and Admiral von Tirpitz. In the same debate Mr. Asquith gave the British and German figures of the number of dreadnaughts to be ready for war in April, 1913. Britain was to have 25 and Germany 21. What the figures were worth so far as Germany was concerned may be shown by an answer to a question put to Mr. Churchill on March 23, 1914. He then said Germany would have 14 dreadnaughts ready on April 1st, 1914, but on April 22nd the First Lord of the Admiralty reduced the number to 13. It is a strange way to foster confidence and intimacy. Anyway, the Prime Minister's rebuke had little or no effect on the Opposition leader. He went to Glasgow in October, 1910, and there delivered another alarmist speech.

He could not understand why "there should be slips not used, on which no ship is being built," and he said he did "not believe the margin in British strength has ever in our history through the last hundred years — more than a hundred years — sunk so low as that." If Mr. Balfour had taken the trouble to look at the Navy League Annual, published at the time he made the speech, he would have found the position of the two fleets to be as follows:

*Dreadnaughts and pre-dreadnaughts.*

	1910	1911	1912	1913
British .....	48	52	60	67
German .....	22	25	29	37

If the combination of Powers is taken in the same class of ships, it will be seen that Britain and France, without Russia, had an enormous preponderance over the Triple Alliance:

	1910	1911	1912	1913
British and French.....	63	67	81	88
Germany, Austria, and Italy..	34	38	43	48

The marvel of it all was the fact that Mr. Balfour and his friends knew that they could make such statements with impunity. They knew their audiences, and the statements they made on the navy and Germany reflected the standard of intelligence of their political supporters. Yet, notwithstanding the evidence supplied by the Admiralty, the Navy League, and even the *Daily Telegraph*, which in October published an article from "Our Naval Correspondent," showing how German dreadnaught-building had received a serious setback, owing to the Germans learning that we had a new 13.5-in. gun, and that in

consequence "the whole of the preparatory work, which had been practically completed in April last, will now have to be done afresh," Mr. Balfour, at Nottingham, in November, said:

"Whether or not the Government have now awakened out of their sleep, whether or not they do seriously propose to deal with a situation which is full of peril — I know not if they are still slumbering — no matter what charges of partisanship are levelled at us, we will fight for a strong navy."

Never was there a stronger case of increase of appetite growing by what it fed on.