

THE NAVY.

"A BACHELOR SERVICE."

My Lords, Commissioners of the Admiralty and their permanent civilian assistants have been opposed to marriage in the Navy ever since the Navy Office was established.

Senior officers of the old school were equally hostile to matrimony in all ranks and ratings of the service. With the increased stationing of ships in home waters and the withdrawal of the foreign squadrons, this feeling died away to a certain extent as regards the sea-going captains and admirals. But in the first years of my own service in the Navy, writes Lieut. Commander Kenworthy in the Evening Standard, and up to about 1910, it was a tradition in the Service that an officer who married before being promoted to post-captain was ruined so far as his career was concerned.

No captain would take a married commander if he could help it, and no commander of a sloop or gunboat would have a married first-lieutenant.

The idea was that a naval officer should be married to his ship, and that bigamy was to be discouraged.

A Tradition.

The one exception was that of the Flag-Lieutenant, personal aide-de-camp to an admiral, who, by tradition, was expected to marry the admiral's youngest daughter. Thereafter his father-in-law looked after his promotion. Other officers, who were rash enough to marry while comparatively

young, tried to get a gunboat's and other small commands where promotion was not good but the pay for an officer in command better, or retired into the coastguard service.

Some change took place on the introduction of torpedo-boat destroyers and submarines into the naval service. These provided more separate commands for junior officers, and also higher pay on account of the arduous and specialised nature of the service.

A wave of matrimony spread through the destroyer and submarine services, to the horror of the old-fashioned sea officers and the distress of the Admiralty. But the spell was broken, and by the outbreak of the Great War the old tradition as regards the Navy at sea had been impaired.

It was the same with the blue-jackets. Marriage was not recognised by the Admiralty except that seamen, as a special concession, were allowed to allot from their pay by arrangement with the paymasters.

Years of Separation.

Only the wealthier of the married officers can possibly have their wives with them on foreign stations, and none of the warrant officers, petty officers, or men are able to bring their wives abroad, although they may be away for a three, or five years' "foreign" commission.

This has meant, and still means years of separation. I have known married naval officers returning home after service abroad complete strangers to their own children, who were actually afraid of their fathers. It is a fact that the great majority of naval marriages turned out very happily. This is probably due to the fact that, in view of these disabilities and discouragements, young people have to be very much in love with each other before they marry in the Navy.

The cynical avow that the long separations prevent them from getting tired of each other. It must be remembered that, generally speaking, the Royal Navy is a poor man's service. It is the service of the younger sons, or the sons of professional men; but, above all, many of the officers come from traditionally naval families, and represent the third and fourth generations of naval officers in the service of the country. These latter are the very salt of the service, as they are imbued in its traditions and devoted to its interests.

Most of them are poor men. By the very nature of their service they have to keep up two homes. The married officer on boardship has to pay his mess allowance, as he is only provided with bare Navy rations by the Admiralty, and does not even get the rum allowance of the seaman; in addition he has to pay for his servant and to provide his own uniform. He must then keep up a separate establishment ashore.

Whereas the married military officer may expect to live at home and dine every night in his own house, the married naval officer must face long separations and no financial benefit from the upkeep of his house on shore.