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BRITISH NAVAL EFFICIENCY.

A controversy of the greatest significance, which has been before the British public for some time in the shape of rumours, has during the past week reached all but a climax. It is notorious in many circles, high and low, that Lord Charles Beresford, the Commander-in-Chief of the Channel Fleet, is opposed, on many grounds, to the policy of the Board of Admiralty and the regime of Sir John Fisher; it is less notorious, and although it is not absolutely verified there is every ground for believing the report, that these differences of opinion have led to a personal breach between Lord Charles Beresford and his superior officer, the First Sea Lord, on the one hand, and one of his subordinate flag officers, on the other. A discussion has been raised, in the Press and later in the House of Commons, as to how far such action on the part of Lord Charles Beresford is detrimental to the service and dangerous to the safety of the nation, and as to whether it is not the duty of the Cabinet to take cognizance of these differences in the interests of the State. It has been held by Mr. Arthur Lee, who was a Lord of the Admiralty in the Balfour Government, that if these controversies actually exist among the senior officers of the Fleet, they must "imperil the efficiency of the first line of defence, so vital to the safety of the Empire;" and the Times in a weighty article, as just as it is severe, maintains that Lord Charles Beresford would outrage the good sense of his countrymen and alienate their good will "if by his action and his attitude he should leave the country no alternative but to believe that he deems himself entitled to flout the authority of the Board of Admiralty and to set a deplorable example of indiscipline and insubordination to the Fleet."

It was on the same day as this article appeared that questions bearing directly on the Government's proposed action were raised in the House of Commons, and elicited from Mr. Asquith a brief, dignified, and, as it is universally agreed, statesmanlike reply. Mr. Bellairs asked whether the Government would devote their consideration to alleviating the dissensions among the senior naval officers; and, if so, whether the Government would impartially endeavour to arrive at a complete knowledge of the method of introduction and the value of the changes in administration and organization which originated this antagonism. Mr. Asquith replied that the Government had no knowledge, apart from unverified rumours, of the dissensions alleged. If they found reason to believe that a state of things existed which was in any way detrimental to the discipline or smooth working of the Fleet, they would not hesitate to take prompt and effective action. "As regards the latter part of the question," he added, "I must repudiate emphatically the suggestion which it appears to convey. The direction of the policy of the country lies with the Government of the day, and it is the business of naval officers on active service not to discuss or criticize that policy, but to carry it out with loyalty to their superiors, in harmony with one another, and with a single eye to the efficiency of the great service b which they belong."

The attempt on the part of opponents of the Present naval régime to make use of this opportunity in order to attack a method of defence organization which they believe to be wrong will be regretted by people of all shades of opinion. As Mr. McKenna, the First Lord of the Admiralty, pointed out later in the afternoon, to subject the Board of Admiralty to an inquiry would be tantamount to a vote of censure incompatible with its peculiar position among the permanent departments of Government. An inquiry would, in fact, imply a vote of censure on the Government itself, for, although the Board of Admiralty does actually originate naval policy in a great degree independently of the House of Commons, the ultimate responsibility for naval Policy rests with the House of Commons. The question at issue is not for one moment whether

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A MILITARY AUTHOR.

General Hardy de Périni has not lived long after the completion of his great work, "Batailles Francaises," for only the other day the sixth volume was published. He came of a distinguished military family. His grandfather served under the First Empire, his father fell in the Crimea, and he himself fought in the war of 1870. He had been engaged on his chef d'oeuvre for fourteen years, but he also found time to produce other books dealing with military subjects.

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or more, but whether personal views on policy should allow one high officer to bring about a rupture between himself and other high officers in the service. To this question there is only one answer consistent with good sense and good discipline, and it is held in influential quarters that not all Lord Charles Beresford's personal popularity and great merit could save him from repeating in its culmination the late Sir Redvers Buller's unfortunate career, to which his own has so far borne a striking parallel.

GENERAL NEWS.

NEWS FROM ENGLAND.

THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Mr. Walters asked whether, in view of the lack of employment in the East-end of Sheffield among workmen chiefly dependent upon Admiralty orders, the Admiralty would expedite the distribution of

Mr. Macnamara said "the amount of money the Admiralty could spend was limited by the amount Parliament sanctioned, and no fresh expenditure could be incurred this year without a supplementary estimate. Mr. J. Hope: Will the hon. gentleman propose such an estimate in view of the exceptional distress in Sheffield, and the fact that a larger Naval programme will have to be undertaken next year?

Mr. Macnamara: Not as at present advised. Mr. Walters pointed out that if these specially trained men were thrown out of work and scattered, great difficulty would be experienced in carrying out the increased Naval programme which was in-

evitable next year.

Mr. Owen Philipps asked if the Admiralty had sent a letter to Pembroke Dock, expressing appreciation of the fact that the first-class cruiser "Warrior," built at the Welsh dockyard, was built cheaper than any other ship of her class, and complimenting the officers and men who contributed to this creditable result.

Mr. Macnamara said the Admiralty had sent such a letter to the superintendent of the dockyard. Mr. Philipps asked whether in view of the saving effected by building ships in Welsh dockyards, in the larger programme of the near future he would see that one of the large ships was allotted to the Welsh dockyards.

Mr. Thorne: And will he consider the Thames and the East-end of London (hear, hear).

Mr. Jenkins: Is it not a fact that this is the invariable result with all ships built in His Majesty's dockyards; and will the hon. gentleman advise the Admiralty boldly to nationalise the building of like ships in order that this money might be saved and put towards the Old Age Pension Fund?

Mr. Markham: Does the Admiralty employ any commercial travellers in the dockyards? (laughter). Mr. Macnamara asked for notice of Mr. Jenkins's question. As to the others the representations would have respectful consideration.

Mr. Rees: How can the distribution of these contracts matter if, as the Labour party have contended, all Admiralty expenditure is unproductive? (hear, hear, and laughter).

Mr. Asquith announced that the House would be prorogued on August 1st. During the next three weeks various financial measures, the Irish Universities bill, and other measures will engage the attention of the House. This period will also afford an opportunity for the debate on the Licensing bill. All other subjects of importance must be held over for discussion during the Autumn Session, which will commence on October 12th.

(Continued on page 2.)