

It must be remembered that in the back end of the 19th century and early years of the 20th, an 18 year old could be, and was often such, a Boy 1st Class sailor. Quite often one sees on WW1 Memorials the names of Boys of age 18. Note also in this case that he had had his grog. In 1870 rum was issued neat to officers and senior ratings, but grog was neat rum mixed with three parts water. This ration was half a gill, one eighth of a pint. Between 1870 and 1885, 16% of officers [800] were court martialled for drunkenness. In 1881 rum was withdrawn from wardroom officers and by 1918 warrant officers also had lost the privilege. The age of drawing grog was changed to 20 in 1909.

Sir John Hay speaking in a naval debate

House of Commons July 1883

Communications which he had received from gallant officers, some of them holding the highest commands, led' him to believe that they felt alarm at the condition of discipline in the Navy. The Return to which his hon. and gallant Friend had alluded showed that in the past year 13 men were sentenced to penal servitude for five years for striking superior officers; but that in 1870 there were only two such offences followed by penal servitude; in 1871 only two; in 1872 only three; in 1874 only one; in 1875, four; in 1876, four; in 1877, seven; in 1878, 15; in 1879, four; and in 1880 seven. After the suspension of flogging in the Navy the number increased to 17 in 1881; and last year there were 13. His hon. and gallant Friend had stated that corporal punishment had been abolished; but that was not the case. The House had not abolished corporal punishment, and he hoped the House was too wise to do so. The House had accepted a statement by the Admiralty that they were able to govern the Navy without that punishment; but they did so at their own risk and on their own responsibility; and, even in the cases of aggravated crime, they did not sanction that form of punishment. **The Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant, when he was Secretary to the Admiralty, stated, in 1881, that in view of that statement by the Admiralty the Bill for the abolition of corporal punishment would not be proceeded with, but that a Circular would be at once issued to commanders and senior officers, informing them that the Regulations authorizing the use of the lash were to be considered cancelled; but, as the powers of a court martial to award a sentence could only be removed by legislation, they were to take care that those powers were not carried out without reference to the Admiralty in each case.** That was the authority under which corporal punishment was at present suspended. He wished to call attention to the result of that suspension. In the first place, he wished to ask how any hon. Members would like their sons at Eton or Harrow, or elsewhere, to be sentenced to penal servitude for five years for striking a Master? Would they not prefer that the boys should be birched? In the Navy now, instead of being birched, boys of 17 and 18 were sentenced to five

years' penal servitude. The lad Louis Price, whose case had been referred to, had been of an exemplary character. He was 18 years of age; and it appeared that after having had his grog he lay down to sleep in the sun, and, being roused by the gunner's mate to attend drill, he struck that officer twice. He was tried by court martial, and sentenced to five years' penal servitude. The Admiralty had reduced that by two years; but still that boy was sent penal servitude for three years. But that was not the only case, for of those cases given in the Return 13 were the cases of boys of 18 years of age. The country thus lost their services; and many of those youths had, previous to the particular offence, had good characters. Surely this system must be bad for the Service and for the men themselves.