

**ADMIRALTY
ADMINISTRATION, ITS
FAULTS AND DEFAULTS**

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Admiralty Administration, Its Faults and Defaults by Anonymous

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ITS FAULTS AND DEFAULTS

SECOND EDITION

REVISED

(WITH A POSTSCRIPT)

LONDON

LONGMAN, GREEN, LONGMAN, AND ROBERTS

1861

PREFACE.

THE principle of publicity with respect to Naval affairs has been so completely established by the unreserved statements of members of the Board of Admiralty in Parliament, as well as by the publication of the Reports of all Commissions of Naval Inquiry, some spoken of by the Government when appointed as strictly confidential, that no new information can be given, or facts stated, which have not already been before the country in some official or authentic shape.

But these revelations on a variety of unfamiliar subjects, made separately and at considerable intervals, have almost necessarily failed to convey any satisfactory general view either of the state of the Navy, or of the system by which it is governed, while the endless differences of opinion among professional men, and the want of any intelligible principle in Naval Administration, have led to the habit of regarding the Navy as a subject apart from all ordinary

knowledge, involving a maze of technicalities and contradictions not to be unravelled by inexperienced persons.

Hence it has arisen that matters of the most momentous interest to the country are often discussed in the House of Commons under the constant apprehension of a count-out, for naval questions act as a general signal for a rush to the doors, and the Government whip on no occasions finds it more difficult to keep a House together. Yet strange to say, no instance is known to have occurred of the office of First Lord, or of Secretary of the Admiralty having ever been declined for the excellent reason of a total want of knowledge of naval affairs; stranger still, after a very short time, what was recently held to be incomprehensible, is supposed to be so thoroughly mastered and understood, that naval opinions are often treated with considerable contempt, as altogether superfluous.

Even with the best intentions, a short tenure of office can never enable a civilian to gain more than a very imperfect knowledge of naval affairs, more especially as constant labour is required to enable him to understand something of the matters which are hourly pressing for his decision; hence it follows that even those who have held the highest offices in the Admiralty can seldom, if ever, obtain such a complete knowledge of the subject as to enable them to form a distinct general estimate of the

merits or demerits of the system they have superintended, and this can alone account for the long course of years during which it has continued in its present state, without any attempt to reform it from within.

With respect to naval officers the case is not more encouraging, for the only one subject on which there is general agreement amongst them, is the utter hopelessness of any good result arising from a system which is felt to hang like a blight over the Navy. And yet the officer who was eloquent on the subject yesterday, becomes perhaps to-morrow a member of the Board, and possibly from supposing that what failed in other hands may succeed when he has a share in its management, his views often change with marvellous rapidity, and if a word is said against the system, he will defend it as if he had always considered it the perfection of human wisdom.

Besides these obstacles to a sound judgment being formed on questions so important, there is the traditional confidence which inclines all who do not inquire for themselves, (and who does inquire for himself on this subject?) to rest in the secure belief that the British Navy is the *ne plus ultra* of efficiency; the danger however becomes formidable if such confidence rests on insufficient grounds, particularly when it is shared by public men having the best opportunities, if they would but use them, of forming juster conclusions.

Under these circumstances it appears that facts collected in such a shape as to show in one view the principles on which naval affairs are conducted, and the results of the mode of administration as proved by the actual condition of the first great essentials of a Navy, Ships and Seamen, would be of great value in enabling the country to judge whether or no our Navy would be effective in great emergencies in due proportion either to our vast expenditure or to our great requirements in the way of maritime defence, and whether it would approach the amount reasonably to be expected, comparing our immense materials of naval strength with our available resources.

The Author conceives that no subject can surpass this in importance to his country, and he entertains the strongest conviction that great perils must eventually ensue if any very erroneous estimate of our real condition should prevail much longer.

He is so deeply impressed with the overpowering necessity of great changes before the Navy can be effectively organised, that he feels himself compelled by the force of his convictions, as well as by the immense importance of the subject, to lay the grounds on which they are based before the country in a clear and intelligible form, more especially because many circumstances combine to render the present juncture most favourable for repairing the evils he has pointed out, and a long

time may be expected to elapse before such an opportunity will again present itself.

He has carefully confined his observations to matters properly open to the freest public discussion, and his object is not to cast blame on individuals, but rather to show that the mismanagement which exists, grows naturally from the long operation of a thoroughly vicious system.

His most sanguine hopes will be fully answered if these pages should have some effect in drawing attention to the Faults and Defaults of our Admiralty administration, and so contribute to their remedy.

January 16th, 1861.