

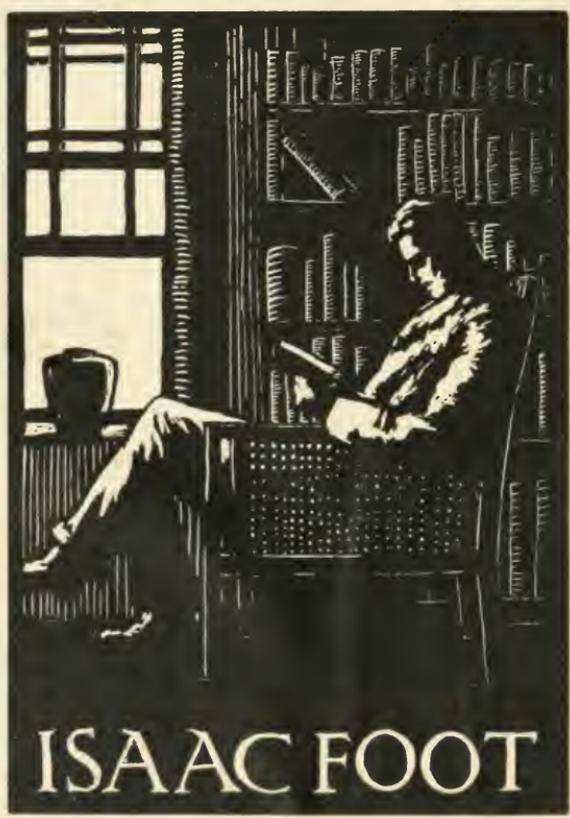
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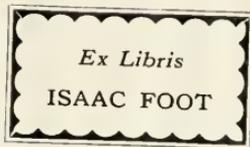
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NELSON
AND OTHER NAVAL STUDIES

F. Pollack
1936



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LORD NELSON

From the original painted for Sir Wm. Hamilton by Leonardo Guzzardi,
and presented to the Admiralty by the Hon. Robt. Fulke Greville in 1848

[Frontispiece

NELSON
AND OTHER NAVAL
STUDIES

BY JAMES R. THURSFIELD, M.A.
HON. FELLOW OF JESUS COLLEGE, OXFORD

"THERE IS BUT ONE NELSON"

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET, W.

1920

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TO
THE CHILDREN OF NELSON
THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF HIS MAJESTY'S FLEET

I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
IN FRIENDLY AND GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE
OF MANY HAPPY AND FRUITFUL HOURS
SPENT IN THEIR COMPANY
AFLOAT AND ASHORE
DURING FIVE-AND-THIRTY YEARS

AUTHOR'S NOTE

IT is necessary to state explicitly that this re-issue of a book published in 1909 is in no sense a new and revised edition, but merely a reprint in which not a syllable nor a comma of the text has been changed. I regret that owing to a misunderstanding, for which I am at least partly responsible, I was not informed of the publisher's intention to issue this reprint until the last moment, when it was no longer possible to make any changes in the text. I would, therefore, invite such new readers as it may attract to bear in mind that it was written five years before the outbreak of the Great War which has wrought such vast changes in the methods and aspects of Naval Warfare.

As regards the Essay on "Paul Jones," some further explanation is necessary, though it must needs be brief. That Essay was, as I stated in the Preface, "very largely based on what is now the standard American biography of Paul Jones, by Mr. A. C. Buell." The words "standard American biography" must now be unequivocally withdrawn, and for them must be substituted "a work on which no reliance can be placed." When I wrote the Essay I was not aware that Buell's good faith had ever been impugned. But shortly after it was published, a letter appeared in the *New York Times* of August 29, 1909, from the pen of Mrs. Anna De Koven. This lady has since published what is very justly entitled to be called the standard biography of Paul Jones, based as it is on a critical and exhaustive study of all the authentic materials, printed and manuscript, to be found in public libraries and private collections both in the United States and abroad. In her letter, Mrs. De Koven stated that on June 10, 1906, she had contributed an article to the same journal in which she claimed to have "exposed the falsity" of Buell's work. As soon as I had read Mrs. De Koven's

AUTHOR'S NOTE

letter of August 29, I wrote a letter which appeared in *The Times* of September 13, 1909. In this letter I quoted Mrs. De Koven's letter *in extenso*, and assured the readers of my book that when I wrote the Essay on Paul Jones, "I was completely ignorant of the fact that Mr. Buell's biography of Paul Jones was regarded by some critics as 'an utterly false and discredited book,' and, in particular, that the document regarding the founding of the American Navy attributed by Mr. Buell to Paul Jones was regarded by them as a 'very palpable forgery.'" The quotations in the foregoing extract are taken from the letter of Mrs. De Koven which I cited in *The Times* of September 13, 1909. In my covering letter of that date I went on to remark that Mrs. de Koven's allegations were not, I believed, universally accepted in the United States; but I added that I would do my best to get at the truth concerning Mr. Buell's delinquencies and Mrs. De Koven's allegations, and would then take such action as would fully satisfy the requirements of historical accuracy.

The publication in 1913 of Mrs. De Koven's monumental and exhaustive work on *The Life and Letters of John Paul Jones* has now vindicated the substantial truth of her allegations, and I take this opportunity, the first I have had since 1909, of acknowledging that Buell's book, so far from being an authentic narrative, is, in very truth, a work of no historical authority. It is not now in my power to cancel or even to revise the Essay, since the reprint of the volume is too far advanced to permit of any such procedure. But I trust this Note will suffice to warn all my readers to place no reliance on any statement or document in the Essay which rests on the sole authority of Buell, and to induce them to give Mrs. De Koven full credit for her painstaking elucidation of the truth and for her crushing exposure of Buell's delinquencies.

JAMES R. THURSFIELD.

May 20, 1920.

P R E F A C E

WITH one exception the essays here collected have appeared previously at different times during the last few years in various serial publications. I have to thank the conductors of *The Times*, *The Quarterly Review*, *The Naval Annual*, *The United Service Magazine*, and *The National Review* for permission to reprint them. I should add that I do not claim the authorship of the first paper in the volume. It originally appeared in *The Times* as a leading article on the hundredth anniversary of Trafalgar, and it so well represents the spirit in which, as I think, Englishmen should celebrate an anniversary of the kind that I have obtained the permission of the conductors of *The Times* to reprint it as a fitting introduction to a volume which deals so largely with Nelson and his crowning victory at Trafalgar.

The exception is the essay on Paul Jones. This has been written specially for the present volume. It is at once a duty and a pleasure to acknowledge that it is very largely based on what is now the standard American biography of Paul Jones by Mr. A. C. Buell. Readers of Mr. Buell's work will perceive at once how deeply my own essay is indebted to it at almost every point. I have however consulted other authorities, more especially a biography published in 1825, and written, as I am assured by my friend Mr. John Murray, by no less famous a person than Benjamin Disraeli, afterwards Earl of Beaconsfield. The volume is anonymous, and it is now, I believe, very rare. Probably it was never well known, nor was its authorship ever avowed in Disraeli's lifetime. But on the authority of Mr. Murray I attribute it with confidence

to Disraeli, if not as the writer of every word, at any rate as the responsible and largely contributory editor. I have quoted several passages from it. My readers will judge for themselves how far these passages betray the authorship I have claimed for them.

Disraeli is the only English biographer of Paul Jones known to me who has attempted to do him justice. He evidently felt for him a certain affinity of temperament, a certain sympathy of soul. His youthful motto, "Adventures are to the adventurous," would have been as congenial to Paul Jones as it was to himself. When he says of him, "that to perform extraordinary actions, a man must often entertain extraordinary sentiments, and that in the busiest scenes of human life, enthusiasm is not always vain, nor romance always a fable," he is anticipating a vein of reflection with which Englishmen were afterwards to be made very familiar in the character and career of the statesman who made Queen Victoria an Empress and realized the dreams of his own "Tancred" by annexing Cyprus to her dominions.

It is because Paul Jones has been so often misjudged in this country that I too have sought to bespeak for him a rehearing of the whole case. I may have mistaken his character. It may have been as "detestable" as Sir John Laughton says it was. But his acts speak for themselves. The man who founded the American Navy and showed it how to fight; who set before it the high standard of conduct, attainment, and efficiency which still inspires it; who propounded views of naval warfare and its conduct which anticipated the teaching of Clerk of Eldin in the eighteenth century, and that of Captain Mahan in our own days, and were conceived in the very spirit of Nelson himself; who baffled all the diplomacy of England at the Texel, and alone achieved a diplomatic triumph of which even Franklin had despaired, is certainly not a man to be dismissed from the court of history as a mere adventurer, a person of no importance, even if he cannot leave it without a stain

upon his character. I would hardly go so far as Disraeli and say, "As to his moral conduct, it would seem that few characters have been more subject to scrutiny and less to condemnation." I do not take Paul Jones to have been a Galahad or even a Lancelot. But whatever his moral delinquencies may have been, I have discovered none to make me ashamed of avowing a profound admiration for his extraordinary gifts and astonishing achievements.

The papers on "Trafalgar and the Nelson Touch" were written in 1905, and published in *The Times* during the early autumn of that year. I had previously enjoyed an opportunity of talking the matter over with Colonel Desbrière, of the French General Staff, the distinguished author of a monumental work, well known to all students of the subject, entitled *Projets et tentatives de débarquement aux Iles Britanniques, 1793-1805*. But I found that at the time of my visit to Colonel Desbrière at the French War Office he had not completed those studies and researches which have since borne such abundant fruit in his supplementary volume, entitled *Trafalgar*, which was only published in 1907. This will explain why no mention was made of Colonel Desbrière's work in my articles as they originally appeared. The importance of his researches and of the conclusions he has drawn from them lies not merely in his profound acquaintance with the whole subject, and the singularly acute and detached judgment he has brought to its discussion, but in the fact that he alone has had access to all the documents bearing on the subject which are preserved in the French and Spanish archives, the most important of them being printed in his volume for the first time. It is for this reason extremely gratifying to me to find that working on lines in no sense suggested by myself—for the very slight assistance I was able to afford him in his study of the subject is more than generously acknowledged in his preface—and on materials entirely inaccessible to me, he has reached conclusions so closely akin to my own. He

and I have reached our respective conclusions by different and independent paths. But how closely those conclusions coincide may be seen from the following sentences which I quote from his final chapter :

Quant au dispositif d'attaque des Anglais, il semble démontré qu'il différa tout à fait des deux colonnes généralement admises. Pour la division du Sud, celle de Collingwood, aucun doute ne peut subsister et l'engagement sur tout le front des alliés prouve bien que l'ordre de former la ligne de relèvement fut exécuté. Pour la division du Nord, celle de Nelson, la ligne de file se transforma au moment de l'engagement en un ordre semi-déployé sur un front de quatre ou cinq vaisseaux. L'amiral attaqua bien le premier mais il fut immédiatement soutenu à sa droite et à sa gauche.

There are a few points of detail concerning which I am more or less at variance with Colonel Desbrière, but they are none of them of primary importance, and there are others in respect of which his analysis corroborates mine in a very remarkable manner. These I have duly indicated in the notes appended at their proper place in the present volume. I would here add that the most striking corroboration of all is that furnished by three pictorial diagrams, representing three successive stages of the battle, which are preserved in the archives of the Captain-General at Cadiz, and are reproduced in black-and-white facsimile by Colonel Desbrière. Coloured facsimiles of these diagrams were presented in 1907 by the Spanish Government to the British Admiralty, and now hang in the room of the Permanent Secretary of the Admiralty. I am informed that the original drawings were made by the Chief of the Staff of the Spanish Admiral Gravina, who commanded the rear of the allied line, his flag flying in the *Principe d'Asturias*. The first of these diagrams represents the moment when Collingwood, in the *Royal Sovereign*, had just broken the allied line astern of the *Santa Ana*, and the remaining ships of

his line were about to follow his example. But they are not shown in the diagram as ranged in a line astern of the *Royal Sovereign*, and therefore perpendicular to the enemy's line. That is the traditional representation in this country, but it finds no countenance whatever from the diagram prepared by Gravina's Chief of the Staff. The rear ships of Collingwood's line are shown in a position which runs in a direction approximately parallel to the rear of the allied line, and all engaged simultaneously. There may be some pictorial exaggeration in this, though it may be noted that the *Swiftsure* recorded in her log "At half-past noon, the whole fleet in action, and *Royal Sovereign* had cut through the enemy's line"; but, in any case, the draughtsman, from his position on board the *Principe d'Asturias*, must certainly have known as well as any one whether the line of the attacking fleet was perpendicular or parallel to that of the allied rear during the first phase of the onslaught. He represents it as parallel, or nearly so; and his testimony on this point seems to me well-nigh conclusive in itself, and at any rate quite incontrovertible when taken in connection with all the other evidence to the same effect. As to the character of Nelson's attack his testimony is of course far less weighty, because his position in the line was far removed from that of the *Bucentaure* and the ships ahead of her. But it is worthy of note that he represents the *Victory* and two ships astern of her firing their port broadsides, as I have shown they must have done when they first opened fire, and steering direct for a gap in the allied line between the *Bucentaure* and the *Redoubtable*. No other ships in Nelson's column are shown as having opened fire at this period of the action. A reproduction of this diagram will be found at page 66.

I have to thank the authorities of the Admiralty for their kindness in allowing me to reproduce, I believe for the first time, and to use as a frontispiece to this volume, the very remarkable portrait of Nelson which hangs in the Board Room at the Admiralty. This por-

trait was painted at Palermo in 1799 by Leonardo Guzzardi. It is not one of the more attractive portraits of Nelson, but, as I have explained on page 93, it has a special significance in the evidence it seems to afford as to Nelson's state of health and of mind at this critical period of his career. My best thanks are also due to the Earl of Camperdown, for his permission to reproduce, at page 129, the beautiful portrait of his illustrious ancestor by Hoppner, which stands as the frontispiece of his valuable biography of that great seaman.

My readers will bear in mind that the essays collected in this volume were originally written at different dates, some of them several years ago. They are all of them, therefore, necessarily affected by the "psychological atmosphere" which prevailed when they were written. I have so far revised them as to correct statistics and other statements of fact which the lapse of time has rendered obsolete, and even this has proved to be far from easy in the case of an essay like that on "The Strategy of Position," where I have attempted, not, I fear, with entire success, to describe the strategic disposition of the Fleet which was initiated at the end of 1904 in terms of the kaleidoscopic developments of more recent years. But I have not otherwise attempted to modify the psychological atmosphere of their original date. That would have been quite impossible without rewriting them altogether. This remark applies especially to the lecture on "The Higher Policy of Defence" with which the volume concludes. It now has to reappear in a psychological atmosphere very different from that in which it was originally written. For this reason, were I to deliver another lecture on the same subject to-day, I daresay I should express myself very differently as regards the order, stress, and application of the arguments employed. Nevertheless, I remain a convinced and wholly unrepentant adherent of the doctrines I enunciated in 1902. They were not my doctrines. I was merely the unworthy mouthpiece of the lessons I learnt many years ago at the

feet of the late Admiral Colomb and of other naval officers, most of whom are happily still living, who were associated with him in his life-long endeavour to bring back to his countrymen a renewed sense of the things which belong to their peace. Even the title which I gave to the lecture, "The Higher Policy of Defence," was not of my own invention. It was, I believe, first employed, many years ago, by my friend Sir George Clarke, the present Governor of Bombay, with whom it was my high privilege to be associated, in 1897, in the publication of a volume of collected essays, entitled *The Navy and the Nation*. If I have any claim to speak with authority on the matters I have discussed in this present volume, I should certainly base it myself mainly on the fact that Sir George Clarke did not disdain twelve years ago to link his name with mine in the publication of a former volume, which has assuredly owed whatever influence it has exercised far more to his contributions than to mine. That volume was saturated from its first page to its last with the higher policy of defence. In the preface which Sir George Clarke and I drafted together—though it is only right to say now that its composition was mainly the work of his pen—we wrote :

That the sea communications of the Empire must be held in war ; that if they are so held, territorial security against serious attack both at home and abroad is, *ipso facto*, provided ; that if they are not so held, no army of any assigned magnitude, and no fortifications of any imagined technical perfection, can avert national ruin ; these are the cardinal principles of Imperial Defence.

Yet these cardinal principles are now once more being impugned on the highest military authority—that of the great soldier whose long and brilliant career, whose lofty and disinterested patriotism, whose splendid achievements in India and South Africa, have endeared him to every Englishman, and have invested him with a right to speak on all questions of national defence which no one would

presume to dispute, least of all a mere civilian student like myself. I have said, "on all questions of national defence." But the fact remains that, for an insular Power like England—a Power which can neither attack its enemies nor be attacked by them except across the sea—no question of national defence can ever be either a purely military question or a purely naval question. Lord Roberts is a soldier; one of the greatest of living soldiers. On the military issues involved in any large question of national defence, I, for one, should never dream of disputing his authority; but on the naval issues involved in the same question, I would point out, with all respect, that, apart from his immense personal prestige, his authority is not in kind greater than that of any other amateur student of the subject. He is not an expert in the theory and practice of naval warfare any more than I am myself. In that respect he and I stand on the same footing, if I may say so without presumption, and on that ground alone do I venture to dispute some of the premisses he has lately advanced in respect of the naval aspects of the question of invasion.

Now I understand the school of which Lord Roberts is the illustrious leader to contend that we cannot rely on naval force alone, however superior to that of the supposed enemy, to prevent an invader landing on these shores in such force as, in the present condition of our military defences, might afford the enemy a reasonable prospect of bringing us to submission. The incapacity of the Navy to "impeach" the invader on the sea is thus represented as due, not to any deficiency of strength at any given point or moment, but to some indefeasible defect inherent in the nature of naval force as such and in the nature of the element on which it operates. If it were due to a mere deficiency of naval strength, the obvious and infallible remedy would seem to be to make good that deficiency at any cost and with as little delay as possible. But that is not the remedy recommended by Lord Roberts and his school. They would forth-

with increase, and very largely increase, the military forces of the Crown available for the defence of these shores. At the risk of seeming presumptuous, I must insist once more that, if the sailors are to be trusted in a matter which especially concerns their profession, this is emphatically the wrong way to go to work. I do not here pose as an adherent of what is called, for some reason never intelligible to me, the "Blue Water School." I have never willingly used that phrase, for frankly, I do not in the least know what it means. I have learnt from the sailors that the function of a naval force adequate to prevent invasion is to operate neither in the blue waters of the Atlantic or the Mediterranean as such, nor in the grey waters of the North Sea as such, but in all those waters, whether blue or grey, whether deep or shallow, from which any menace of invasion can, on any reasonable calculation of contingencies, be expected to come. But I am an adherent—as I have said, a convinced and wholly unrepentant adherent—of what I would call the "naval" school, the school, that is, that holds as the cardinal principle of its creed, that with a sufficiency of naval force the invader can and will be impeached at sea, and that without a sufficiency of naval force he cannot be impeached at all. Am I then an adherent of what has been called—merely *pour rire* perhaps—the "dinghy" school, the school which is supposed to hold, though I never met a disciple of it, that not a dinghy full of foreign soldiers could ever land on these shores so long as our naval defence on the seas is sufficient? By no manner of means. I hold what is now the official doctrine, as quite recently expounded in Parliament by the Secretary of State for War, that the military forces of the Crown available for home defence should at all times be sufficient in numbers—and, of course, efficient enough in training, equipment, and organization—to compel any enemy who projects an invasion of this country to come in such force that he cannot come by stealth. Of course I presuppose an effective command

by this country of the seas to be traversed by the invader ; but that is not to beg the question. It surely must be common ground with all disputants in this controversy that this country must never surrender the command of the sea to its enemies. That is the very meaning of the naval supremacy at which we aim, and must always aim, as a condition absolutely indispensable to our national security and our Imperial integrity. If there is any room for doubt, or even for any reasonable feeling of insecurity, on this vital point, the one and only way to remove it is instantly to set about increasing our naval forces to any extent that may be necessary to re-establish our imperilled supremacy at sea. If I entertained any such doubt, I would not add a single man to the Army until I had once more brought the Navy to its required strength of unchallengeable supremacy at sea. For I hold now, as I held with Sir George Clarke twelve years ago, that if the sea communications of the Empire are not securely held in war, " no army of any assigned magnitude, and no fortifications of any imagined technical perfection, can avert national ruin."

Now I do not attempt to determine either the numbers of the military forces that must be available for home defence, nor the character of the training, equipment, and organization that ought to be given to them if they are to discharge the function that I have assigned to them ; that I leave entirely to competent military experts, of whom assuredly I am not one. Neither am I a naval expert, for I hold that none but sailors are entitled to be so called ; but I know what the sailors think, for, as I am about to show, we have it on official record. Is it too much to ask the soldiers to withdraw from the naval province, in which they are not experts, and to confine themselves to the military province, in which their authority is no more to be disputed than that of the sailors is in their province ? There are, indeed, some sailors whose authority I, at least, have no title to dispute, who follow the lead of Lord Roberts. But I suspect they do so

mainly on the ground that they hold "national service" of the character advocated by him to be a good thing in itself, rather than on the assumption which his main argument presupposes, namely, that no sufficiency of naval force can insure this country from invasion. I repeat that his main argument must rest on that assumption, because, if mere insufficiency of naval force were alleged, the plain logic of the situation would imperatively insist that any and every such alleged insufficiency should be made good before any other form of national defence were even so much as attempted. But this will not serve the turn of Lord Roberts and his school. Soldiers, and the disciples of soldiers themselves, they insist on telling the sailor and his disciples that, whatever they may think to the contrary, no sufficiency of naval force can insure this country against invasion. I, of course, am no sailor, and therefore it is not for me to answer them. They, on the other hand, albeit experts, and experts not to be challenged by me at any rate, in their own province, are just as little experts in the sailors' province as I am. Fortunately there exists a tribunal, composed largely of experts in both provinces, to which we can both appeal. That tribunal is the Committee of Imperial Defence as constituted by Mr. Balfour. One of the first problems to which the Committee of Imperial Defence addressed itself was that of invasion, its risks and its possibilities, and some four years ago, on May 11, 1905, Mr. Balfour expounded in the House of Commons the conclusions it had then reached. In unfolding his exposition he said :

Though every one must recognize that this is the central problem of Imperial and national defence, we see year by year the continuance of a profitless wrangle between the advocates of different schools of military and naval thought, to which the puzzled civilian gives a perplexed attention, and which leaves in the general mind an uneasy sense that, in spite of the millions we are spending on the Navy and the Army, the country is not, after

all, secure against some sudden onslaught which might shatter the fabric of Empire. This, be it remembered, is no new state of things. It reaches far back into a historic past. The same controversy in which we are now engaged was raging in the time of Drake; and then, as now, it was in the main the soldiers who took one side; in the main, the sailors who took the other. The great generals in the sixteenth century believed the invasion of England possible, the great admirals did not believe it possible. If you go down the stream of time, you come to an exactly similar state of things during the Napoleonic wars. . . . It is certain that Napoleon believed invasion to be possible; and it is equally certain that Nelson believed it to be impossible. Forty years later you find the Duke of Wellington, in a very famous letter, expressing, in terms almost pathetic in their intensity, his fears of invasion—fears which naval opinion has never shared, provided our fleets be adequate. We found, when we took up the subject, that the perennial dispute was still unsettled; and it appeared to us—I do not say that full agreement could be come to, but something nearer than ever had been reached before—if we could avoid barren generalities, and devise a concrete problem capable of definite solution, yet based on suppositions so unfavourable to this country, that if, in this hypothetical case, serious invasion was demonstrably impossible, we might rest assured that it need not further enter into our practical calculations. Following out this idea, we assumed that our regular Army was abroad upon some overseas expedition, and that our organized fleets in permanent commission were absent from home waters. Frankly I do not see that we could be expected to go further.

Mr. Balfour then proceeded to define more precisely the suppositions, as unfavourable to this country as they could with any show of reason be made, on which the conclusions of the Committee were based. He assumed, "for the sake of argument, that the Mediterranean, the Atlantic, and the Channel Fleets are far away from these shores, incapable of taking any part in repelling invasion, though of course still constituting a menace to the communications of any invader fortunate or unfortunate

enough to have effected a landing." He assumed further, that the military forces at home had been reduced to the lowest ebb they had reached during the crisis of the war in South Africa. Then he proceeded to inquire what was the smallest force with which a foreign Power would be likely to invade this country. "That," he said, "may seem a paradoxical way of putting the question, but it is the true way. . . . The difficulty which our hypothetical invader has to face is not that of accumulating a sufficient force on his side of the water, but the difficulty of transferring it to ours; and inasmuch as that difficulty increases in an increasing ratio with every additional transport required and every augmentation in the landing force, it becomes evident that the problem which a foreign general has to consider is not, 'How many men would I like to have in England in order to conquer it?' but 'With how few men can I attempt its conquest?'" To the question so propounded the answer given by all the military authorities consulted, including Lord Roberts himself, was that it would not be possible to make the attempt with less than 70,000 men. "With a force even of this magnitude Lord Roberts was distinctly of opinion that for 70,000 men to attempt to take London—which is, after all, what would have to be done if the operation were in any sense to be conclusive—would be in the nature of a forlorn hope." Finally, taking France to be the invading Power, not in the least because it is at all likely that France would be the invading Power, but because, being nearer to this country than any other Power, France could, if she were so minded, invade this country more easily than any other Power, Mr. Balfour showed, and declared that it was the conviction of the Committee, that even on these extreme assumptions, "unfavourable as they are, serious invasion of these islands is not a possibility which we need consider."

That was, only four years ago, the considered judgment of the only tribunal competent to decide between soldiers and sailors when they disagree, delivered from his

place in the House of Commons by the Minister who was at the time primarily and finally responsible for the security of the Empire and the inviolability of these shores. Has anything occurred since to disallow the judgment then delivered or to show cause why the appeal of Lord Roberts and his school against it should be entertained? I am not aware that the Committee of Imperial Defence has shown any disposition to reverse its judgment, or even to revise it in any essential respect. It has indeed been alleged, I believe, that Mr. Balfour's estimate of the tonnage required for the transport of a given number of troops was excessive, and that the tonnage then alleged to be available at any given time for France was far below the estimate that would have to be made of the tonnage available at any given time for another Power, more distant than France from these shores, which, if we were at war with it, or if its ambitions prompted it to a sudden and unprovoked attack, might seek to invade this country. But the revision of these factors to the extent required—for the sake of precision let us say to the extent of enabling the Power in question to embark 150,000 or even 200,000 men—does not in any way impair the capacity claimed by Mr. Balfour and the Committee of Imperial Defence for the depleted naval force of their fundamental assumption to impeach that enlarged embarkation. On the contrary, it enhances the capacity to make invasion impossible then claimed for the residual naval forces in home waters and not at the time disputed in any authoritative quarter; for, as Mr. Balfour insisted, the difficulties of embarkation, transit, and landing increase in an increasing ratio with every additional transport required, and every augmentation in the landing force transported. I would add that the hypothesis on which Mr. Balfour and the Committee proceeded in 1905, namely, that our organized fleets in permanent commission were absent from home waters, is no longer a tenable or even a thinkable one. The Mediterranean Fleet is likely to be absent in any case. The

Atlantic Fleet is just as likely, or as unlikely, to be absent in the future as it was in the past. But the Channel Fleet has now become a detached division of the Home Fleet and, as such, it is, for the future, very unlikely to be beyond striking distance at the hour of need. These were all the fleets in permanent commission which Mr. Balfour had to consider in 1905, and he assumed them all to be away. Even so he declared, on the authority of the Committee of Imperial Defence, that serious invasion was not a possibility which we need consider. But the Home Fleet as we now know it had not then been constituted. It is now, or shortly will be, by far the strongest single fleet in the world, and it is practically inconceivable that it should ever be absent from home waters. If the Committee held that without the Home Fleet as now constituted, and with all the other fleets in permanent commission away, we were safe against the invasion of 70,000 men in 1905, can it conceivably hold that with the Home Fleet, as now constituted, always in home waters, we are not still more safe in 1909 against the invasion of 150,000 or even 200,000 men, than we were in 1905 against the invasion of 70,000 men? The difficulties and delays involved in the embarkation, transport, and landing of 200,000 men I shall not attempt to estimate, nor shall I ask any soldier to estimate them. It is purely a sailor's question, and how a sailor would answer it may be seen in a masterly discussion of what professional strategists would call the "logistics" of this question contributed to the *Contemporary Review* for February 1909, by a writer who signs himself "Master Mariner." The identity of this writer is unknown to me; but he is evidently a sailor, and he is writing on matters concerning which soldiers, and indeed all who are not sailors, must be content to sit at the feet of the sailors. We do not ask sailors to tell the soldiers how to conduct military enterprises on land. Why are we to listen to soldiers when they insist upon telling us that sailors do not know their business afloat, or that the sailors of to-

day cannot do what their forefathers have done over and over again ?

But some soldiers are really *impayables*—of course I am here speaking, not of individual soldiers, but of soldiers in the sense in which Mr. Balfour spoke of the historic antagonism between soldiers and sailors on the field of national defence. You have no sooner rebutted one of their arguments, as I hope I have done on the authority of Mr. Balfour and the Committee of Defence, than with amazing polemical agility they forthwith confront you with its exact opposite. We used to be told that you cannot rely on the Navy to prevent invasion, because at the critical moment your fleets may be away. "Very well," said Mr. Balfour in effect, "I will, for the sake of argument, preposterous as the argument really is, send all the organized fleets away, and still I am able to show you that, in the judgment of the Committee of Defence, invasion is nevertheless impossible." Straightway the boot of the soldier is transferred to the other leg. Since Mr. Balfour spoke, the distribution of the national fleets has been adjusted by the Admiralty to that momentous change in the strategic situation which has come about through the growth of a great naval Power with its bases on or adjacent to the North Sea. The effect of this re-adjustment has been to render Mr. Balfour's original hypothesis of the total absence of all our organized fleets from home waters too preposterous even for hypothetical consideration. The Home Fleet never will be away, and the Home Fleet is, as I have said, the strongest single fleet in the world. Still the soldier is not happy, and, to be quite frank, he finds some support from some sailors at this point. He has found a sailor of over fifty years' service to complain that the British Fleet is now "manacled" to the shores of the United Kingdom, that the proud prerogative which it once enjoyed of roaming at large over all the seas of the world is now and for ever in abeyance, and that it must henceforth be "cabin'd, cribb'd, confined" within the narrow seas. I fancy I

have crossed swords with this veteran sailor more than once, and if so, I have generally found his polemic rather ingenious than convincing, and sometimes a little wayward. His argument seems to me merely to mean this, that as a sailor of long standing and of all the authority which his long standing implies, he does not approve of that strategic distribution of the fleet which now finds favour with the Admiralty. Be it so. In this field I am no match for him. He is a sailor and I am not. His disapproval of the policy of the Admiralty is, as the French say, *une idée comme une autre*, and I at least am no arbiter between his ideas and those he repudiates. But I recollect a very distinguished naval officer, who was at the time Director of Naval Intelligence, saying to me many years ago, "If you have a sufficiency of naval force, surely you may trust the Admiralty to distribute it to the best advantage from time to time." I have never forgotten the admonition, and it is one which I would commend to my countrymen, whether soldiers or civilians, who are no more experts in this matter than I am. It is different, of course, with sailors, who are experts in this matter. My friend of the "manacled fleet," with his more than fifty years' service—I am sure honourable and distinguished—is fully entitled to convert the Admiralty if he can. But I doubt if he will.

My own views on this matter, whatever they may be worth, are given in an essay in this volume entitled "The Strategy of Position." Perhaps I may here supplement them by quoting a short extract from a letter I addressed to *The Times* over my own initials shortly after Mr. Balfour's speech was delivered in 1905. It had been argued that Mr. Balfour had ignored the possibility of our having to deal with two or three great Powers at the same moment. On this I said :

I can discern no foundation whatever for this contention. It seems to me to be altogether inconsistent with the fundamental hypothesis that our main fleets

are absent. That hypothesis is an extreme, almost an extravagant, one in any case. It becomes strategically unthinkable—as I cannot doubt that the Prime Minister, fresh from the deliberations of the Committee of Defence, would acknowledge—unless we assume that the fleets are absent, not on a wild-goose chase, but solely for the purpose of meeting to the best advantage the fleets of such Powers as may have combined, or are likely to combine, against this country. If the enemies' fleets are in adjacent waters, our own main fleets will be there too. If the enemies' fleets are in distant waters, our own main fleets will be there too. In any case, unless our sailors are unworthy of their sires, our own main fleets will always be where they can act to the best advantage, whether in home or in foreign waters, against the enemies of their country; and, even when they are in foreign waters, there will always be a residual naval force in home waters to deal with what, by the hypothesis, can only be the residual naval force of this or that enemy who seeks to invade us. That is what every sailor instinctively understands, and yet what nearly every soldier seems to be almost incapable of understanding. It is only because we have now happily bethought ourselves of asking the sailors a question which sailors alone are competent to answer that the country at large is beginning to understand it at last. It seems to me that this is a revolution in the strategic thought and the defensive policy of the country comparable only to the Copernican revolution in astronomy.

But the Copernican system did not find universal acceptance at once. Even Bacon wrote in his hasty youth of "these new carmen who drive the earth about." But Bacon, as we know, was said by Harvey to "write philosophy like a Lord Chancellor." Perhaps, if Harvey had written of law, Bacon would have retorted that he wrote of law like a physician. When soldiers try to teach sailors their business, or sailors do the same by soldiers, I would invite them both to apply the apologue to themselves.

The truth is that the naval forces of this country are now for the most part concentrated in home waters be-

cause that is where what I would call the centre of strategic moment manifestly lies in existing circumstances. There are only two naval Powers in Europe which as matters stand at present are capable of trying conclusions with this country on the seas. These are Germany and France. I am not concerned to inquire whether we are likely to be at war with either of them ; I sincerely trust we are not. But political issues of this kind are altogether outside my present province. In any case it stands to reason that if we were at war with either of them or with both, and if either or both desired in that contingency to invade this country, we should need a naval force in home waters sufficient to make certain of impeaching them. We want no more than that, however, at any time ; and if at any time we maintain a larger force in home waters than suffices for that purpose, that is merely a matter of administrative convenience, and not in any sense a matter of strategic necessity. The ships and fleets not required for home defence are just as free to go anywhere and do anything as they ever were, and they do go far and wide whenever occasion serves or calls. In the course of last year the Atlantic Fleet went to Quebec and the Second Cruiser Squadron paid a round of visits, first in South Africa and afterwards in South America. Not a year passes that the Fourth Cruiser Squadron does not visit the West Indies. That is the true way of " showing the flag." What " showing the flag " means when ships which cannot fight and must not run away are employed for the purpose, I have shown in my comments on the capture of the *Drake* by Paul Jones in the *Ranger*.

It is, moreover, purely a soldiers' idea and not a sailors' at all that a sufficiency of military defence on shore will set free the fleet for the discharge of its proper duties. What are the proper duties of the fleet ? They are, as every sailor knows, " to keep foreigners from fooling us," as Blake, who was soldier and sailor too, is reputed to have said in the rough and homely fashion of his age. This is done by confronting the foreigner—or, as I should

prefer to say, the enemy—in superior force in any part of the seas where, if we were not there in superior force, he might be able to fool us. He cannot fool us anywhere unless he can get there, and if he attempts to get there, he will very soon find that a superior force is “upon his jacks,” as Howard said. Since neither ships nor fleets can be in two places at once, it is plain that, superiority of force in a known proportion being presupposed, and guaranteed in that proportion by the two-Power standard, it can be maintained in the like proportion in any part of the world where the enemy’s ships are to be found, except in so far as a single ship cannot be split up into fractions. I should have thought that any soldier could see that, just as well as any sailor, or any civilian, for that matter, who can work a sum in simple proportion. The soldier very seldom does see it, however; and even when he does begin to see it, as apparently he did in 1905, he can always find some ingenious sailor to draw the feather once more across his eyes.

In sum, then, my plea is simply this: That the problem of home defence being in its very essence partly a naval problem and partly a military problem, the soldier should leave the solution of the naval problem to the sailor, who is an expert in this province, and confine himself exclusively to the province in which he is equally an expert, namely, the solution of the military problem. Thus, the first question which the soldier should address to the sailor is, “Can you keep the invader out?” To this, if Mr. Balfour and the Committee of Defence are to be trusted, the sailor will answer without hesitation, “Unquestionably I can, if only you will have military force enough on land, suitably trained, equipped, and organized, to compel him to come, if he comes at all, in such numbers that he cannot escape my attentions. If, as Lord Roberts told the Committee of Defence, no invader would dream of coming with less than 70,000 men, and even then it would be a forlorn hope, I can certainly stop him if he comes with that number, and *a fortiori* if he comes with

twice or thrice that number, provided only, and provided always, that he has not first cleared the seas of all my available force ; and, frankly, I don't see how he is to do that so long as the two-Power standard is maintained." Thus the naval problem is now disengaged altogether from the military problem, being solved by the sailor to the entire satisfaction of the Committee of Defence, and we can now turn with confidence to the soldier for the solution of the military problem. I, who am neither soldier nor sailor, have offered no solution of either problem. I have applied myself purely to the method of stating the problem and of looking for its solution in the proper quarter, and not to its subject-matter at all. That I leave entirely to the sailor so far as it lies in his province, and to the soldier so far as it lies in his. For the solution of the naval problem I have gone to the only authoritative source known to me, namely, the conclusions of the Committee of Defence recorded in 1905 by the Prime Minister of the day. Those conclusions hold the field until they are either modified or withdrawn on the same unimpeachable authority. For the solution of the associated military problem I am quite ready to go to the same source ; and, since it is a purely military problem, I am equally ready to take its solution from the soldiers and not to listen to the sailors at all. The problem may now be stated thus : What amount of military force is it necessary to maintain at all times in this country in order to make sure that if any enemy seeks to invade us he shall be compelled to cross the sea with at least 70,000 men, and how should this force be trained, equipped, and organized for the purpose ? It may be that the answer is to be found in the Territorial Force, or in such modification and development of it as Lord Roberts and his followers have advocated. That is not for me, a mere civilian, to discuss, still less to decide. I will only record my own conviction that, if the problem is solved on these terms, the Territorial Force, or any other force which may hereafter be found better fitted to discharge the same

function, will never exchange a single shot with an invader on British soil any more than its predecessors, the Volunteers, ever did. The Romans had a proverb, *Res ad triarios venit*, to signify that when the engagement had reached the *triarii*, the end of the conflict was at hand, and that so far it had gone against the legions. The Territorial Force, or any future substitute for it, will always be the *triarii* of the British array. If ever they are called upon to withstand an invader on British soil, the end of the Empire will not be far off. But, so long as our naval supremacy is maintained, it is much more likely that if they ever meet an enemy in the stricken field at all, they will, as many of their predecessors the Volunteers did, meet him thousands of miles from the shores they were enrolled to defend. Thus will patriotism once more be justified of all her children.

Perhaps at no time in the history of this country since the days of the Norman Conquest has the menace of invasion been so acute as it was in the two years before Trafalgar, when, as Captain Mahan says, "Nelson before Toulon was wearing away the last two years of his glorious but suffering life, fighting the fierce north-westerners of the Gulf of Lyon and questioning—questioning continually with feverish anxiety—whether Napoleon's object was Egypt again or Great Britain really." The Grand Army, 130,000 strong, was encamped at Boulogne and along the adjacent coasts, whence "they could, on fine days, as they practised the varied manœuvres which were to perfect the vast host in disembarking with order and rapidity, see the white cliffs fringing the only country that to the last defied their arms." England was shaken with alarms. The Army Estimates, which had stood at £12,952,000 in 1803, rose with a bound to £22,889,000 in 1804, and again advanced to over £23,000,000 in 1805. The number of effectives voted for employment in the United Kingdom rose from 66,000 in 1803, to 129,000 in 1804, and 135,000 in 1805, and even then they barely exceeded the numbers with which Napoleon, not forty

miles away across the Channel, was preparing to invade and hoping to conquer England.¹ The martial ardour of the people rose to an unprecedented height. Every county resounded with the drill of patriotic Volunteers—over 300,000 in number. Dumouriez, the versatile victor of Valmy, pestered the British Ministers with plans for their permanent organization. Men wondered from day to day when “Buonaparte,” or “Boney” as they called him, would come, and why he did not come. My own grandfather used to tell how false alarms of his coming would sometimes fetch the Volunteers out of their beds and march them off in the middle of the night to the nearest rendezvous. I daresay the soldiers of the day could demonstrate to their hearts’ content that he certainly would come, and that there was really nothing, except the military array on shore, to prevent his coming; but the sailors never faltered. “Those far-distant, storm-beaten ships, upon which the Grand Army never looked, stood between it and the dominion of the world.” And though the soldiers may have insisted that it was their preparations on shore that “set free” the outlying ships to occupy their stations far away, yet I cannot find that the sailors set much store by these same preparations, and it is certain from their own words and deeds that they knew, as surely as men can ever be sure about anything in war, that however quickly Napoleon’s troops might embark on one side of the Channel, they would never be allowed to disembark on the other until the sea supremacy of this country had been overthrown. Nor, again, can I find that Napoleon was ever for a moment intimidated by the stir of military preparation in England. It was not that which stopped him, or ever would have stopped

¹ These figures are taken from the *Annual Register*. Fuller details will be found in the valuable work on *The County Lieutenancies and The Army, 1803-1814*, recently published by the Hon. J. W. Fortescue. It is only right to acknowledge that Mr. Fortescue puts the total strength of the Regular Army at a higher figure than those given above. But his account of the organization and equipment of some portions of it goes far to explain why Napoleon was never intimidated by its numbers.

him, if the fleets which barred his way could once have been put out of being.

“Our great reliance,” wrote St. Vincent, “is on the vigilance and activity of our cruisers at sea.” When the menace of invasion first became acute in 1801, before the Peace of Amiens, Nelson wrote: “Our first defence is close to the enemy’s ports”—that is, his ports in the Channel—“and the Admiralty have taken such precautions, by having such a respectable force under my orders, that I venture to express a well-grounded hope that the enemy would be annihilated before they get ten miles from their own shores.” Again, Pellew said in his place in Parliament in 1804: “As to the enemy being able in a narrow sea to pass through our blockading and protecting squadron with all the secrecy and dexterity, and by those hidden means that some worthy people expect, I really, from anything I have seen in the course of my professional experience, am not much disposed to concur in it.” These words are as pertinent in 1909 as they were in 1804, and I would commend them to the special attention of soldiers in our own day. Finally, I would point out that if the Ministers of the day were really relying on an Army of 135,000 men, supported by 300,000 Volunteers, to keep the 130,000 troops of Napoleon out of the country, they were guilty of something like treason in sending no fewer than 11,000 regular troops out of the country on distant and secret expeditions, as they did in 1805, at the very crisis of the Trafalgar campaign. One of these expeditions, consisting of some 5,000 men, embarked in April 1805, about a fortnight after Villeneuve left Toulon for the last time. The troops were destined for Gibraltar, Malta, and Naples, where they were to co-operate with a contingent of Russian troops, and where in the following year they were destined to win the victory of Maida. It was the presence of this combined force in Southern Italy that determined Napoleon’s instructions to Villeneuve to make for the Mediterranean when he left Cadiz to encounter Nelson at Trafalgar. The

troops were under the command of Sir James Craig, and were convoyed by two line-of-battleships under the command of Rear-Admiral Knight. Nelson was ordered to furnish them, if he deemed it necessary, with additional convoy in the Mediterranean, and just before he left for the West Indies in pursuit of Villeneuve he detached the *Royal Sovereign* for that purpose. The other expedition, consisting of some 6,000 men, under the command of Sir David Baird, was despatched in August of the same year at a time when Villeneuve was still at large and still undefeated. Its destination was the Cape, and in January 1806 it captured Cape Town and put an end for ever to the rule of Holland in South Africa. These singular episodes have generally been overlooked. They seem to show conclusively that the British Government, in 1805, was very far from quaking over the insufficiency of our military defences at that time. The knee is nearer than the shin. You do not send troops abroad when you want them to repel the invader at home. The sailors had apparently convinced the Government that the management of the invader could safely be left to themselves.¹

It was left to the sailors, with what results we know. There were chances of failure no doubt, but so there must be in any war. Napoleon knew this as well as any man, and complained that his admirals had "learned—where I do not know—that war can be made without running risks." But the sailors of England had learned their lesson

¹ It is, moreover, highly important to note that Mr. Fortescue is of opinion that, after the rupture of the Peace of Amiens, England could and should have taken the military offensive abroad from the very outset. "An attitude of passive and inert defence," he says, "is very rarely sound and was never more false than in 1803. . . . Napoleon was not prepared for war. . . . It may be asserted without hesitation that the British Government could, so far as the safety of the sea was concerned, have sent any force that it pleased to any point that it pleased, and thirty thousand, or even twenty thousand, men despatched to Sicily or to Naples in the summer of 1803 must almost certainly have broken up the camp at Boulogne." In other words, if the soldiers wanted to share with the sailors the task of keeping Napoleon at bay, they could, in the judgment of this high authority, have done so much more effectively by organizing a counter-stroke abroad than by filling England with tumultuary forces which Napoleon never even affected to fear.

better. They ran risks, and they even made mistakes, but they never faltered in their conviction that, if the fleets of England could not save England, nothing else could. Is it a mere accident, or the mere fortune of war, which one day may play us false, that from the Norman Conquest, when England was lost by the insufficiency of her fleet, to the days of Trafalgar, when she was saved by its sufficiency, the sufficiency and prowess of the fleet—more than once its bare and scarcely adequate sufficiency—have invariably kept the invader at bay, and that her defenders on shore have never once met an enemy on British soil except in such mere handfuls that his discomfiture has left scarcely a trace in the national history? For an answer to this question I have nothing to add to what was said, with far higher authority than mine, by Sir George Clarke twelve years ago :¹

That naval force is the natural and proper defence of a maritime State against over-sea invasion is the indisputable teaching of history. The unbroken consistency of the records of hundreds of years cannot possibly be the result of accident. No theories incubated in times of peace, no speculations as to what might have happened if events had shaped themselves differently, can shake a law thus irrefragably established. There is only one explanation of the fact that of the many projected invasions of England none has succeeded for eight hundred years, notwithstanding that naval superiority has not existed at all periods, and that the military forces at home have often been utterly inadequate to resist the strength that could be brought against them, if the sea had not intervened. All the great operations of war are ruled by the measure of the risk involved, and, until the defending Navy has been crushed, the risk of exposing large numbers of transports to attack is too great to be easily accepted.

Is it, or is it not, then, an advantage to be an insular State? The answer is surely given in the fact that there is no State in Europe which has not been invaded over

¹ *The Navy and the Nation*, p. 320.

and over again in the eight hundred years during which England has enjoyed immunity from that unspeakable calamity. How long will that immunity last if we once begin to transfer the stress of defence from the sea to the land? If the fleet of England, which is her all in all, as it always has been, can no longer be trusted to keep the invader at bay, it is not "National Service" that will save us. The full model of the citizen-armies of the Continent will barely serve our needs. At the same time the defence of the Empire and the security of our maritime commerce will need a Navy just as strong as before. India cannot be held unless we command the sea, as every sailor knows and as every soldier will acknowledge. Hence, on these conditions, so far from its being an advantage to England to be an island State, it must in time become a tremendous and overwhelming disadvantage. There is, in very truth, no middle course in the matter. Either the fleet, so long as it is maintained in sufficiency, can henceforth, as heretofore, be trusted to keep the invader at bay, in which case our military defences can be strictly adjusted to the measure and the conditions of our sea power; or it cannot, in which case not all the adult manhood of the nation in arms will suffice to defend our homes. Surely the country cannot hesitate between these two alternatives. Nearly five hundred years ago the truth was written in rugged lines that still go to the root of the whole matter :

Keep then the Sea about in special,
Which of England is the Town-wall.
As though England were likened to a City
And the Wall environ were the Sea.
Keep then the Sea that is the Wall of England,
And then is England kept by God's hand ;
That as for any Thing that is without,
England were at Ease withouten doubt.

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* * * *For an explanation of the device on the cover of this volume see note on page 247.*

NELSON, AND OTHER NAVAL STUDIES

PROEM

THE ANNIVERSARY OF TRAFALGAR¹

THE memory of Trafalgar can never fade so long as England remains a nation, nor even so long as the English tongue is spoken or the history of England is remembered in any part of the world. It was so transcendent an event, so far-reaching in its consequences, so heroic in its proportions, so dramatic in its incidents, so tragic in its catastrophe, that it is difficult to name any single event in all history which quite equals it in the opulent assemblage of all those elements and conditions which excite and sustain the abiding interest of mankind. It was the last and greatest fight of the greatest seaman of all time. It was consecrated by his death in the hour of victory. It delivered this nation once for all from the threatened thralldom of Napoleon. It changed the face of Europe, and set the world's stage for the successive acts of that tremendous drama which ended ten years later at Waterloo. It was, moreover, the last great fight of the sailing-ship period of naval warfare. It was at Trafalgar that the unique genius of Nelson, then at its ripest, put the last finishing touch—the Nelson touch—to those tactical methods which three centuries of

¹ *The Times*, October 21, 1905.

warfare had evolved, and witched the world with noble seamanship never to be seen on the field of naval battle again. But Trafalgar did even more than all this. When Gravelines, the first great battle of the sailing-ship period, was fought, England did not possess in effective occupation and sovereignty a single rood of territory beyond the narrow seas. It was, indeed, Drake and his comrades who laid at Gravelines the foundations of that vast Empire which sea power has since given us, but it was Trafalgar that countersigned its title-deeds with the blood of Nelson and of those who died with him, and ratified them beyond dispute. It is the thought of all these things, and of many others which the name and memory of Trafalgar suggest, that should inspire Englishmen whenever they celebrate the anniversary of the battle. We are then commemorating the most famous and the most decisive victory ever achieved by British arms on the seas. We are mourning, as our forefathers mourned now more than a hundred years ago, the death in the hour of victory of the greatest of all sea-captains, of the man whose surpassing gifts of head and heart, whose unparalleled achievements in the defence of his country and the overthrow of its enemies, have endeared him beyond all other sons of Britain to every son of Britain who lives and thinks to-day. We may study Nelson's personality and character, and still find more and more to engage and enthral our love. We may analyse his methods, and still find their depths unfathomable. We may appeal in his name—as the Poet Laureate has appealed—to our modern "Wardens of the Wave" to emulate his deeds and yet never to forget his generous and loving temper. "May humanity in the hour of victory be the predominant feature of the British Fleet," was the prayer of his last unclouded hours. We may remember—as Mr. Henry Newbolt has bidden us remember—how "the soul of this man cherished Duty's name." But perhaps we may sum it all up best with Browning in those stirring "Home Thoughts from the Sea";

Nobly, nobly Cape Saint Vincent to the north-west died away ;
Sunset ran, one glorious blood-red, reeking into Cadiz Bay ;
Bluish mid the burning water, full in face Trafalgar lay ;
In the dimmest north-east distance, dawned Gibraltar grand and grey ;
" Here and here did England help me ; how can I help England ? " say
Whoso turns as I, this evening, turn to God to praise and pray,
While Jove's planet rises yonder, silent over Africa.

This is the true spirit in which Englishmen should approach the thought and memory of Trafalgar, in no " braggart vein " of martial triumph, but in one of solemn thanksgiving for mercies which it behoves us still to deserve. After more than a hundred years have passed—for nearly all of which we have happily been at peace with the great nation it took a Nelson to beat at Trafalgar—after the passions that engendered the conflict have long ago died down and passed away, above all now that the two nations are at length beginning to understand how necessary each is to the other, the last thing that we should think of in commemorating Trafalgar is the fact that France was worsted in that encounter of heroes. In truth it was not so much France that was worsted at Trafalgar as Napoleon that was overthrown, and even France—the valour of whose seamen was never more stoutly displayed than on that memorable day—may now feel that her true greatness lies in quite other directions than those in which Napoleon would have led her ; in the peace and contentment of her sons, in her orderly emergence from the throes of a necessary revolution, in her sustained championship, now happily shared by her former foe, of those great ideas, begotten of her revolution and ours, which are to make more and more, as both nations hope and believe, for the peace, prosperity, and progress of mankind. It is not then, in any sense, the discomfiture of France that we celebrate on Trafalgar Day. Still less have we in mind the discomfiture of her gallant ally, Spain, the ancient mistress of the seas. Our long centuries of struggle with the valiant sons of Spain have taught us to value them as highly as friends as erstwhile we dreaded them as foes, and to the sincerity

of our sentiments the reception always accorded to their youthful monarch on the occasion of his visits to these shores bears ample testimony. It is the deliverance of England and of Europe, France and her allies included, from the scourge of Napoleon's devastating sway that we celebrate. "England," said Pitt, in what Lord Rosebery terms "the noblest, the tersest, and the last of all his speeches"—"England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example." She did save Europe in the end, though even the indomitable spirit of Pitt quailed for a moment, and his splendid insight deserted him, when Austerlitz followed so quickly on Trafalgar. "Roll up that map," he said, as he caught sight of a map of Europe a few days before his death; "it will not be wanted these ten years." It was not wanted for hard upon ten years to come. "But," as was once said in *The Times*, "in spite of all that was happening then at Ulm, at Austerlitz, and at Vienna, in spite of all that was destined to happen in the Peninsula, at Moscow, and at Waterloo before the map of Europe could be finally settled at the restoration of peace to the world, Pitt, if his faith and insight had been those of his own prime, . . . might there and then have placed one finger on the site of Napoleon's camp at Boulogne, and another on the scene of Nelson's death at Trafalgar, and said 'Here and now is Napoleon vanquished; here and now is a barrier set to his power and designs which, so long as England remains a nation, shall never be cast down.'" In truth it was the hand of Nelson, dead in the flesh, but still living in the spirit and in the might of its deeds, that guided and determined the course of events from the day of Austerlitz to the day of Waterloo. It was he who compelled Napoleon to abandon for ever his plan for invading England. It was those "far-distant, storm-beaten ships" of his and those of his companions in arms that, as Captain Mahan truly says, stood between Napoleon and the dominion of the world. That is why we celebrate Trafalgar with undying thankfulness

for so great a deliverance and for the valour and genius of those who wrought it, and yet with none but kindly thoughts of the nations which, though vanquished, there fought so well. When during the visit of a French fleet to English waters in 1905 the French officers and seamen passed through Trafalgar Square, they bared their heads in silent reverence before the Nelson Column. Let us all imitate that noble and gracious act of homage. We cannot, if we would, forget Trafalgar and its incomparable hero. We should not, if we could, refrain from celebrating its anniversary with more than ordinary solemnity. That we owe to ourselves as heirs of the ages and of the conflicts which have made us what we are. But we owe it not less to France, as the nation in Europe whose ideals come nearest to our own and whose genius best supplements our own, to forget the causes of our former differences and remember only the valour and self-devotion of those who fought and died for her at Trafalgar.

Even if Trafalgar were not one of the greatest events in our history, it would still be one of the most memorable, because it was there that the incomparable genius of Nelson was canonized for all time by the splendour of his victory and the tragedy of his glorious death. As Lady Londonderry wrote, he then "began his immortal career, having nothing to achieve upon earth, and bequeathing to the English Fleet a legacy which they alone are able to improve." *Spartam nactus es, hanc exorna*, is the supreme and undying lesson of that immortal scene. "Here and here did England help me; how can I help England?" is the solemn question which every Englishman should put to himself while meditating, in all sobriety and humility of spirit, on what Trafalgar did for him, on what the example of Nelson's life and character has in it to stir and uplift him. We cannot all be Nelsons. Genius such as his, a judgment as of ice, an ardour as of fire, an insight as of direct inspiration, "untiring energy," to quote Captain Mahan, "boundless audacity, promptness, intrepidity, and endurance beyond all proof," a patriotism

of the purest, a sense of duty of the highest, a superb fearlessness of responsibility, generosity, loving-kindness, and sympathy the most abounding—these and other great qualities of his are such as nature bestows in all their wondrous assemblage on none but the choicest of her souls. The genius is unique and incommunicable. But the moral qualities, the graces of the temper and the spirit, which in Nelson did so much to sustain and illuminate his genius, are happily just those which every true man can strive to emulate, even if he may not hope to rise to the full height of Nelson's great exemplar. That is the abiding lesson of such a life as that of Nelson. Without a peer in the special range of his activities, he was perhaps almost as incomparable in the loving and lovable qualities of his heart, in the ardours of his lofty soul. There is but one Nelson ; but there is not an Englishman alive who may not if he chooses be the better for what Nelson did for him.

TRAFALGAR AND THE NELSON TOUCH

INTRODUCTION¹

IN the following exposition I have as far as possible avoided technical details ; but as all technical detail cannot be avoided in a tactical exposition, it may be as well to explain at the outset such technical terms as must inevitably be used. The points of the compass may be taken first. There are 32 of them in all, so that a right-angle contains eight points, and each point consists of $11\frac{1}{4}$ degrees. Next to explain the relation of these points to the course of a ship as determined by the direction of the wind. A sailing-ship cannot move in a direction opposite to that of the wind, as a steamship can. She need not have the wind behind her, but if she is to move by its agency, there are always a considerable number of points of the compass on either side of the wind towards which she cannot move at all. A modern yacht will go within some four points of the wind. But a sailing-ship of the Nelson period could not go within less than six, nor generally within less than seven. When a ship is going as near the wind as she can she is said to be "close-hauled" on the port or the starboard tack according as the wind is blowing on the port or the starboard side of the ship. So long as the wind remained unchanged, therefore, there was always a moving area bounded by an angle of 12 points, or 135 degrees, on the windward side of the ship within which she could not be propelled forward by sails. Within the remaining area of 20 points, or 225 degrees, she could by a suitable adjustment of her

¹ *The Times*, October 19, 1905.

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sails move freely in any direction. With these explanations the following table speaks for itself. It gives in the middle column the direction of the wind from each point of the compass in succession, and on either side the corresponding courses for a ship supposed to be close-hauled on the starboard and port tacks respectively :

COURSE, STARBOARD TACK.	WIND.	COURSE, PORT TACK.
W.N.W.	N.	E.N.E.
N.W. by W.	N. by E.	E. by N.
N.W.	N.N.E.	E.
N.W. by N.	N.E. by N.	E. by S.
N.N.W.	N.E.	E.S.E.
N. by W.	N.E. by E.	S.E. by E.
N.	E.N.E.	S.E.
N. by E.	E. by N.	S.E. by S.
N.N.E.	E.	S.S.E.
N.E. by N.	E. by S.	S. by E.
N.E.	E.S.E.	S.
N.E. by E.	S.E. by E.	S. by W.
E.N.E.	S.E.	S.S.W.
E. by N.	S.E. by S.	S.W. by S.
E.	S.S.E.	S.W.
E. by S.	S. by E.	S.W. by W.
E.S.E.	S.	W.S.W.
S.E. by E.	S. by W.	W. by S.
S.E.	S.S.W.	W.
S.E. by S.	S.W. by S.	W. by N.
S.S.E.	S.W.	W.N.W.
S. by E.	S.W. by W.	N.W. by W.
S.	W.S.W.	N.W.
S. by W.	W. by S.	N.W. by N.
S.S.W.	W.	N.N.W.
S.W. by S.	W. by N.	N. by W.
S.W.	W.N.W.	N.
S.W. by W.	N.W. by W.	N. by E.
W.S.W.	N.W.	N.N.E.
W. by S.	N.W. by N.	N.E. by N.
W.	N.N.W.	N.E.
W. by N.	N. by W.	N.E. by E.

When a ship passed from one tack to the other she was said to "tack" or to "wear" according as her first movements effected by the helm and by suitable adjustments of the sails was towards the direction of the wind or away from it. In tacking, therefore, she would pass through 12 points, whereas in wearing she would pass through 20.

For the purpose of tacking the helm was said to be "put down," and for that of wearing to be "put up." Hence the phrase to "bear up" means that the helm is so moved as to cause the ship to assume a course further away from the direction of the wind than when she is close-hauled on the same tack. She is then said to be "sailing large" or "going free," and when she again resumes a close-hauled position she is said to haul her wind on the same tack. Thus if the wind is N.W. and the ship is close-hauled on the port tack her course is N.N.E. If she tacks she will put down her helm so as to turn to port and bring her head successively through 12 points to W.S.W., whereas if she wears she will put up her helm so as to turn to starboard and bring her head successively through 20 points to the same point as in the former case. The difference is that in tacking and turning to port she cannot advance in the direction of any one of the 12 points between N.N.E. and W.S.W.; whereas in wearing and turning to starboard she could if necessary pursue her course in the direction of any one of the 20 points through which she would pass if she turned completely to the starboard tack. Hence when a ship bears up with the wind at N.W. she is free to proceed in any direction over an arc of 225 degrees, passing through E. and S.; but she cannot move forward in any direction over the complementary arc of 135 degrees, passing through N. from N.N.E. to W.S.W. The same conditions apply *mutatis mutandis* to every possible direction of the wind. A sailing-ship which cannot lie higher than six points from the wind thus always has on her windward side an area that moves with her and is bounded by an angle of 135 degrees within which she cannot advance at all. On the other hand, she has on her leeward side an area bounded by an angle of 225 degrees within which she can move freely in any direction.

Next to consider the dispositions and movements of a number of ships organized as a fleet. I will for simplicity's sake assume the ships to be disposed in a single

line only, though the same terminology would apply to two or more associated lines. There are three possible formations in which a line of ships can be disposed—the “line ahead” (generally, and perhaps exclusively, called a column in the time of Nelson), the “line abreast,” and the “line of bearing.” In all these formations the intervals between the ships would normally be of the same length, and in the British Navy this length is, and was, commonly two cables or 400 yards, the cable being taken at 200 yards or the tenth of a nautical mile. In the line ahead the ships are so disposed that their keels are all in the same straight line. In a line abreast they are so disposed that their mainmasts are all in a straight line which makes a right angle with their respective lines of keel. In a line of bearing their mainmasts are still in a straight line, but this line may make any angle from zero, which is the line ahead, up to 90 degrees, which is the line abreast, with their respective keels. We are now in a position to consider the effect on a fleet disposed in line ahead of an alteration of course whether together or in succession. If course is altered in succession the leading ship assumes the new course first, while the following ships continue the original course until they successively reach the point at which the leading ship turned, and at that point they successively assume the new course. Thus the line ahead is preserved but its direction is altered. If, on the other hand, course is altered together, all the ships turn together, thus converting the line ahead into a line abreast or a line of bearing according as the alteration of course is one of eight points or less. It will further be observed that if a fleet tacks or wears in succession the leading ship remains the leading ship and the rear ship the rear ship after the operation is concluded, and the order of ships in the line is unchanged; whereas if it tacks or wears together the leading ship becomes the rear ship and the rear ship the leading ship, while the order of ships in the line is completely reversed.

It only remains to disentangle the several meanings of

the word "bear" in nautical parlance. Three of them, and those the most important for my purpose, are to be found in close juxtaposition in the following extract from Collingwood's Journal: "*Bore up . . . and made all sail for the enemy . . . the British Fleet in two columns bearing down on them . . . made the signal for the lee division to form the larboard line of bearing.*" Bearing up has already been explained. It is to bear up the helm so as to cause the ship to sail on a course further from the wind than before. To "bear down" is to make for a given point, as in this case the enemy's line, by the best available course. Thus in certain cases, as in the case of Trafalgar, to bear down might seem to mean exactly the same thing as to bear up, though the latter phrase properly defines the movement of the helm and the former the movement of the ship. To "bear from" defines relative position, but does not necessarily indicate movement at all. Thus when the lee division was ordered to form the larboard line of bearing the meaning was that each ship was to have her next ahead on her larboard, or port, bow and bear from it a definite number of points of the compass. The common course for all the ships would, according to the log of the *Victory*, be at the time E. by N.; but the next ahead and the next astern of any ship in the line would not be disposed on that bearing from her. The next ahead would be so many points to port of her and the next astern the same number of points to starboard. All the ships of the lee division had *borne up* to the same point; all were or should have been then *bearing down* on the same course; each was or should have been *bearing from* her consorts at the same angle.

CHAPTER I¹

THE PROBLEM

THE controversy concerning "The Tactics of Trafalgar" which in 1905 was waged so vigorously in *The Times* by various writers of authority and repute has at least served to show that, even after the lapse of a hundred years, there are many questions still unsettled concerning the tactics pursued by Nelson and his subordinates on the memorable day which witnessed the victory and the death of the greatest of all seamen. I venture, however, to express the opinion that the particular issue which then formed the staple of the controversy in *The Times* is not the main issue to be decided, and that it is not a vital, nor even a very important, issue in itself. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that, until we can get outside and beyond it, we are compelled to move in a region of technicalities, and even trivialities, which, however interesting in themselves, are very apt to obscure and divert attention from the only problem which, in the interest of Nelson's fame and of the truth of history, it is now worth while to attempt to solve. The grounds for this opinion will be made apparent in the course of the following discussion. For the present, my purpose is to state the problem as I conceive it ought to be stated, and to indicate the direction in which I think we ought to look for its solution. Such a solution can only be tentative, at the best. The only evidence available, though copious enough, is very far from being complete, consentaneous, and conclusive; indeed, it is extra-

¹ *The Times*, September 16, 1905.

ordinarily conflicting, and even contradictory. Any one who approaches it with an open mind and handles it in a judicial temper must acknowledge that he is face to face with one of the most difficult and tangled problems to be found in the whole range of naval history; and, however firmly he may be convinced that he has found a clue to the labyrinth, he will nevertheless acknowledge, if he keeps an open mind, that other students, as fair-minded as himself, may draw quite other conclusions from evidence which is so conflicting that perhaps no two critics will ever be found to reconcile its manifold discrepancies in exactly the same way.

I cannot better state the problem, as I conceive it, than it was stated in *The Times* of July 8, 1905, in a comment on the address delivered by Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, at the meeting of the Navy Records Society—an address which afterwards became, as *The Times* anticipated that it would, the *fons et origo* of a very acute controversy :

If we read the famous Memorandum in which Nelson embodied what he called "the Nelson touch" we can only come to the conclusion that he intended to fight the battle in one way. If we read the accounts of most historians, and still more if we look at the plans exhibited by them from Ekins, and James, and Nicolas, even down to and including Captain Mahan, or again, if we look at the great plan or model deposited in the museum of the United Service Institution, we are driven to the conclusion that, so far from fighting the battle in the way he deliberately intended and carefully explained to his captains, Nelson actually fought it in quite another way, and in a way which, according to the late Admiral Colomb, "it is hardly too much to say was the worst possible way." Further, if we look at the contemporary records of the battle contained in the logs of the several ships engaged, or at the contemporary comments of officers who were present . . . we shall find evidence so confusing and conflicting as almost to make at first sight as much for one solution as for the other. This . . . is the

great paradox which the twentieth-century commentator on Trafalgar must needs attempt to resolve.¹

It will be seen that the twentieth-century commentator on Trafalgar has by no means an easy task before him. Yet, as *The Times* also remarked, "it does seem strange that the country which by common consent has produced the greatest sea-commander that the world has ever seen should have been content for a hundred years not to know how his last and greatest battle was fought." Even now I am far from sure that, unless fresh and decisive evidence should be disclosed, this knowledge is ever likely to be elicited in such a form as to satisfy all inquirers and to silence all dissentients. It is not, in my judgment, likely that the two conflicting theories on the subject will ever be completely reconciled. Each of the two parties to the controversy will always be able to appeal to the evidence which makes for the theory he favours, and, as this evidence cannot be reconciled with that which makes for the alternative theory—though it may be discounted as of inferior value—it would seem that a final harmony is unattainable. On the other hand, even if we may never know exactly how the battle was fought, we can, I think, attain to something like certainty as to how it was not fought. It was not fought in strict and exact accordance with the letter of Nelson's Memorandum; nor was it fought, as I think I shall be able to show, in anything like the fashion depicted in any of the diagrams referred to above in the passage quoted from *The Times*. About the first of these propositions there is, I think, no serious dispute; but in saying this I must ask leave to emphasize the phraseology I have used above, "in strict and exact accordance with the letter." Whether the battle was fought in all essential accordance with the spirit of the Memorandum or not is the real problem

¹ Colonel Desbrière, in his work on "Trafalgar," has done me the honour to cite this passage and to adopt it as the basis of his own examination of the problem.

which I am to attempt to solve, and in the course of my attempt to solve it I hope to be able to establish the latter of the two propositions just formulated.

It is no concession to the theory that the plan of the Memorandum was abandoned altogether to say that the battle was not fought in strict and exact accordance with the letter of that document. Nelson himself wrote, in sending the Memorandum to Collingwood, "I send you my plan of attack as far as a man dare venture to guess at the very uncertain position the enemy may be found in." Here he obviously points to the probability that the plan might be modified in certain details if the circumstances of the moment appeared to require it; and his tactical intuition was so instant and so unerring that we may be quite sure that if, as the hour of battle approached, he saw any good reason for modifying the plan in detail he would act upon it without the slightest hesitation, and without the slightest regard to the mere letter of the Memorandum. But that is by no means to say that, without a word of warning, and even without the knowledge, then or thereafter, of his second-in-command, he threw to the winds the plan of action so carefully prepared and so fully explained beforehand to all concerned. "No man," says Captain Mahan, "was ever better served than Nelson by the inspiration of the moment; no man ever counted on it less." It served him so well because he counted on it so little. "My dear friend," he continues, in the letter quoted above, "it is to place you at ease respecting my intentions, and to give full scope to your judgment for carrying them into effect." Surely no man who wrote in this way could ever allow himself to abandon intentions so solemnly declared, and to abandon them without a word of warning or explanation to the man in whose readiness to give effect to them he was expressing such explicit confidence. And yet this is what we must believe, if we are to believe that the plan of attack was discarded altogether when the battle came to be fought, and discarded in favour of a plan which, by

common consent, was in all respects inferior and altogether unworthy of Nelson's tactical genius.

To my mind this hypothesis is absolutely untenable, and even well-nigh unthinkable. Before I come to close quarters with the evidence I will give some general reasons in support of this opinion. Nelson, we know, was a life-long student of naval tactics. In 1783, when he was quite a junior captain, and barely twenty-five years of age, Lord Hood had spoken of him as an officer to be consulted "on questions of naval tactics." At that time he had never even served with a fleet, and yet Lord Hood, as his correspondence shows, was by no means the man to bestow his praise indiscriminately or unworthily. It is certain that, in his grasp of tactical principles and of their application in action, Nelson was as far ahead of the ideas in vogue at the time as he overtopped all others in his consummate genius for war. He was, as we learn from Beatty's narrative, a frequent reader of Clerk of Eldin's *Naval Tactics*, and it is certain that the Memorandum we are considering was not a little indebted to that famous and most illuminating work, though, as I shall hope to show hereafter, it greatly improved on Clerk's methods and suggestions. Further, it is certain that, for months before the battle, Nelson was constantly looking forward to it as the crowning effort of his career. During his last stay in England it must have occupied his thoughts almost night and day. "Depend upon it," he said to Blackwood, "I shall yet give Mr. Villeneuve a drubbing." On his return to the fleet in September he wrote to Lady Hamilton, some days before joining—"I am anxious to join, for it would add to my grief if any other man were to give them the Nelson touch which *we* say is warranted never to fail." This is conclusive evidence that at Merton "the Nelson touch"—whatever it was—was constantly under discussion between the Admiral and his friends, and that Lady Hamilton knew exactly what was meant by it. Further, we know that the proposed plan of action was propounded and explained

separately to Keats, one of his favourite captains, and to Lord Sidmouth, who had been Prime Minister before Pitt returned to office in 1805. It was only after several years that the recollections of Keats and Sidmouth were recorded in writing; but, though this may throw some doubt on their testimony in point of detail, yet their evidence is quite conclusive as to the fact that Nelson, during his last brief stay in England, was constantly revolving the matter in his mind. We know, too, that as soon as he rejoined the fleet he summoned his captains, and then and there explained to them what he had in his mind. On October 1 he writes to Lady Hamilton :

I joined the fleet late on the evening of the 28th of September, but could not communicate with them until the next morning. I believe my arrival was most welcome, not only to the commander of the fleet, but also to every individual in it; when I came to explain to them the "Nelson touch" it was like an electric shock. Some shed tears, all approved. "It was new—it was singular—it was simple!" and from Admirals downwards it was repeated, "It must succeed, if ever they will allow us to get at them!"

A few days later, on October 9, he embodied his plan in the famous Memorandum, and sent a copy of it to Collingwood, accompanied by the letter already quoted. Subsequently copies of it were sent to every captain in the fleet. The copy delivered to Captain Hope, of the *Defence*, was endorsed as follows: "It was agreeable to these instructions that Lord Nelson attacked the combined fleets of France and Spain, off Cape Trafalgar, on the 21st of October, 1805." Thus we can trace the germ of the plan and the genesis of the Memorandum, from the discussions at Merton and the conversations with Keats and Sidmouth, down to the time when it was first explained verbally to the assembled flag-officers and captains on or before October 1, and finally reduced to writing and communicated to Collingwood on October 9.

Is it conceivable that such a plan, so patiently thought out, so exhaustively discussed, so carefully explained, so enthusiastically received, so simple and withal so profound as to have seemed to some of the best critics to be well-nigh unfathomable in its subtlety, should have been suddenly cast aside without a word of notice, warning, or explanation, in favour of another which no one, except perhaps James, whose tactical insight was beneath contempt, has yet been found to explain, defend, or account for? Collingwood certainly knew nothing of any such radical change of plan. In his official despatch describing the battle—a very cold and matter-of-fact document, which certainly does not err on the side of generosity towards Nelson—he says: “As the mode of our attack had been previously determined on and communicated to the flag-officers and captains, few signals were necessary and none were made except to direct close order as the lines bore down.” It is not strictly true that no signals were made; for Nelson, as we know, made several, including that immortal one which, as Southey says, “will be remembered as long as the language, or even the memory, of England shall endure.” But what Collingwood appears to have meant is that no signals were necessary and none were made to give effect to the well-known and well-understood intentions of the Commander-in-Chief; and it is both characteristic of the man and corroborative of this view of his meaning that, when Collingwood saw the first flags of the famous signal ahoist, he exclaimed with some impatience, “I wish Nelson would stop signalling. We all know what we have to do.”¹ This is certainly not the attitude of a

¹ I cannot concur in Colonel Desbrière's interpretation of this exclamation of Collingwood's. He takes it to signify that Nelson's immortal signal was a “message qui, semble-t-il, loin de soulever l'enthousiasme, causa une sorte d'agacement a ceux auxquels il s'adressait.” Collingwood was impatient, not with the signal itself, still less with its purport, but with the fact that any signal at all was being made at this juncture, because, as he said, “we all know what we have to do.” His exclamation thus furnishes very strong evidence to show that he never expected Nelson to make any essential change

man who, having been thoroughly seized of one plan, suddenly found himself called upon to carry out an entirely different one, of which no previous inkling had been given.

But I have not yet done with Collingwood's testimony. Writing to Blackett on November 2, he said of Nelson, "In this affair he did nothing without my counsel. We made our line of battle together, and concerted the mode of attack, which was put in execution in the most admirable style." Here he claims his own share in Nelson's plan, and declares most explicitly that that plan was put in execution. Again, in a letter to Sir Thomas Pasley, he writes on December 16, "Lord Nelson determined to substitute for exact order"—that is, for the regular line of battle, a phrase he uses in the next preceding sentence—"an impetuous attack in two distinct bodies. . . . It was executed well and succeeded admirably." Thus, whatever other officers may have thought—and some of them undoubtedly thought that the plan was "not acted upon," as Moorsom wrote—it is certain that Collingwood, the second in command, the life-long friend of Nelson, the man who claimed that nothing was done without his counsel, and that he actually concerted the plan with his chief, never dreamt that the plan so concerted had been abandoned and that a totally different plan had been substituted for it at the last moment. It is true that in his letter to Pasley he does not describe the plan of the Memorandum very accurately. That Memorandum contemplated three "distinct bodies," not two. Some critics—among them Mr. Henry Newbolt, to whom we are all indebted for his masterly handling of the problem in his

in the dispositions prescribed by the Memorandum, and that any signal of instruction or direction made in pursuance of prescriptions already so well known to all must be superfluous. It is, indeed, well known that as soon as the signal was completed, it aroused the utmost enthusiasm throughout the fleet and especially on board the *Royal Sovereign*, Collingwood's flag-ship. "When," says Captain Mahan, "the whole signal was known, and cheers resounded along the lines, Collingwood cordially expressed his own satisfaction."

Year of Trafalgar—have accordingly urged that the words in the letter to Pasley do not apply to the plan of the Memorandum, but are to be taken as evidence that Collingwood acknowledged that Nelson “determined to substitute” something else for it at the last moment—to wit, “an impetuous attack in two distinct bodies.” I do not think that this contention can be sustained. It is disallowed, as it seems to me, by the two other passages cited above. It is at variance even with the context of the letter to Pasley itself; for Collingwood there says, “The weather line he commanded, and left the lee line totally to my direction. He had assigned the points to be attacked.” These words refer, and can only refer, to the Memorandum. Nowhere else was any authority given to Collingwood to take the lee line totally under his direction. In the Memorandum such authority is given three times over, as if especially to emphasize it, and in Nelson’s covering letter it is repeated once more. Nowhere else is any indication to be found of the points which Nelson “assigned to be attacked.” On the other hand, it may, I think, be argued, from Collingwood’s words, that he never fully understood the Memorandum. Very few, if any, of those to whom it was expounded ever did. Mr. Newbolt tells us that “a distinguished living Admiral has said that ‘the simplicity and scope of that order have never been fully appreciated.’” But assuredly Collingwood, to whom the Memorandum was originally addressed personally, and with whom, as his own words show, it was discussed and even “concerted” much more fully than with any other officer in the fleet, must have known whether it was cancelled at the last moment or not, and whether it was, in his judgment, carried out in substance or not. His own words, official and unofficial, seem to me to leave no room whatever for doubt that he, at least, believed from first to last that the battle was fought in substantial accord with the plan of the Memorandum. I submit that this is evidence of the very first order and weight, only

to be rebutted by stronger evidence of like order and of equivalent weight. But, according to the scales in which I weigh the matter, no such evidence is forthcoming. Such as there is—and there is plenty of it so far as mere quantity is concerned—is of an entirely different order and weight, conclusive, perhaps, if it stood alone, but little more than a featherweight in scales judicially held. For surely in such scales nothing can outweigh the judgment and testimony of the second in command, who became commander-in-chief at the close of the day.

It is now time to turn to the Memorandum itself, to consider its genesis and examine its content. But I must reserve that great subject for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER II¹

THE MEMORANDUM, ITS GENESIS

THE "Nelson touch," as all the world knows, was embodied in a secret Memorandum dated October 9, and communicated to Collingwood on that date. It was subsequently communicated to all the captains of the fleet, its substance having been explained to them orally, amid great enthusiasm, as soon as Nelson took over the command. I did not quote it textually in the previous chapter, because its details were not necessary to that branch of the argument, and also because it demands, and will repay, full discussion on its own account. I here quote its text, as given in Mr. Newbolt's *Year of Trafalgar*. Mr. Newbolt explains that "the words in italics and in round brackets were originally written by Lord Nelson, but deleted in favour of those which follow them":

SECRET MEMORANDUM

VICTORY, off Cadiz,
October 9, 1805.

Thinking it almost impossible to bring a fleet of forty Sail of the Line into a Line of Battle in variable winds, thick weather, and other circumstances which must occur, without such a loss of time that the opportunity would probably be lost of bringing the Enemy to Battle in such a manner as to make the business decisive, I have therefore made up my mind to keep the fleet in that position of sailing (with the exception of the First and Second in Command), that the Order of Sailing is to be the Order of Battle, placing the fleet in two Lines of Sixteen Ships

¹ *The Times*, September 19, 1905.

each, with an Advanced Squadron of eight of the fastest sailing Two-decked Ships, [which] will always make, if wanted, a Line of twenty-four Sail, on whichever Line the Commander-in-Chief may direct.

The Second in Command will (*in fact command his Line and*) after my intentions are made known to him, have the entire direction of his Line to make the attack upon the Enemy, and to follow up the blow until they are captured or destroyed.

If the Enemy's fleet should be seen to Windward in Line of Battle, and that the two Lines and the Advanced Squadron can fetch them (*I shall suppose them forty-six Sail in the Line of Battle*) they will probably be so extended that their Van could not succour their Rear.

I should therefore probably make (*Your*) the Second in Command's signal to lead through, about their twelfth Ship from their Rear, (or wherever (*You*) he could fetch, if not able to get so far advanced); my Line would lead through about their Centre, and the Advanced Squadron to cut two or three or four Ships ahead of their Centre, so as to ensure getting at their Commander-in-Chief, on whom every effort must be made to capture.

The whole impression of the British fleet must be to overpower from two or three Ships ahead of their Commander-in-Chief, supposed to be in the Centre, to the Rear of their fleet. I will suppose twenty Sail of the Enemy's Line to be untouched, it must be some time before they could perform a manœuvre to bring their force compact to attack any part of the British fleet engaged, or to succour their own Ships, which indeed would be impossible without mixing with the Ships engaged. (Mr. Scott here added a reference to the following words written by Lord Nelson in the upper margin of the paper: "The Enemy's fleet is supposed to consist of 46 Sail of the Line, British fleet of 40. If either is less, only a proportionate number of Enemy's Ships are to be cut off; B. to be $\frac{1}{4}$ superior to the E. cut off.")

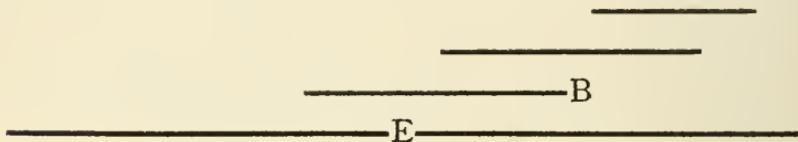
Something must be left to chance; nothing is sure in a Sea fight beyond all others. Shot will carry away the Masts and Yards of friends as well as foes; but I look with confidence to a Victory before the Van of the Enemy could succour their (*friends'*) Rear, and then that the

British fleet would most of them be ready to receive their Twenty Sail of the Line, or to pursue them, should they endeavour to make off.

If the Van of the Enemy tacks, the Captured Ships must run to Leeward of the British Fleet ; if the Enemy wears, the British must place themselves between the Enemy and the Captured, and disabled British Ships ; and should the Enemy close, I have no fears as to the result.

The Second in Command will in all possible things direct the movements of his Line, by keeping them as compact as the nature of the circumstances will admit. Captains are to look to their particular Line as their rallying point. But, in case Signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood, no Captain can do very wrong if he places his Ship alongside that of an Enemy.

Of the intended attack from to Windward, the Enemy in Line of Battle ready to receive an attack :



The divisions of the British fleet will be brought nearly within gunshot of the Enemy's Centre. The signal will most probably then be made for the Lee Line to bear up together, to set all their sails, even steering sails (in the upper margin of the paper, with a reference by Lord Nelson to this passage, are the words, "*Vide* instructions for Signal, Yellow with Blue fly,¹ Page 17,

¹ Mr. Newbolt gives "flag," but this must, I think, be a clerical error, as in the original MS. of the Memorandum, at present deposited in the Guildhall of Tunbridge Wells, the word is "fly." A copy of the Signal Book referred to, which is believed to have belonged to Hardy, Nelson's flag-captain, and was probably the actual copy used by Nelson at Trafalgar, is now in the possession of Hardy's grandson, Commander Sir Malcolm MacGregor, R.N. It appears to be the only known copy which contains the signal indicated by Nelson. The signal is entered in MS., and runs: "Cut through the enemy's line and engage close on the other side. N.B., this signal to be repeated by all ships." It was probably therefore a signal framed by Nelson himself, and ordered by him to be inserted in one of the blank spaces left for the purpose in the Signal Book. There is no reference to the Appendix in the Hardy copy of the Signal Book. Possibly the reference should have been to the words following "N.B." in the text of the signal.

Eighth flag, Signal Book, with reference to Appendix ''), in order to get as quickly as possible to the Enemy's Line, and to cut through, beginning from the 12 Ship from the Enemy's rear. Some Ships may not get through their exact place, but they will always be at hand to assist their friends; and if any are thrown round the Rear of the Enemy, they will effectually complete the business of twelve Sail of the Enemy.

Should the Enemy wear together, or bear up and sail large, still the Twelve Ships composing, in the first position, the Enemy's Rear, are to be [the] object of attack of the Lee Line, unless otherwise directed from the Commander-in-Chief, which is scarcely to be expected, as the entire management of the Lee Line, after the intentions of the Commander-in-Chief is [are] signified, is intended to be left to the Judgement of the Admiral commanding that Line.

The remainder of the Enemy's Fleet, 34 Sail, are to be left to the management of the Commander-in-Chief, who will endeavour to take care that the movements of the Second in Command are as little interrupted as is possible.

NELSON AND BRONTE.

Only those who have paid some attention to the history of naval tactics during the century which preceded Trafalgar—so admirably elucidated by Mr. Julian Corbett's edition of the *Fighting Instructions*—are qualified to appreciate the height, and the depth, and the breadth of this immortal Memorandum, the last tactical word of the greatest master of sea tactics the world has ever known, the final and flawless disposition of sailing-ships marshalled for combat. The old method of fighting, which had prevailed throughout the eighteenth century down to the time when Rodney, in 1782, broke the enemy's line in the battle off Dominica, was to attack from to windward in a long close-hauled line parallel to that of the enemy and abreast of it. The French always preferred the leeward position, and the English that to windward, with the result, as Clerk of Eldin puts it, in the opening paragraph of his famous work written in 1781,

that " during the last two wars, as well as the present . . . when ten, twenty, or thirty great ships have been assembled and formed in line of battle . . . in no one instance has ever a proper exertion been made, anything memorable achieved, or even a ship lost or won on either side." The line of battle had, in fact, become a fetish and the windward position a superstition. The English found themselves constantly baffled in their attempt to bring on a decisive engagement, and the French, who never wanted to bring on a decisive engagement, were as constantly able to haul off with little damage after crippling the English van, as it bore down in the vain attempt to form a close-hauled line within gunshot to windward. Clerk showed clearly how this was, and suggested a remedy ; but, as his treatise, although immensely suggestive, is prolix and somewhat involved, I will, in the exposition of his doctrine, avail myself of a very lucid summary of it given by Mr. David Hannay in an appendix to his edition of *Southey's Life of Nelson* :

Clerk had shown that as long as sea-fights were conducted by one long line, stretching itself parallel to another line, so that ship was opposed to ship on either side, no decisive results were to be expected. He had shown that until our admirals took to concentrating superior forces on a portion of the enemy and crushing it, they could never compel him to fight a serious battle, but would find that the French continued to engage to leeward with the object of crippling the leading ships of the English line as it came down to the attack, and then filing off to a safe distance. To prevent them doing this Clerk suggested to the admirals of his time that when they found a French fleet in order of battle to leeward of them they should arrange their own fleet, not in a single line corresponding to his, but in two or more, which should be kept parallel to one another, and also to the rear of the enemy. Then, if the enemy continued on the same course, the English division nearest him was to fall on the last ships in the French line, not engaging him ship to ship, according to the old rule, but concentrating

a greater number on a less, with the object of overpowering the portion attacked. If the enemy did nothing his rear ships would be cut off and destroyed. It was to be presumed that he would endeavour to help the ships assailed. This he could only do in one of two ways—either by tacking and coming back to windward, or by wearing and coming back to leeward to the support of the vessels which were in danger of being overpowered. In either case he must come to a close action, and must give up the French device of firing at the masts, and then slipping away, unless of course he was prepared to sacrifice the ships cut off. In either case, too, whether the ships ahead of those attacked wore or tacked, a break would equally appear in the enemy's line. It would then be the object of the English admiral to use the weather line, not immediately engaged, for the purpose of forcing himself in between the ships cut off and others turning to their support. There was the possibility that an enemy, upon seeing that the rear ships of his line were menaced, might wear his whole fleet from end to end, thus reversing his course and turning what had been his rear into his van. In this case the same ships were still to be attacked by superior numbers, and it was still to be the object with the admiral of the weather line to prevent his opponent from relieving them. This would have been by far the more difficult task of the two, since the supporting ships in this case would not have to turn in order to come to the assistance of their friends, but only to press on in the direction they were already following, and no gap would occur in their formation.

The close resemblance between the principles enunciated by Clerk of Eldin and those embodied in the Trafalgar Memorandum will here be apparent; but I venture to think that the latter portion of the above extract, that dealing with the possibility of the enemy's wearing his whole fleet before the attack could be delivered, was suggested to Mr. Hannay by the Memorandum itself rather than by anything to be found in Clerk's own exposition. Clerk did take note of the contingency that the enemy might wear his whole line, but he seemed to

think that this was only likely to take place after the rear had been attacked, so that the ships attacked could not themselves wear, and, being in action, would probably fall astern of the ships ahead of them before the latter began to wear. In that case he showed how the enemy's manœuvre could be foiled. But Nelson's plan, as I understand it, differed fundamentally from this. Clerk's diagrams all represent the attacking ships as coming up from astern and delivering their attack as soon as they fetched the ships to be attacked at the rear of the enemy's line. He seemed to think that not more than three ships, or four at the outside, could be fetched in this manner. He assumed that the enemy, having formed his line, was "keeping under an easy sail, with the intention of receiving the usual attack from another fleet of equal number," and he recommended that three or, if possible, four ships should be attacked by superior numbers in the first instance, relying on subsequent manœuvres, first of the enemy, and secondly of the assailant, to make the action a general and decisive one. Nelson, on the other hand, proposed to reserve his attack until the three divisions in which his fleet was to be organized had been "brought nearly within gunshot of the enemy's centre." This is an immense development of Clerk's original conception, which appears to me to have been overlooked not merely by Mr. Hannay, but by so high an authority as Sir Reginald Custance, in an article on "Naval Tactics" contributed to the *Naval Annual* for 1905. The classical instance of an attack on the rear is, says Admiral Custance, Trafalgar, "and is due to Clerk of Eldin, whose plan Nelson adopted and made his own." Nelson did make it his own, but in so doing he stamped his own genius indelibly upon it. The improvement he effected was very likely suggested by Rodney's experience in his engagement with De Guichen in 1780. There Rodney intended to attack De Guichen's rear, and bore down with his whole force for the purpose. But De Guichen, divining his intention, immediately wore his whole fleet.

Rodney then hauled up on the same tack as the enemy, but, being now abreast of the new rear of the latter, he again ordered what he intended to be a fresh attack of his whole force on the rear. This was frustrated by some ambiguity in his signals and by the inability of his captains to understand that what Rodney wanted was a concentrated attack on the rear, and not a dispersed attack in the old indecisive fashion on the whole line. De Guichen, perceiving what Rodney intended in the first instance, exclaimed that six or seven of his ships were gone, and afterwards sent Rodney word that, had his (Rodney's) signals been obeyed, he himself would have been his prisoner. If the tactical insight of Rodney's captains had been equal to that of the French Commander-in-Chief, there seems to be little doubt that this result would have ensued.

It was Rodney's misfortune not to be properly supported on this occasion. But it would seem that he gave so wary an opponent as De Guichen an opportunity, which was promptly seized, by bearing up at too great a distance from the enemy's line, so that De Guichen had time to wear before the attack could be delivered. Nelson sought to avoid this counterstroke partly by adopting Clerk's suggestion—which had not yet been propounded when Rodney fought De Guichen—of disposing his fleet in three divisions, and partly by bringing all his divisions abreast of the enemy's centre, "nearly within gunshot," before making the signal for the lee line to bear up. The next stage of his plan appears to owe nothing to Clerk, who, in his "Mode of Attack proposed," said nothing about breaking the enemy's line and engaging him to leeward. This part of Nelson's plan was probably derived partly from Rodney's famous action off Dominica in 1782, and partly from Lord Howe's action of the First of June 1794. At the action off Dominica Rodney broke the enemy's line—thus reviving a manœuvre which had been in vogue in the Dutch wars, but had since fallen into disrepute—not by original tactical intention, but by

seizing at the nick of time an opportunity afforded him by a sudden change in the wind ; and he apparently did so, not on his own initiative, but at the suggestion, not too readily entertained by him in the first instance, of his chief of the staff. The overwhelming effect of this manœuvre in destroying the enemy's cohesion once more brought it into tactical repute, and it was repeated—though, as Mr. Julian Corbett has shown, with a fundamental difference—by Lord Howe in the action of the First of June. Even when the latter action was fought the line was not yet dethroned in favour of some such formation as Clerk had suggested, but it was to be employed in a much more deadly and decisive fashion than that which Clerk had so vigorously assailed. Rodney, it is true, had discarded the old ship-to-ship engagement of the *Fighting Instructions*. He declared himself that during all his commands “ he made it a rule to bring his whole force against a part of the enemy's, and never was so absurd as to bring ship against ship, when the enemy gave him an opportunity of acting otherwise.” But he had not discarded the line. Neither did Howe, who formed his line on the First of June with characteristic precision. Rodney, again, apparently had no thought of breaking the line in the action off Dominica in any other place than that which opportunity offered him at the moment. He seems to have expected that all the ships astern of him in the line would follow him through the gap he had made and attack the ships of the enemy's rear in succession. Five ships did follow him, but the sixth, finding a similar opportunity due to the same cause, promptly seized it, and was followed by all the remaining ships astern. Thus De Grasse's line was broken in two places almost simultaneously and its cohesion totally destroyed. But in both cases it was broken by taking advantage of the accident of opportunity, and not with any tactical intent, formulated and thought out beforehand. Nevertheless the accident was full of lessons, and Howe was the very man to profit by them, and even to better them.

He must have noted the advantage gained by breaking the line in two places instead of one. He must have drawn the inference that, if it could be broken in all places, the advantage gained by breaking it would be raised to its *maximum*, and this was what he set himself to do on the First of June. Forming his line parallel to that of the enemy and abreast of it, he ordered his ships to bear up together, to break through the line simultaneously, and then to engage the enemy to leeward, each ship taking its appointed adversary in the enemy's line. It was, as Mr. Corbett suggests, probably this masterly development of the lessons taught by Rodney's famous action that was in Nelson's mind when he called Howe "the first and the greatest sea-officer the world has ever produced . . . our greatest master in naval tactics and bravery."

We can now trace in outline the genesis of Nelson's great conception; its full content I must leave to be examined in a third chapter. The attack on the enemy's rear was manifestly derived from Clerk of Eldin, as was also the proposed disposition of the fleet in three divisions. But Nelson aimed higher than Clerk, and saw his way to attack twelve ships of the rear instead of three or four, and to attack them in superior force. Next, warned, perhaps, by the comparative failure of Rodney's attack on De Guichen, he provided that the division told off for the first onslaught should be brought "nearly within gunshot" of the enemy before bearing up. By this means he apparently hoped that, since his fleet was still to be kept in the order of sailing and not to assume the recognized order of battle, the enemy would hesitate to take any steps to frustrate an intention which they would not be able to divine, as De Guichen had divined and frustrated the intentions of Rodney. "I think it will surprise and confound the enemy," he said to Keats. "They won't know what I am about." Lastly, for the actual attack to be made by the lee line, he adopted Rodney's manœuvre of breaking the line, as developed

and perfected by Howe. Rodney, in fact, had shown, more or less accidentally, the immense advantage of breaking the line. Howe had shown how it could be done with the greatest certainty and effect. Mr. Julian Corbett—to whom in this analysis I am indebted at every point—has pointed out that Rodney's attack could always be parried "by the enemy's standing away together on the same tack. By superior gunnery Howe's attack might be stopped, but by no possibility could it be avoided except by flight." Nelson's express instructions to the lee line are "to set all their sails" so as "to get as quickly as possible to the enemy's line and to cut through, beginning from the twelfth ship from the enemy's rear." This is plainly Howe's manœuvre, not Rodney's; for the lee line would now be in line abreast, and Nelson goes on to say "some ships may not get through their exact place"; whereas in Rodney's manœuvre the ships would be in line ahead and would all pass through at the same place.

CHAPTER III¹

THE MEMORANDUM, ITS CONTENT

WE have now to examine the content of the Memorandum in detail. It is rather clumsily worded, for Nelson was no very skilful penman, and it is not very lucidly arranged. But we shall find little difficulty in disengaging its leading ideas. In the first place there is the great idea, which amounts to nothing less than the dethronement of the line of battle—the final destruction of that fetish, the worship of which, according to Clerk of Eldin, had sterilized the tactics of British Fleets during three successive wars in the eighteenth century. Nelson, as Mr. Julian Corbett has shown, had early abandoned this antiquated form of worship. In his final Memorandum he inaugurated a new ritual, which, had his successors in what remained of the sailing-ship period been men of his calibre, must have become universal in all its essential principles, though it might have been improved and developed in some of its details. For cruising purposes fleets were not disposed in order or line of battle. They were disposed in “order of sailing,” which usually consisted of two or more columns or divisions disposed abeam of one or another. These divisions were generally three, designated respectively the van, the centre, and the rear, to indicate the positions they were to assume when the line of battle was to be formed. Now, the transformation of the order of sailing—whether in two columns or more—into a single line of battle was an evolution that necessarily required time for its completion—in some cases a very considerable time, and in most cases, an amount of time that could ill be spared.

¹ *The Times*, September 22, 1905.

It was, says Nelson, "almost impossible to bring a Fleet . . . into a Line of Battle in variable winds, thick weather, and other circumstances which must occur, without such a loss of time that the opportunity would probably be lost of bringing the Enemy to Battle in such a manner as to make the business decisive." This, then, was the first reason why Nelson abandoned the line of battle. He grudged the time wasted in forming it; for, as Captain Mahan says somewhere, he never trifled with a fair wind or with time. But there was a much deeper reason than that. He held, with Clerk of Eldin, that the line of battle was a very bad formation for fighting "in such a manner as to make the business decisive." Hence, having abandoned the single line, he determined to dispose his fleet in such an order of sailing that it might become the order of battle without any further change of formation. The order of sailing devised for the purpose was in form that suggested by Clerk of Eldin, but in substance something quite different. Clerk had assigned no special functions—beyond that of containing the enemy's van as best they might—to the two weathermost of the three divisions in which he disposed his attacking fleet, and his whole conception was that of an attack from to windward. Nelson was much more explicit, and his disposition provided for the alternative of an attack from to leeward as well as for that of an attack from to windward. Assuming that his fleet would consist of forty ships, he proposed to place it "in two Lines of Sixteen Ships each, with an Advanced Squadron of eight of the fastest sailing Two-decked Ships, which will always make, if wanted, a Line of twenty-four Sail, on whichever Line the Commander-in-Chief may direct." I shall consider hereafter how far, and why, Nelson modified this disposition on the day of battle. It suffices to observe here that no independent function was assigned to this "advanced squadron." It was to be kept in hand, so that, "if wanted," it could at any moment reinforce either, or possibly both, of the two other divisions.

Next we have the very pregnant idea of giving the second in command "the entire direction of his Line to make the attack upon the Enemy, and to follow up the blow until they are captured or destroyed." This was to take effect "after my intentions are made known to him." As this idea is repeated no fewer than three times in the Memorandum, and forms the keynote of the covering letter in which Nelson sent the Memorandum to Collingwood, it is manifest that Nelson attached the utmost importance to it. There may be some question as to what particular time is meant by the words, "after my intentions are made known to him"—whether from the date at which Collingwood received the Memorandum or from some time on the morning of the battle, when some signal made by Nelson clearly indicated what his final intentions were. In the latter alternative, I do not think that we can put the time later than that when Nelson first made the general signal to "bear up and sail large"—though whether this signal was an order to bear up in succession or to bear up together is, as all students of the subject know, a much-debated question, which I do not attempt to prejudge here. In any case, if we collate the three passages in which this idea is embodied in the Memorandum and compare them with Collingwood's words already quoted, both from his official despatch and from his private letters, we shall, I think, conclude that the better opinion is that Collingwood was to have "the entire management of the lee line" from the very first moment when the engagement was seen to be inevitable. In other words, Collingwood enjoyed a free hand, subject to the general directions of the Memorandum, not merely in the attack, but in the advance as well.

Be this as it may, the principle involved is one of supreme importance. The breaking up of the traditional line of battle into two or more divisions, to which different functions were assigned, seems to involve as a necessary consequence the enlargement of the initiative of sub-

ordinate leaders of divisions. It was clear to Nelson that, having assigned to Collingwood the task of attacking the rear of the enemy's line, and to himself the far more important duty of taking care that Collingwood's movements were interfered with as little as possible, he would best further the objects of both by not even interfering with Collingwood himself. If, as Collingwood says, the Commander-in-Chief broke through the enemy's line "about the tenth ship from the van, and the second in command about the twelfth from the rear," and if, as the French naval historian Chevalier records, there was a gap of a mile, or of anything like a mile, about the centre of the combined fleet, the leading ships of the two British divisions must have been at least two miles apart at the time when Collingwood first came into action. At this distance it would be far from easy for Nelson, having his own business in hand, to keep in close touch with the detailed proceedings of Collingwood's division, or with the circumstances which from time to time determined them. He foresaw that this would be the case, and made provision for it by thrice repeating in the Memorandum that the entire management of the lee line would be left to the judgment of the admiral commanding that line. In like manner, in his conversation with Keats, he explained how he then proposed to employ the advanced squadron; but he added, "If circumstances prevent their being employed against the enemy where I desire I shall feel certain he"—that is, the officer in command of them—"will employ them effectually and perhaps in a far more advantageous manner than if he could have followed my orders." Thus the independent initiative of subordinate flag-officers in separate command of divisions was something like a fixed idea with Nelson. He himself had shown the importance of such independent initiative in the Battle of St. Vincent, the great action which laid the foundation of his fame. By wearing his own ship at the critical moment without waiting for orders, and throwing it athwart the Spanish line of advance, he saved

the situation, redressed what many critics have regarded as a grave tactical blunder on the part of Jervis, and, if he did not actually win the action himself, he, at any rate, made it far more easy for Jervis to win it and to make it much more complete than it might otherwise have been. He was not, indeed, at that time a flag-officer, nor was he, as a commodore, in separate command of a division. He had no authority, express or implied, to act as he did. But, without waiting for an order which he knew ought to be given, and even in defiance of the prescribed rules for preserving the line of battle, he saw the right thing to do, and did it without a moment's hesitation. Calder, Jervis's chief of the staff, could only see in such an act an unauthorized departure from the method of attack prescribed by the admiral, and he said as much to Jervis in the evening. But Jervis, as stern a disciplinarian as ever walked a quarter-deck, saw much deeper. Recognizing the consummate tactical intuition displayed by Nelson and the superb fearlessness of responsibility which prompted him to act on it instantly without waiting for orders, he replied, "It certainly was so, and if ever you commit such a breach of your orders, I will forgive you also." Was it not the remembrance of this famous day that induced Nelson to resolve that his subordinates should have the freedom that he then took? If there were more Jervises there might even be more Nelsons; but if there were more Calders there would certainly be no Trafalgars.

The next few paragraphs of the Memorandum need not detain us long. They provide for the case in which the enemy should be seen to windward in line of battle, so that the British attack would have to be made from to leeward; for Nelson, although he evidently preferred the attack from to windward, which he spoke of as "the intended attack," was true to his own principle of not wasting time in manœuvring for position—"a day is soon lost in that business," he had said in an earlier memorandum—and was prepared to take the situation as he

found it. But, as he found the enemy to leeward at Trafalgar, this part of the Memorandum is not pertinent to the present inquiry, though it is not without a profound tactical interest of its own. At the close of this section of the Memorandum, however, there is one paragraph which seems to have a more general application. It begins with a repetition of the provision that the second in command is in all possible things to direct the movements of his line, and then goes on as follows: "Captains are to look to their particular Line as their rallying point. But, in case Signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood, no Captain can do very wrong if he places his Ship alongside that of an Enemy." Here, again, is a manifest reminiscence of Nelson's own action at St. Vincent—for us, at any rate, if not for himself. Signals might not be seen or might not be understood. There was a memorable instance of a signal not being seen at Copenhagen. At St. Vincent no signal was misunderstood, but Nelson could not understand why a certain signal was not made, and, as he knew it ought to be made, he acted as if it had been made. He resolved that at Trafalgar every captain should by his orders enjoy the liberty that he took at St. Vincent without orders.

Lastly we come to the kernel of the whole Memorandum, "the intended attack from to windward, the Enemy in Line of Battle ready to receive an attack." To emphasize this, his chosen plan of action if fortune favoured him with the choice, Nelson himself illustrated it by a simple diagram. It will be noted in this diagram that the so-called "advanced squadron" is no more ahead of the weather line than the latter is of the lee line. On the assumption that the enemy's line is close-hauled and that the three divisions of the British fleet are, therefore, close-hauled on the same tack also, the wind would be about 6 or 7 points on the weather bow of all four lines—that is, at an angle of $67\frac{1}{2}$ or $78\frac{3}{4}$ degrees. In that case it would seem that Nelson in his diagram showed his three divisions as they would be disposed in the order

of sailing when "sailing by the wind," because in that condition, as Admiral Bridge has explained, the column leaders were not abeam of each other, but bore from one another in the direction of the wind. This being so, it is not very easy to see why the "advanced squadron" was so called, but perhaps the explanation is that suggested by Admiral Bridge—namely, that the designation was due to the mode in which Nelson intended to employ, and actually did employ, the ships composing this squadron in "feeling" for the enemy. They were to be an advanced squadron in the days preceding the battle; on the day of battle they were to be a light division not otherwise disposed than the other two, but to be employed as circumstances might require. In the conversation with Keats Nelson expressed the intention of keeping them "always to windward or in a situation of advantage." In the Memorandum they are shown to windward, indeed, but not otherwise disposed than they would be if the order of sailing were in three divisions. On the day of battle, as we shall see, the advanced squadron was broken up and distributed between the other two divisions. Nelson apparently satisfied himself that the time had then already come for disposing of them in accordance with the intentions indicated in the first paragraph of the Memorandum, not indeed in strengthening one division or the other, but in strengthening both, though in different proportions.

As the so-called advanced squadron had thus disappeared on the day of battle, I need only consider henceforth the function assigned to the two divisions of the fleet. We have seen what the lee line was to do, Nelson's own words having already been quoted. It was to bear up together, set all sail, and attack the rear of the enemy in superior force, breaking his line as far as might be simultaneously, after the method adopted by Howe, so that each ship should as far as possible pass through the interval in the enemy's line corresponding to its own position in its own line. "Some Ships may not get

through their exact place, but they will always be at hand to assist their friends ; and if any are thrown round the Rear of the Enemy they will effectually complete the business of twelve Sail of the Enemy." The precise function of the lee line is thus clearly defined, and the evolutions most likely to conduce to the effective discharge of that function are exactly, albeit provisionally, prescribed. But what was to be the function of the weather line ? The answer to this question is contained in what is at once the shortest and most pregnant paragraph in the whole Memorandum. " The remainder of the Enemy's Fleet . . . are to be left to the management of the Commander-in-Chief, who will endeavour to take care that the movements of the Second in Command are as little interrupted as is possible." There is no question here of bearing up or not bearing up, or of any other specific evolution whatever. Nelson reserved his absolute freedom of action, subject to the paramount condition that the work of the lee line was to be immune from interruption until its object—the crushing of the enemy's rear—had been attained. In other words, just as the sole function of the lee line was to concentrate in superior force on the rear, so the primary function of the weather line was to contain the centre and the van. But not its sole function, though Nelson says not a word about its ulterior purpose. Undoubtedly that must have been by close fighting to " complete the business " of as many ships of the enemy's centre as possible, leaving the van to do its worst, which could not be much, since by the hypothesis it was to be contained and thrown out of action. This being so, it seems idle to consider in what formation Nelson's line was—whether in line ahead, line abreast, or line of bearing—when at last he bore down to the attack. Whatever it was, we may be quite sure that it was the best formation that could be adopted, in the circumstances, for securing the primary purpose of containing the enemy's van and centre until Collingwood's ships had done their work, and that, if in adopting

it Nelson exposed his ships to greater risk of damage than some other formation might have involved, he did so for the very good reason that he cared more, in the first instance, for the success of Collingwood's attack than for the immunity of his own line; knowing full well that, if only he could contain the van and throw it out of action—as he did—the ultimate victory must be in his hands. The officer of the *Conqueror*—to whose criticism, singularly acute but manifestly influenced by *parti pris*, nearly all the controversy concerning the tactics of Trafalgar is due—frankly assumes that, “if the regulated plan of attack had been adhered to, the English fleet should have borne up together and have sailed in a line abreast in their respective divisions until they arrived up with the enemy.” It is not for me to say whether this would or would not have been a better plan than Nelson's, but I think I have shown beyond all manner of doubt that it was not Nelson's.

In sum, then, I think we may concur in the main in Mr. Julian Corbett's conclusion, that Nelson's plan of attack as expounded in the Memorandum—and, though I say it with fear and trembling, as carried out substantially in action—was an exceedingly subtle, and not less original, combination of the several ideas of concentration on the rear, of complete freedom of action for the second in command, of containing the enemy's van and centre until the business of twelve sail of the enemy was seen to be so far advanced that its interruption was no longer to be feared, and, above all, of the concealment of his own intentions until the last possible moment, so as to confuse the enemy's mind by not letting him know where and how the attack of the weather line was to be delivered. No one of these ideas is, perhaps, entirely new except the last. I have shown that the genesis of some of them can be traced a long way back in the tactical history of the eighteenth century. Their combination was, no doubt, Nelson's own, but what was far more his own was the moral and psychological idea which binds them all

together and displays Nelson's genius at its highest. The plan outlined in conversation with Keats differs in several important respects from that expounded in the Memorandum, either because Keats misunderstood it to some extent, or because Nelson's great conception had matured before the Memorandum was composed. But the innermost thought in Nelson's mind is, perhaps, better displayed than anywhere else in what he said to Keats: "I will tell you what I think of it. I think it will surprise and confound the enemy. They won't know what I am about. It will bring forward a pell-mell battle, and that is what I want." That is the true "Nelson touch." Yet perhaps the most astounding thing in the whole story is the fact that, as Mr. Julian Corbett has pointed out, Villeneuve had divined almost exactly the kind of attack that Nelson was most likely to make. In his General Instructions, issued in anticipation of the battle, he had written: "The enemy will not confine themselves to forming a line parallel to ours. They will try to envelop our rear, to break our line, and to throw upon those of our ships that they cut off groups of their own to surround and crush them." That he could devise no better mode of parrying such an attack than a single and ill-formed line of battle is perhaps the chief reason why Villeneuve, in spite of the gallantry of his fleet, was so thoroughly "drubbed" at Trafalgar.

CHAPTER IV¹

THE ADVANCE

HAVING now analysed the Memorandum, traced its genesis, and examined its content, we have next to consider its application. In the first place we have to bear in mind that, as Admiral Bridge has said, "advancing to the attack and the attack itself are not the same operations." The two are, however, continuous, and there is no one point in the series of events to be considered at which we can say that the advance ended and the attack began—more especially as, in the case before us, the attack of the lee line was, and was intended to be, anterior to the attack of the weather line. Perhaps the best point of distinction is that which is indicated in the Memorandum itself. "The divisions of the British Fleet will be brought nearly within gunshot of the Enemy's Centre"—this is the advance. "The signal will most probably then be made for the Lee Line to bear up together, to set all their sails, even steering sails, in order to get as quickly as possible to the Enemy's Line, and to cut through"—this is the opening of the attack. It is with the advance alone that I shall deal in the present chapter.

The first point to be noted is that, in the final order of sailing, which was also, as prescribed by the Memorandum, the order of battle, the so-called advanced squadron had disappeared. It had indeed been formed and had been employed as an advanced squadron proper—that is, as Admiral Bridge puts it, "in feeling for the enemy"—during the days and nights immediately pre-

¹ *The Times*, September 26, 1905.

ceding the battle. Mr. Corbett, in his invaluable edition of the *Fighting Instructions*, traces at length the formation and proceedings of this advanced squadron, but for my purpose it is sufficient to quote the concise statement of Admiral Bridge :

On October 19 six ships were ordered "to go ahead during the night"; and besides the frigates two more ships were so stationed as to keep up the communication between the six and the Commander-in-Chief's flagship. Thus eight ships in effect composed an "advanced squadron," and did not join either of the main divisions at first.

The majority of them were recalled on October 20, but three still remained detached, to form a chain between the Admiral and his frigates. Throughout the night of the 20th Nelson was thus kept fully informed of every movement of the enemy, and regulated the movements of his own fleet accordingly. When, however, the detached ships were recalled, they did not, as prescribed by the Memorandum, re-form into a separate division, but took their respective stations—no doubt as previously determined, though there appears to be no record of an order or signal to that effect—in one or other of the two main divisions. Codrington, of the *Orion*, which was one of the advanced squadron, seems to have thought that, although that squadron had been merged in the two main divisions, yet it might, at a later stage of the advance, be ordered to haul out of line again and re-form as a separate division for the purpose of checking the enemy's van. But this intention, if it existed, was never carried out, Nelson himself making a feint at the van, apparently with his whole division, before he finally hauled to starboard and broke the enemy's line astern of the *Bucentaure*.

Why Nelson thus abandoned his original idea of a separate advanced squadron it seems impossible now to say. But it is worth while to reflect that, when he drew up the Memorandum, he assumed that his fleet would

consist of "forty Sail of the Line," and the enemy's of forty-six. The actual numbers were twenty-seven to thirty-three. With forty ships, he proposed to have two divisions of sixteen ships each, and a third of eight ships. With twenty-seven ships, the nearest corresponding proportions would be two divisions of ten and eleven ships respectively, and a third of six. Now, he had prescribed that "if either is less, only a proportionate number of Enemy's Ships is to be cut off; B. to be $\frac{1}{4}$ superior to the E. cut off." In this case the lee division, even if it consisted of eleven ships, would only be able to cut off eight of the enemy—or nine at the outside, if the prescribed superiority of one-quarter were fractionally reduced. Nelson may have considered that, in these circumstances, it was better to strengthen the lee line from the outside to such an extent that it would still be able to "complete the business of twelve Sail of the Enemy." He accordingly gave it fifteen ships, thus reducing the third division to two only, and these he attached to his own division, since they were insufficient to form a separate one. In point of fact, having regard to the reduced numbers of both fleets and the reduced proportion between his own numbers and those of the enemy, he found that he had not ships enough to form a third division without so reducing the weight of the attack of the lee line as to upset the balance of his plan. The advanced squadron, if it had been retained, was to have been under the orders of the Commander-in-Chief, and to be so employed as to "make, if wanted, a Line of twenty-four Sail, on *whichever Line the Commander-in-Chief may direct.*" What he did actually direct, not in the course of the advance but beforehand, was, for the major part of it, to make a line of fifteen sail under Collingwood's orders. I am the more inclined to adopt this explanation of the matter, because, whereas Nelson told Keats that he should put the proposed third division "under an officer who, I am sure, will employ them in the manner I wish," he does not seem ever to have told

off any officer for what Keats called "this distinguished service." He discharged that function himself, by putting the bulk of the advanced squadron into Collingwood's line, before the action, or even the advance, began, and the residue into his own.

Be this as it may, at 6.30 on the morning of October 21 the signal was made, according to Collingwood's Journal, "to form the order of sailing in two columns, and at 7 to prepare for battle." Taken together, these two signals form the first stage of the advance, since the order of sailing was to be the order of battle. It is clear from the logs that the order of sailing had been much deranged during the night, and the signal would have the effect, not only of correcting this derangement so far as time and circumstances allowed, but recalling to their appointed stations such ships of the line as were still detached for lookout purposes.¹ What the precise order of sailing was, however, it is exceedingly difficult to determine. Collingwood, in his official despatch, gives it as follows :

VAN.	REAR.
1. <i>Victory</i> , 1, 1, 1	1. <i>Royal Sovereign</i> , 1, 1, 1
2. <i>Téméraire</i> , 2, 2, 2	2. <i>Mars</i> , 4, 3, 3
3. <i>Neptune</i> , 3, 3, 3	3. <i>Belleisle</i> , 2, 2, 2
4. <i>Conqueror</i> , 4, 5, 6	4. <i>Tonnant</i> , 3, 4, 5
5. <i>Leviathan</i> , 5, 4, 5	5. <i>Bellerophon</i> , 5, 5, 6
6. <i>Ajax</i> , 7, 8, 8	6. <i>Colossus</i> , 6, 6, 4
7. <i>Orion</i> , 8, 9, 9	7. <i>Achilles</i> , 7, 7, 7
8. <i>Agamemnon</i> , 9, 7, 7	8. <i>Polyphemus</i> , 14, 9, 8
9. <i>Minotaur</i> , 10, 10, 10	9. <i>Revenge</i> , 8, 10, 11
10. <i>Spartiate</i> , 11, 11, 11	10. <i>Swiftsure</i> , 10, 11, 11

¹ Colonel Desbrière adduces abundant proof from the French and Spanish archives examined by him that the British fleet, when first sighted by the allies, was in no very regular order. The expression used to describe it by several observers in the allied line is that it appeared to be in two "pelotons," that is, in two more or less irregular groups.

VAN.

- 11. *Britannia*, 6, 6, 4
- 12. *Africa*, 12, 12

REAR.

- 11. *Defence*, 12, 15, 13
- 12. *Thunderer*, 11, 13, 14
- 13. *Defiance*, 9, 12, 15
- 14. *Prince*, 15, 14, 12
- 15. *Dreadnought*, 13, 8, 10

It is certain, however, that Collingwood's order is not strictly correct. The journal of the *Britannia*, describing the attack of the weather line, led by Nelson in the *Victory*, states that "he was close followed up by the *Téméraire*, *Neptune*, *Conqueror*, *Leviathan*, and this ship"; and there is evidence to show that some of the other ships are misplaced. In the log of the *Britannia*, which was the flagship of Rear-Admiral Lord Northesk, a list of the ships, with the amount of loss in killed and wounded sustained by each, is given, and the order in that list differs materially from that given by Collingwood, especially in respect of the lee line. I have indicated this order in the first of the series of figures placed after the names of the ships in Collingwood's list. The second series of figures indicates the order given by Sir John Laughton in his *Nelson*, and the third that given by Mr. Newbolt in his *Year of Trafalgar*. The truth is that, the ships having been ordered to make all sail, the order of the rear ships in both lines was very irregular, being dependent on their rate of sailing. "All our ships were carrying studding sails," says Moorsom, "and many bad sailers were a long way astern, but little or no stop was made for them." Hence the order may have changed from time to time, as the faster ships got ahead and the slower ships fell astern of their stations. The *Africa* never took her proper station. She had got away to the northward during the night, and only rejoined the weather line just as the action began, having in so doing run down the whole of the enemy's van within gunshot. The *Prince* also was a very slow ship, and never reached the lee line.

After having recorded the signal for close action, which was the very last that Nelson made, she logs herself as "steering down between the lines with all sail set." She was the last ship into action, opening fire after 3 p.m. and losing neither killed nor wounded throughout the day.

Thus, however the lines were formed, whether in line ahead or line of bearing, there is, I think, no doubt that they were very irregularly formed, and that the slower ships straggled greatly. "Admiral Collingwood dashed directly down," says Moorsom, "supported by such ships as could get up, and went directly through their line; Lord Nelson the same, and the rest as fast as they could." It may be argued, and has been argued, from this that Nelson was in too great a hurry. That he was in a great hurry is not to be disputed. But the Memorandum is founded on the necessity of not losing a moment, if the enemy was to be brought to battle "in such a manner as to make the business decisive." The allied fleet was heading for Cadiz. Though the wind was light and variable throughout the day, a gale was imminent, as Nelson well knew. The days were shortening, and even in those latitudes the sun would set on October 21 very soon after five o'clock. "No day could be long enough," he had told Keats, "to arrange a couple of fleets and fight a decisive battle according to the old system." He was determined to make a short October day long enough to give Mr. Villeneuve his "drubbing." Was there any time to spare? Was he in *too* great a hurry? The answer is given in that quaint, but pathetic, entry in the *Victory's* own log which records the triumphant close of the day in all its tragedy. "Partial firing continued until 4.30, when a victory having been reported to the Right Honourable Lord Viscount Nelson, K.B. and Commander-in-Chief, he then died of his wound." "Thank God, I have done my duty," were his last words, oftentimes repeated. Would he have done his duty if he had wasted in manœuvring a single moment that could be saved for beating the enemy before the day was gone?

A very few minutes—not more than five, according to the log of the *Mars*—after the signal was made to form the order of sailing in two columns, Nelson made another signal, which has been more hotly debated than any other point in his long and tangled history. According to the log of the *Mars*, this signal was “76, with compass signal E.N.E. (bear up and steer E.N.E).” By the log of the *Victory* the wind, which was N.W. by W. at 6 a.m., had become N.W. at 7, and so remained until it became W.N.W. at 1 p.m. Moorsom records that “the wind all the morning was light from the N.W.,” thus confirming the log of the *Victory*; but Collingwood in his despatch speaks of the wind as “about west.” The log of the *Victory* is attested by the master of the ship, and I think we may regard this testimony as being of the first order and weight. The master of a man-of-war was not responsible for fighting the ship, but he was responsible for navigating her. If there was one thing that he was less likely to be mistaken about than any other, it was the direction of the wind and the corresponding course of the ship. Thomas Atkinson, the master of the *Victory*, was working under Nelson’s own eye, and, as the tactical situation was governed entirely by these two factors, any misconception in this regard on his part would seem to be extremely improbable. He may have been inaccurate in his record, but he can hardly have been mistaken in his original observation, and that, at any rate, affords some presumption that his record also was trustworthy. Hence we may assume, in default of evidence of the same order and of equivalent weight to the contrary, that the log of the *Victory* is correct, so far as it goes, in giving the direction of the wind and the course steered by that ship. The entries are only made at intervals of an hour, so that any temporary alteration of course made and completed between one hour and the next would not be recorded.

Now the question is whether the alteration of course prescribed by signal 76 was to be executed in succession,

or together. If all the ships bore up together, the line ahead in which they had previously been sailing would be converted into a line of bearing, in which all the ships would be pointing to the E.N.E., whereas, if they bore up in succession, the line ahead would still be preserved, though its direction would be altered to E.N.E. as soon as the evolution was completed. I shall not attempt to decide this point, nor is it, in my judgment, worth while even to discuss it at any length. The evolution, whatever it was, was an evolution of advance, not an evolution of attack; that is, it was prescribed for the purpose of getting down to the enemy's line as quickly as possible, not for the purpose of putting the fleet into the prescribed position of attack when it got down. If it served both purposes, so much the better; but Nelson could not possibly have known that it would when he made the signal, because it was certainly made before the enemy's fleet began to wear. In the Memorandum he made no specific provision for the advance. He could not do so. He could not possibly tell in what position the enemy would be found, nor what his intentions and dispositions might be after his position had been discovered. Therefore he only said "the divisions of the British Fleet will be brought nearly within gunshot of the Enemy's Centre." He would do that as best he might, when he saw what the situation was in which it had to be done. It was only when it had been done that the signal was to be made "for the Lee Line to bear up together." It is to my mind merely an accident of the situation, and scarcely so much as a coincidence, that nearly six hours before the action began, and when the enemy was still some ten or twelve miles off, a signal to bear up was made to both lines—though whether to bear up in succession or to bear up together I am content to leave in doubt. Personally I think it was to bear up together; but there are so many high authorities on the other side, and to my mind it matters so little, that I am not concerned to press my opinion. Whatever the signal may

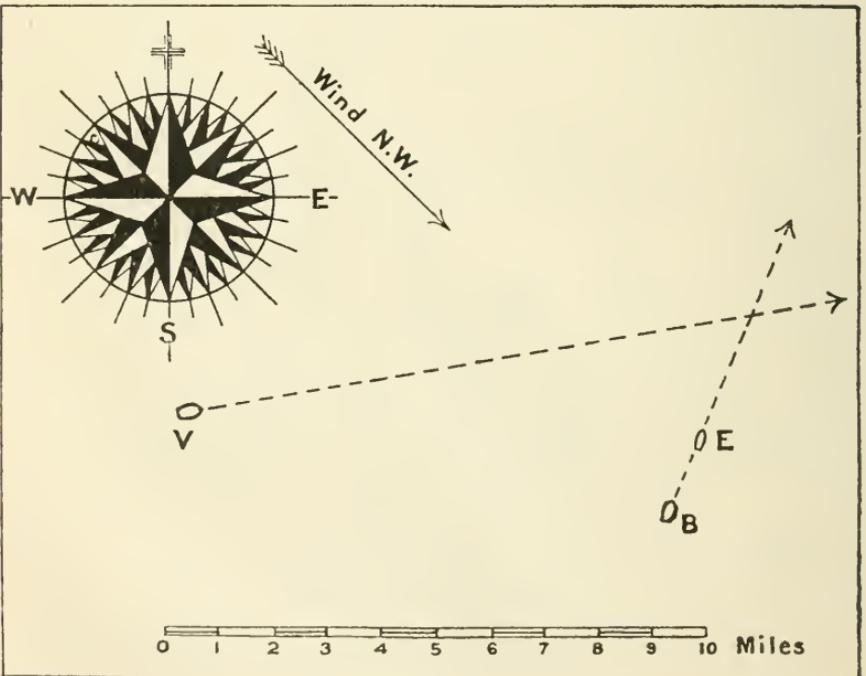
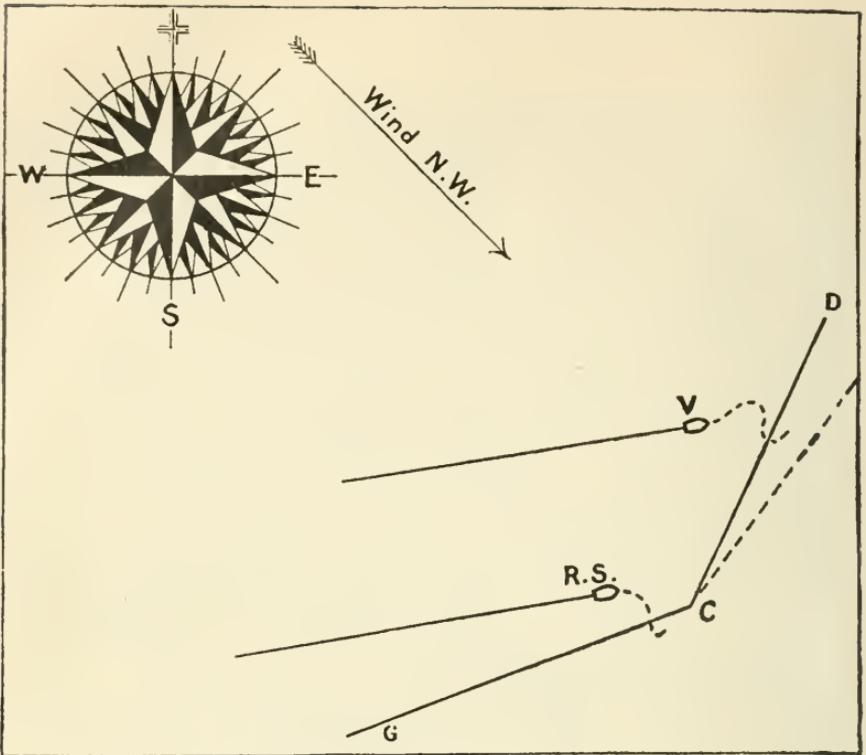
have meant, I feel quite sure that the evolution prescribed by it was the one best adapted in Nelson's judgment to bring the British fleet into contact and conflict with the enemy at the earliest possible moment, and that it had no other purpose. To identify a signal proposed to be made to one line at the moment of action with a signal made five or six hours earlier to both lines at the very outset of the advance, and to found upon that identification a vindication of Nelson's consistency, appears to me to be rather a superfluous piece of special pleading—more especially as I hope to show in the sequel that no such vindication is required.

The course E.N.E. was not long maintained. By 8 o'clock, according to the log of the *Victory*, it had been altered to E. by N., and this is confirmed by Collingwood's Journal, which records that at 7.40 the signal was made to bear up E. If the log of the *Victory* is to be trusted, this course remained unchanged during the remainder of the advance. Thus, neglecting the formation of the two divisions, whether in line ahead or line of bearing, we find that from 8 o'clock onwards the two leading ships, the *Victory* and the *Royal Sovereign*, were steering on parallel courses to each other, and each heading E. by N. The upper diagram of the two which face page 53 illustrates this position, and shows the angular relation to the enemy's line of what I may call the mean line of advance of the leading ships of both divisions. The enemy, who had been heading in a southerly direction, began to wear at a time very variously stated in the records. Nelson, in his private diary, says, "at 7 the enemy wearing in succession." Collingwood, in his Journal, says, "at 10 their fleet wore, formed their line, and laid their heads to the northward, the British fleet in two columns bearing down on them."¹ Now, if the

¹ Nelson's phrase, "wearing in succession," cannot be taken in a strict technical sense. Colonel Desbrière says that Villeneuve's signal, made between 8 and 8.30 a.m., was "de virer lof pour lof tous à la fois et de prendre l'ordre renversé babord amures"; that is, for the fleet to wear together and

wind was N.W., the leading ship of the enemy's line after wearing could not lie higher than 6 points from the wind—that is, at N.N.E., and probably would not lie higher than 7 points, that is at N.E. by N. The succeeding ships, after wearing, would have to go free until they reached the point at which, by hauling their wind, they could form a close-hauled line astern of the leading ship. With the light wind prevailing, much time would be required to complete this evolution, more especially as there is some reason for thinking that Gravina's division had, up to this point, formed a detached "escadre d'observation," and did not take its station in the main line until the latter had begun to wear. Mr. Newbolt reproduces a plan of the battle which is known to have been attested by Magendie, Villeneuve's chief of the staff. In this plan Gravina's division is shown to leeward of the rear of the main line. On such a point as this Magendie's attestation is entitled to considerable weight, though, for reasons which I shall give hereafter, I do not think it is equally trustworthy in respect of the position and formation of the British columns. Be this as it may, the result was that the new line was not completely formed when the *Royal Sovereign* came into action about noon. "It formed," says Collingwood in his official despatch, "a crescent convexing to leeward, so that in leading down to their centre, I had both their van and rear abaft the beam." There were many other irregularities and some gaps in the allied line, but these need not concern us here. The French account of the battle quoted by Nicolas states that, when Villeneuve first sighted the British fleet at daybreak, he made the signal "de former l'ordre de bataille naturel," and afterwards speaks of this as a "ligne de bataille bien serrée." Thus

invert the line on the port tack; and this is exactly what Collingwood says it did. Nevertheless, though the act of wearing was simultaneous ("tous à la fois") for all the ships, each successive ship would have to sail large, and could only haul her wind when she had reached the point at which the rear ship, now become the leading ship, had hauled her wind after wearing; and this is, no doubt, what Nelson meant by "wearing in succession."



the direction of the line before wearing would make to its direction after wearing an angle of 12 or 14 points, that is of 135 or 157½ degrees, according as the ships could lie within 6 or 7 points of the wind. If, on the basis of these data, we construct a diagram showing the mean lines of advance of the *Victory* and the *Royal Sovereign* and their angular relation to the two directions of the enemy's line, we shall find, as is shown in the diagram above referred to, that the line of advance of the *Royal Sovereign* was approximately parallel to the rear of the enemy's line, and that the line of advance of the *Victory* was not perpendicular, but appreciably oblique, to the van of the enemy's line. In the upper diagram given on the opposite page, CD represents the enemy's van, supposed to be sailing within six points of the wind, assumed to be N.W. The dotted line to the right of CD shows what was the course of the van if it could only lie as high as 7 points from the wind. CG represents the course of the rear ships up to the point C, at which they hauled their wind for the purpose of forming a close-hauled line astern of the van. V and RS represent the *Victory* and the *Royal Sovereign*, and the lines drawn astern of them represent the parallel courses on which they steered, heading E. by N., during the advance. The dotted and curved lines ahead of them represent the attack, and not the advance, and will be considered in my next chapter, dealing with the attack. The only purpose of the diagram is to show the angular relation of the British lines of advance to the van and the rear of the enemy's line respectively. It is not drawn to scale, and it is essentially a diagram and not a plan. If, as a diagram, it is even approximately correct, and if the data on which it rests are well founded, it shows conclusively that neither of the two British divisions advanced to the attack in directions anything like perpendicular to that portion of the enemy's line which was immediately opposed to each. The advance of the lee line was very nearly parallel to the enemy's rear; the advance of the weather line was

as nearly parallel to the enemy's van as its parallelism to the lee line and the direction of the enemy's van would permit.¹

¹ On the foregoing analysis of the act of wearing and its consequences Colonel Desbrière remarks as follows: "Le virage lof pour lof de tous les vaisseaux de l'armée combinée devait avoir une autre conséquence, qui paraît avoir été indiquée pour la première fois dans la remarquable série d'articles publiés dans le *Times* en 1905 au sujet de la bataille de Trafalgar." After quoting a portion of what has been said above, Colonel Desbrière continues, "Ces considérations, bien qu'ayant un fonds de vérité, paraissent exagérées." He considers that the allied formation was really concave and not angular, as I have suggested, following Admiral Bridge on this point. He then proceeds: "La forme concave paraît tenir à d'autres causes. Lorsque la conversion fut faite, la ligne était mal formée, mais déjà exagérément resserrée. Le virage se fit VENT ARRIÈRE, et il en resulta que, pour ne pas heurter le vaisseau qui allait devenir son matelot d'avant, chaque vaisseau dut 'arriver' un peu plus que lui. La disposition totale de la ligne eut donc dû être de la tête à la queue inclinée vers l'Est et cela d'autant plus que l'ordre donné plus tard à l'avant-garde de 'serrer le vent' en ralentissant la vitesse des premiers navires, obligea ceux qui les suivaient à se laisser encore plus tomber sous le vent. Si l'arrière-garde, au contraire, était sensiblement plus à l'Ouest que le centre, le fait ne peut resulter que de la place qu'avait, avant la conversion, l'escadre de Gravina. Il faut donc que celle-ci eût été AU VENT au moment où le combat s'engagea. Or, ce fait est attesté par divers témoignages." I should perhaps explain that the word "arriver" is the French technical term for "to bear up," and that the expression "au vent" signifies "to windward," "sous le vent" being the corresponding expression for "to leeward."

On such high authority as this, fortified as it is by copious citations from documents preserved in the French and Spanish archives, I am quite ready to accept this explanation of the crescent form of the allied line in lieu of my own. The essential point is, that, whichever explanation is adopted, it exhibits Collingwood's line of advance as approximately parallel to the rear of the allied line. The angular relation of Nelson's advance to the van of the allied line is comparatively immaterial; but if "the crescent convexing to leeward" of Collingwood be accepted—as it is by Colonel Desbrière no less than by myself—this angular relation cannot have been widely different from that which is indicated in my diagram.

It will be noted that Colonel Desbrière holds, on evidence which he represents as convincing, that the "escadre d'observation" of Gravina was *to windward* of the allied line, when the latter wore. This throws grave doubts on the accuracy of the plan of the battle attested by Magendie, which, as I have said in the text, distinctly shows Gravina's squadron *to leeward* of the allied line. But, except as bearing on the value of Magendie's attestation, the point is of no great importance. Whether to windward or to leeward, Gravina's squadron would take a considerable time in getting into line, and would, no doubt, materially impede the correct formation of the line.

CHAPTER V¹

THE ATTACK

I N my last chapter I attempted to determine the lines of advance of the two British divisions and their angular relation to the two portions of the enemy's line opposed to them. If we look back to the simple diagram given by Nelson in the Memorandum, we shall see that Nelson hoped to bring his two divisions—being parallel to each other—into a position opposite to the enemy's centre, nearly within gunshot of it, and parallel to the direction of the enemy's line. It is an essential feature of Howe's method of breaking the enemy's line—which was, as we have seen, adopted by Nelson for the attack of the lee division—that the attacking force should be disposed parallel to that part of the enemy's line to be attacked, in order that the impact of all the ships might be simultaneous. It is also an essential feature of Nelson's plan, as expounded in the Memorandum, that the two divisions of the British line should be disposed parallel to each other. If the upper diagram facing page 53 is approximately correct, it will be seen that both these conditions were satisfied by Nelson's method of advance. But a third condition of the Memorandum—namely, that the weather line should also be parallel to the enemy's line—was not satisfied, and could not be satisfied, for the simple geometrical reason that the enemy's line was not a straight line throughout its length, but “a crescent convexing to leeward,” as Collingwood describes it, or “a very obtuse re-entering angle,” as Admiral Bridge,

¹ *The Times*, September 28, 1905.

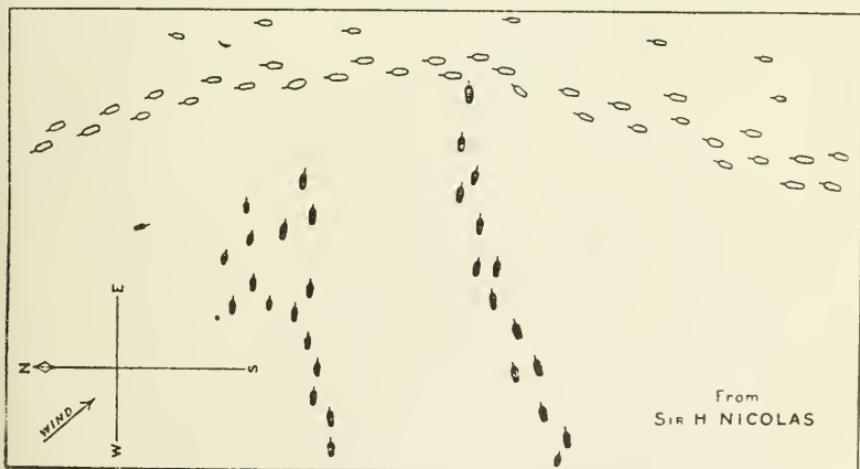
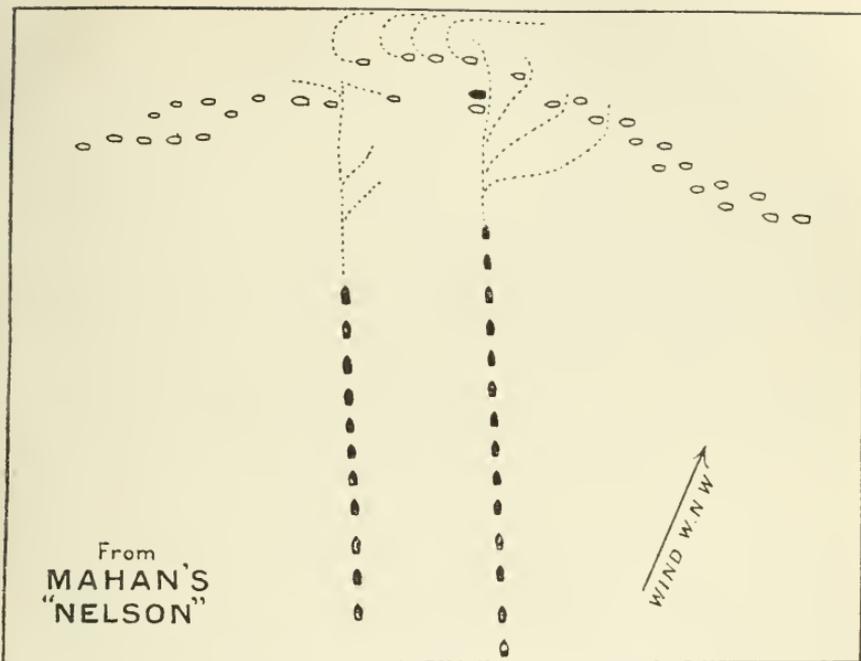
having regard to the probable cause of its convexity, defines it with greater precision.

Thus in principle the plan of the Memorandum was carried out so far as the tactical and geometrical conditions permitted. There was no question of substituting a perpendicular attack for a parallel attack, since the advance of the lee line was approximately parallel to the portion of the enemy's line to be attacked, and the advance of the weather line was only not parallel to that portion of the enemy's line with which it was specially concerned, because it was geometrically impossible for it to be so. It may be urged, perhaps, that this sudden adaptation of his dispositions to a situation wholly unforeseen attributes to Nelson a tactical vigilance which there is no evidence in the records to warrant. The evidence is in his whole character and career, in his unique tactical insight, attested by his acts and by the judgment of all his contemporaries; in his sure and instant grasp of the tactical situation from moment to moment, attested by his action at St. Vincent; in his consummate genius for battle, attested by every battle he had fought. It is true that he has been represented as talking unconcernedly to Blackwood all through the forenoon; but Blackwood's own account is that "his mind seemed entirely directed to the strength *and formation* of the enemy's line, as well as to the effects which his novel mode of attack was likely to produce. He seemed very much to regret, and with reason, that the enemy tacked to the northward." This latter statement is extremely important. It shows that, when Nelson first bore up, he did not anticipate the enemy's wearing. The order to bear up must therefore have been the first preliminary move of a series of operations intended, in the words of the Memorandum, to bring "the divisions of the British Fleet nearly within gunshot of the Enemy's Centre." If the enemy had not reversed his course by wearing, it must have been followed by other movements successively directed to the same end; and for this

reason it seems most probable that the divisions did bear up together and not in succession, since to bear up in succession would have lost time and have rendered the subsequent movements necessary to bring the fleet into the required position more complicated and equally dilatory. As the enemy did wear, these subsequent movements were never executed; but the fact remains that the signal made at daybreak to bear up and steer E.N.E. can have had no tactical relation whatever to the similar signal prescribed by the Memorandum for a different situation at a much later stage of the advance.

An hour or more—according to Collingwood, at 7.40—after the first signal to bear up was made, it was followed by a second, which altered the course from E.N.E. to E. by N. This is corroborated by the log of the *Victory*, which records the course as E.N.E. at 7 o'clock and E. by N. at 8. After that the course was not altered again during the advance, which is thus described in the same log: "Still standing for the enemy's van. The *Royal Sovereign* and her line steering for the centre of the enemy's line." This second alteration of course was probably made as soon as the enemy began to wear, and the new course was clearly one which, to Nelson's experienced and well-nigh infallible eye, was certain to bring his two divisions into the position he wanted them to be in at the moment of contact. Immediately preceding the entry in the *Victory's* log above quoted we find the following: "Body of the enemy's fleet E. by S. 9 miles. The enemy's line forming N.N.E. to S.S.W." No time was given for these observations, but the direction given for the enemy's line shows that the entry last quoted must refer to a time after the enemy had begun to wear. If now we draw a diagram to scale from these data—*Victory's* course E. by N., body of the enemy's fleet bearing E. by S. distant nine miles, enemy's van steering N.N.E.—and allow a distance of a mile and a half between the "body" of the enemy's fleet and the leading ship of his van, we shall find that the *Victory* was at the time steering for a

point some two and a half miles ahead of the enemy's leading ship. But the enemy's leading ships were not stationary, any more than Nelson's ships were stationary. They could not be stationary, or the operation of wearing would have been impossible. They were moving slowly ahead towards the N.N.E., being close-hauled and obliged to go slowly in order to give the rear ships time to recover their stations after wearing. Nelson's ships were moving faster, since they were going free, with all sail set, and he was determined not to wait for the laggards in either line. Even if they fell astern, they would still be able to operate independently, as he had designed the advanced squadron to operate, and it is important to note that, just before the action began, he provided for this very contingency, by telling Blackwood to "make any use I pleased of his name in ordering any of the sternmost line-of-battle ships to do what struck me as best." Hence he had no need to wait, and would push on as fast as he could, knowing well that the course he was steering, though pointing well ahead of the enemy's line at first, would bring him just about where he wanted to be at the moment of contact. In the lower diagram facing page 53, V is the *Victory* and the dotted line shows her course. B is the "body" of the enemy's fleet bearing E. by S. from the *Victory* distant nine miles. E is the head of the enemy's line steering N.N.E. It will thus be seen that Nelson did by eye and instinct exactly what an instrument devised by Prince Louis of Battenberg now enables the modern naval officer to do by mechanism. It is the neglect of this dynamical aspect of Nelson's dispositions, and the too exclusive study of their statical aspect, as exhibited in diagrams scarcely ever correctly drawn, that has in my judgment led so many commentators astray. Two of such diagrams are reproduced from Mr. Newbolt's volume on the opposite page. One is that given by Captain Mahan, the other is from Nicolas's *Dispatches and Letters of Lord Nelson*. It will be seen at once that Captain Mahan's diagram is, as Mr. Newbolt



says, "frankly conventional," and that it "bears about as much resemblance to the actual attack as the letter A does to a bull's head." Of Nicolas's diagram it suffices to say that it represents the leading ships of the enemy's line as steering well to the west of north, the wind being N.W.!

From this point onwards it is necessary to deal separately with the proceedings of the two British divisions. We are to imagine them as steering on parallel courses, in lines very irregularly formed longitudinally, and perhaps also laterally—I waive the question whether they were nominally in line ahead or in a line of bearing, since it cannot matter much in any case—and both heading for points well ahead of the enemy's line, as it stood when, and for some time after, the advance began. As time passed, however, and as the distance between the two fleets lessened, the enemy's line began to draw athwart the heads of the two British columns. Had it been a regularly formed line, bearing uniformly throughout its length from N.N.E. to S.S.W., it seems probable that Nelson, having stood on at E. by N. as long as he could, so as to secure the advantage of speed by going free, would then have ordered both his divisions to haul their wind, so as to put them in the positions assigned to them in the Memorandum. But, observing, as he must have done, that, so far from being regularly formed, the enemy's line was "a crescent convexing to leeward," he must have perceived that the course he was steering would bring the lee line approximately parallel to the rear of the enemy's line, so that no time need be lost in altering course again. He never trifled with a fair wind, nor with time. Having both now in his favour, he was the last man to throw either advantage away. Without further manœuvring, without even so much as a fresh alteration of course, the lee line could, when the time came, do exactly what the Memorandum required it to do; and the weather line, though not so well-disposed as it might have been had the enemy's line been regularly formed—

and would have been if the Memorandum had in that case been followed exactly—was, nevertheless, not so ill-disposed as to induce Nelson to waste any time in disposing it better for the due discharge of the function he had assigned to it, of taking care “that the movements of the Second in Command are as little interrupted as is possible.” This, so far as I can see, was the sole risk that Nelson ran outside the four corners of the Memorandum, the sole change that he made in the dispositions foreshadowed in that document. Who shall say that the risk was an unnecessary risk, that the change was not a well-advised change in the circumstances? “Something must be left to chance,” he had said in the Memorandum; “nothing is sure in a Sea Fight beyond all others.” Though I do not entirely concur—with all respect, be it said—in Admiral Bridge’s reading of the situation, yet I think he touches the matter with a needle when he says that “adherence to a plan which presupposes the enemy’s fleet to be in a particular formation after he is found in another is not to be expected in a consummate tactician.”

Collingwood, it will be remembered, was given “the entire direction of his Line.” In the exercise of this discretion he made, as he tells us himself, a “signal for the lee division to form the larboard line of bearing and to make more sail.” The purpose of this signal, which appears to have been made shortly before eleven o’clock, is no doubt justly stated by Admiral Sturges Jackson in *Logs of the Great Sea-Fights* to have been “to enable the faster ships to get more quickly into action,” and the same authority adds that “it is certain that the line of bearing was never correctly formed.” That, I think, is very probably the case. But Admiral Jackson does not seem to have seen that Collingwood’s signal was strictly congruous with the prescriptions of the Memorandum, and was probably made for that reason. There is some trace in the logs of Collingwood’s having at a later stage made the signal to alter course one point to

port, but the entry is open to some suspicion, and in any case it does not materially affect the situation. It is to be noted, however, that this signal, if made, would have had the effect of bringing the lee line exactly, or almost exactly, parallel to the rear of the enemy's line. What is certain is that, though the *Royal Sovereign*, being a fast sailer and newly coppered, did get into action somewhat in advance of the rear ships of her division, yet the logs of these ships show conclusively that many of them got into action much earlier than they possibly could have done if they had been disposed in a line ahead, astern of the *Royal Sovereign* and perpendicular, or anything like perpendicular, to the enemy's line. Even James, the staunchest advocate of the perpendicular attack in line ahead, is fain to admit that the British lee column was obliged to advance in "a slanting direction"; but he does not on that account abandon a theory which has done as much as anything else to befog the mind of nearly every commentator on the whole subject of the battle. Anyhow, it can be shown by simple and irrefragable arithmetic that Collingwood's attack must have been approximately such as Nelson designed it to be. For this purpose I cannot do better than quote Mr. Newbolt, who seems to me to have grasped the situation at this point far more clearly than any other writer :

The times at which the several ships claim to have commenced action or engaged the enemy show clearly that they cannot all have been following one another in line ahead. . . . Though we cannot hope to find the *absolute* time at which anything occurred, we can, by taking some marked event as a starting point or standard, obtain a series of fairly correct *relative* times for the performances of the individual ships. If, for example, we select as our starting point the moment eagerly awaited and marked by all without any kind of interruption, when the *Royal Sovereign* opened fire, we can find the number of minutes which each ship estimates to have passed between that moment and her own first entry into action. Thus the *Belleisle* claims to have

engaged 8 minutes after the *Royal Sovereign*; the *Mars* 13 minutes; the *Tonnant* 33; the *Bellerophon* 15; the *Colossus* 20; the *Achilles* 15; the *Revenge* 10; the *Polyphemus* about 50; the *Defiance* 75; the *Dreadnought* 73; the *Defence* 128. The *Prince* was undoubtedly last, nearly three hours behind. *Swiftsure* and *Thunderer* name no time. Further, these entries are often significantly expressed. The *Colossus*, ten minutes after opening fire, "passed our opponent in the enemy's line"; the *Defiance* began by engaging "the third from the enemy's rear"; the *Revenge* . . . "got through between the fifth and sixth from the rear"; the *Swiftsure* roundly notes "by half-past noon the whole fleet in action, and *Royal Sovereign* had cut through the enemy's line." . . . It will be seen at once that of the ships in the lee division, no less than nine were engaged within thirty-three minutes of the first British gun being fired.

There is much more evidence to the same effect, and a very lucid and cogent summary of it will be found in Mr. Newbolt's pages. But I need not detail it here. My purpose is satisfied by the foregoing extract, which shows conclusively that Collingwood's attack cannot have been delivered in line ahead, and was, as a matter of fact, delivered in substantial accordance with the prescriptions of the Memorandum. It is true that the diagram given with my last chapter does not, as drawn, fully represent the situation as Collingwood described it in the following passage in his despatch: "In leading down to their centre I had both their van and rear abaft the beam." But as I have before observed, the diagram is not a plan; it is rather a rough geometrical outline of the situation as it was determined by wind, course, and the tactical dispositions of the moment. Collingwood's words must be taken to show that the "crescent convexing to leeward" of his description was rendered more convex than the mere geometrical conditions implied by the lightness of the wind and the tactical unhandiness of many of the enemy's ships. The dotted line in the diagram annexed to the preceding chapter shows his probable course at the

moment of onslaught. I have only to add that Collingwood tells us himself that he broke the line "about the twelfth ship from the rear." He certainly broke it astern of the *Santa Ana*, and most of the lists of the allied fleet, together with nearly all the diagrams, including the Spanish diagram reproduced in this volume, make the *Santa Ana* the sixteenth ship from the rear of the enemy's line. If Collingwood, in spite of his own words, really did bring the fifteen ships of his own column against an equal number of the enemy, he certainly violated most flagrantly the plain letter, and the still plainer spirit, of Nelson's instructions, and for such violation he must be held solely responsible.¹ But his own words are against this, and it is important to note that James declines entirely to specify the exact order of the allied fleet. "As the ships of the combined fleet," he says, "were constantly changing their positions, we shall not attempt to point out the stations of any others than the ships of the four principal flag-officers." He then goes on to say that the *Bucentaure* was directly in front of the *Victory*, and the *Santa Ana* in the same direction from the *Royal Sovereign*. How many ships were ahead of the one or astern of the other he does not attempt to determine.

I now return to the weather line, having brought the whole of the lee line to the point of attack. Nelson's primary purpose was to contain and cut off the van. After that had been done he would make the action as close and decisive as he could. But if, in containing the van, he found it necessary to expose the *Victory* and the ships immediately astern of her to a more destructive fire than might have been incurred in other circumstances, we may be quite sure that he would not hesitate for a moment. He never did hesitate, as he showed at St. Vincent, when a distinct and paramount object was to be

¹ It may be that owing to the irregular formation of the allied line, some three or four of the ships in its rear were well to leeward, and that their fire was thereby masked. Collingwood observing this might very well be entitled to leave these ships out of his reckoning.

obtained even by apparent recklessness. He might have continued on the course he had chosen, and made his attack at the point he had chosen, without exposing the leading ships of his column to any more destructive fire than the relative position of the two lines involved. Or he might, by altering course to the northward, have placed his own line parallel, or approximately parallel, to the van of the enemy and thereby effectually have contained, by engaging, the latter. He did neither of these things. What he did was to make a feint at the van by temporarily altering course to the northward, and then, as soon as he saw that Collingwood was in a fair way to engage and "complete the business of twelve Sail of the Enemy," he turned again to starboard and, according to the *Victory's* log, "opened fire on the enemy's van in passing down their line"—that is, unless I am mistaken, the *Victory* first opened fire with her port guns on two or three ships ahead of the *Bucentaure* and then turned sharp under the stern of the latter, raked her as she passed, and immediately fell aboard the *Redoubtable*. This manœuvre is roughly indicated in the dotted line drawn ahead of the *Victory* on the diagram annexed to my last chapter. There is no question of a "mad perpendicular attack"—the phrase is Mr. Corbett's—nor of a perpendicular attack at all. The advance was a slanting one, making an angle, according to the *Victory's* log, of $56\frac{1}{4}$ degrees with the line of the enemy's van. But before coming within gunfire Nelson turned to port, on a course nearly parallel with the van, and then almost reversed his course, so as to steer, now within gunfire, parallel to the enemy's van, but in the opposite direction. The log of the *Orion* says "the *Victory*, after making a feint as of attacking the enemy's van, hauled to starboard so as to reach their centre." Codrington, the captain of the *Orion*, corroborates and amplifies this contemporary record, in reminiscences committed to paper some years afterwards. Dumanoir, the French admiral in command of the van, excused himself to

Decrès for his failure to tack sooner to Villeneuve's relief by saying, "Au commencement du combat la colonne du Nord se dirigea sur l'avant garde, qui engagea avec elle pendant quarante minutes." The log of the *Téméraire*, which was next astern of the *Victory*, says: "At 25 minutes past noon the *Victory* opened her fire. Immediately put our helm aport to steer clear of the *Victory* and opened our fire on the *Santisima Trinidad* and two ships ahead of her, when the action became general." The context shows that all this was before the *Victory* broke the line astern of the *Bucentaure*, so that it seems impossible to doubt that both *Victory* and *Téméraire* were at this time firing their port broadsides.¹ If Mr. Corbett, who cites all these passages and comments on them, had realised their true bearing and formed in his mind a correct picture of the situation they represent, he would, I feel sure, have thought twice, or even thrice, before inditing his unhappy phrase, "a mad perpendicular attack." It is true that, as he says, "the risk was, indeed, enormous, perhaps the greatest ever taken at sea." But Nelson never measured risks when he saw his way straight to his object. Could he have attained the object without taking the risk?

That object was, as Nelson said to Keats, "to surprise and confound the enemy," to leave him in doubt until the last moment as to whether his own intention was to attack the centre or the van, because, as Mr. Corbett himself acutely observes, until that doubt was resolved "it was impossible for the enemy to take any step to concentrate with either division, and thus Nelson held them both immobile while Collingwood flung himself on his declared objective." If, as the same writer adds, "no-

¹ These movements of the leading ships may not have been followed, and probably were not followed, by all the ships astern of them. There is, as I have indicated, good reason to think that the line was never very exactly formed, and this is probably the reason why, as Colonel Desbrière puts it, "la ligne de file se transforma au moment de l'engagement en un ordre semi-déployée sur un front de quatre à cinq vaisseaux." In that reading of the situation I concur.

thing could be finer as a piece of subtle tactics, nothing could be more daring as a well-judged risk," why should it be called, after all, "a mad perpendicular attack"? It was not, as I have shown, perpendicular at any period of the advance, neither in fact, spirit, nor intention. In spirit and intention it was as near a parallel attack as the formation of the enemy's line permitted. As a matter of fact, Nelson's line of advance made with that of the enemy's an angle of $56\frac{1}{4}$ degrees at the outside, and possibly not more than 45 degrees. As Nelson closed and made his feint to the northward this angle approached very nearly to zero, while his head pointed to the northward, and very nearly to zero again, after he had turned sharp to starboard and "opened fire on the enemy's van in passing down their line." It was probably this turn to starboard—which brought the *Victory*, as we learn from the *Téméraire's* log, under the fire successively of three ships ahead of the *Bucentaure* as well as the *Bucentaure* herself—that accounts for the heavy losses of the *Victory*. But these losses were due not so much to the mode of attack as to Nelson's loyal and devoted redemption of his solemn pledge to Collingwood, that he would "endeavour to take care that the movements of the Second in Command are as little interrupted as is possible." There was, indeed, a moment when Nelson seemed inclined to turn his feint against the van into a real attack, since the *Euryalus* reports that he signalled to Collingwood, at a very late stage of the advance, "I intend to go through the end of the enemy's line to prevent them from getting into Cadiz." But this inclination, if ever seriously entertained, was very promptly repressed. It might have vindicated Nelson against the charge of making a perpendicular attack, and it would, no doubt, have resulted in crushing the van. But it would have left the centre untouched and free to turn upon Collingwood with much greater expedition and effect than the van could ever have done. It would, moreover, have thrown to the winds the whole plan of the Memorandum, the fundamental

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EMBATE NAVAL SOSTENIDO EN LAS AGUAS DEL CABO TRAFALGAR EL DÍA 21 DE OCTUBRE DE 1805 ENTRE LA ESCUADRA COMBINADA DE FRANCIA Y ESPAÑA Y LA INGLESA ALMANDO DEL VICE-ALMIRANTE NELSON.

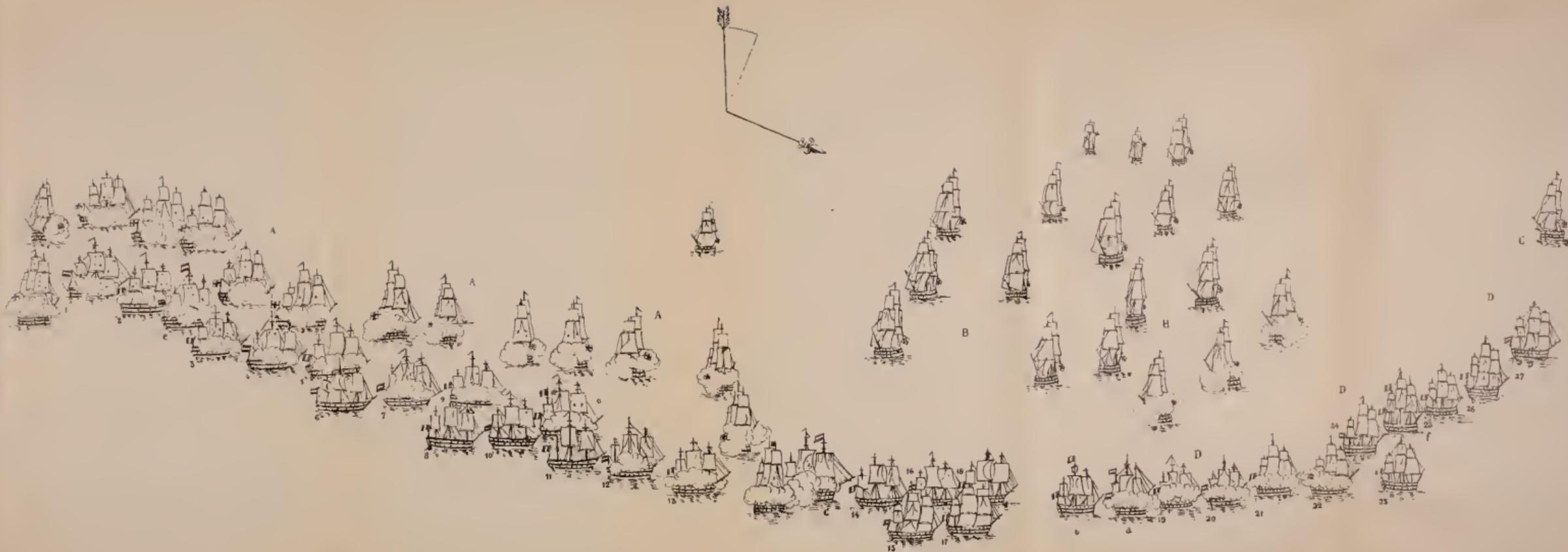
PRIMERA POSICIÓN AL EMPEZAR EL COMBATE.

A y B Navios á el mando del Vice-Almirante Colingot atacan á el cuerpo de *Riviera* y á el *S^a Ana*, *Fíguro*, *Monarca* y *Pluton*—C. 12 Navios á el mando del Vice-Almirante Nelson atacan á los buques *Trinidad*, *Bucentaure* y los que figuran hasta el *S^a Ana*—D. Un navio enemigo que se incorpora y se cañonea con el *Neptuno* español—E. Vanguardia de la escuadra combinada que hace fuego á los navios enemigos que se dirigen al *Trinidad* y *Bucentaure*.

Navios donde estan embarcados los Generales— a. *Trinidad*; b. *Bucentaure*; c. *Santa Ana*; d. *Algeiras*; e. *Príncipe*; f. *Formidable*.

1. *San Juan Nepomuceno* Brigadier Churrúa, 2. *Berwick* M^o Camas; 3. *Acéste* M^o D'Newport, 4. *S. Idelfonso* Brigadier Vargas, 5. *Argonante* M. Epton, 6. *Argonante* C. de N. Pareja, 7. *Montañas* C. de N. Alcedo, 8. *Agile* M^o Contreras, 9. *Susanne* M^o Villemadrin, 10. *Bahama* Brigadier Alcalá Galiano, 11. *Pluton* M^o Cosnaris, 12. *Monarca* C. de N. Arguisona, 13. *Fouquieris* M^o Baudouin, 14. *Indomptable* M^o Hubert, 15. *San Justo* C. de N. Gastón, 16. *San Leandro* C. de N. Quevedo, 17. *Neptune* M^o Mastral, 18. *Redoutable* M^o Lucas, 19. *Heros* M^o Poulam, 20. *San Agustín* Brig. Yañu Cajagal, 21. *Montalanch* M^o Villegas, 22. *Francisco de Asís* C. de N. Flores, 23. *Duguay-Trouin* M^o Touffet, 24. *Hus* Brig. Macdonell, 25. *Intrepid* M^o Internet, 26. *Scepion* M^o Berengé, 27. *Neptuno* Brig. Valdes.

Las vistas de las cuatro posiciones del combate naval de Trafalgar están tomadas de los únicos copios que de las originales enviadas por Luciano, Mayor de la Escuadra de Gravia, posee el Tefe de la Armada Española en D. Emilio Cervera bajo cuya direccion han sido reproducidas fielmente en cumplimiento al mejor desempeño de la comision que le confió S. M. por Real Orden de 3 de Enero de 1864.



idea of which was that the van should be contained, cut off, and thrown out of action, while the centre was first contained and then crushed. All this was accomplished to the letter. I can see no madness in a mode of attack which produced such stupendous results. I can see nothing but as fine a piece of subtle tactics as was ever exhibited in a sea-fight, a combination of psychological insight with tactical dexterity and rapidity such as no man but Nelson ever displayed ; and I can see no greater risk incurred than Nelson was always ready to take, even at the cost of his own life, for the sake of his country's security.

CHAPTER VI¹

CONCLUSION

I HAVE now brought this long inquiry to a point at which it seems clear that, if my data are correct, the plan of the Memorandum was carried out in the battle as closely as was possible in a state of things not exactly identical with that which Nelson anticipated when he drew the diagram contained in the Memorandum. He anticipated that the enemy's fleet would consist of forty-six sail of the line and his own of forty. When he found that the numbers were thirty-three to twenty-seven, he seems to have thought that the advance squadron of eight ships would be better employed in making the lee line still strong enough to cut off twelve ships of the enemy's rear than in the prosecution of the somewhat indefinite purpose originally assigned to it. He anticipated that the enemy's fleet, if found in a line of battle on a certain course, would accept action in that formation and on that course without further alteration; and for this reason his first move was so to dispose the course and formation of his own fleet as ultimately to bring about the exact situation prescribed in the Memorandum. When, however, the enemy began to wear, he made no essential alteration in his plan. It was an unexpected move and an unwelcome one; but, since it resulted in a dislocation and derangement of the enemy's line, it was not, perhaps, altogether disadvantageous to him in the end. He adapted his dispositions to the altered situation with as little modification as possible, not, I would suggest, in any blind adherence to a preconceived plan, but

¹ *The Times*, September 30, 1905.

because he saw, with that instant and sure glance of his, that the original plan might still be made to serve in all its essential features, and that any attempt to readjust it must lose precious time on a day that was all too short, and in weather which was only too likely to play him false, if he once let the opportunity slip. Hence, so far as I can judge, the original plan was carried out as exactly and as completely as the altered situation permitted. The rear was attacked and crushed almost exactly as Nelson had intended. While this was being done, the van and centre were contained, both being rendered immobile during the first critical moments of the onslaught, not so much by the indecision or incapacity of the enemy as by the surprise and confusion which Nelson intended to instil, and did instil, into his mind. Ville-neuve said, as Blackwood records, "that he never saw anything like the irresistible line of our ships; but that of the *Victory* supported by the *Neptune* and *Téméraire* was what he could not have formed any conception of." That is the exact note of stupefaction which Nelson designed to evoke, and from the mention of these particular ships I infer that the moment indicated is that at which these ships first opened fire from their port broadsides, while "passing down the enemy's line." Finally, a pell-mell battle was certainly brought about, and that, as we know, was precisely what Nelson wanted. The result was exactly what he had prescribed for himself in the Memorandum. He never said how or where he meant to deliver his attack, and probably never thought about it beforehand at all. His primary and paramount purpose was to "manage" the whole of the enemy's centre and van until Collingwood was in a fair way to "complete the business of twelve Sail" of the enemy's rear. He did so manage them, paralysing both at the critical moment and throwing the van out of action before he closed with the centre. He did exactly what he said he would do, and Collingwood did exactly what he was told to do. That is how Trafalgar was fought and why

it was so great a victory—because it was designed by the greatest master of sea tactics the world has ever known, and carried out in his own spirit by men who loved and trusted their heroic leader and were not unworthy to be led by him. In this sense and in this alone was the “Nelson touch,” as Mr. David Hannay says, “the touch of fire with which he lit up the souls of other men.” In every other sense it was the finest and most subtle touch of tactical genius that has ever gone to the winning of a great battle on the seas.

I have thus shown how the attack was made. The remainder of the story, at once the greatest triumph and the greatest tragedy of the seas, is so well known that I need hardly go on to describe how the victory was won or how Nelson died. The attack was Nelson's. The rest is the *mêlée*, and this was mainly the work of his captains. Neither he nor they ever had any doubt that if the attack could be delivered as he designed it the result was foreordained. “Should the enemy close,” he wrote, “I have no fear as to the result.” He had so ordered matters that they could not help closing, or rather being closed upon and compelled to fight the battle out. “It must succeed,” said his captains when first the “Nelson touch” was explained to them, “if ever they allow us to get at them.” They knew, as he did, that ship for ship, or even one ship to many ships, they were more than a match for the enemy, and their words, “if only they allow us to get at them,” show very significantly how completely they had assimilated their chief's conviction that the traditional line of battle never did allow them to get at their adversaries. For this phase of the battle, therefore, he gave no specific directions. Nelson had done his part in enabling his captains to “get at them”; the rest he left to them. “Captains are to look to their particular Line as their rallying point. But, in case Signals can neither be seen or perfectly understood, no Captain can do very wrong if he places his Ship alongside that of an Enemy.” It has indeed been said that the day

would have been equally well won, perhaps even better won, if Nelson had been less eager to "get at them." "Had he given Villeneuve time for forming his line properly," writes Mr. Corbett, "the enemy's battle order would have been only the weaker. Had he taken time to form his own order the mass of the attack would have been delivered little later than it was, its impact would have been intensified, and the victory might well have been more decisive than it was, while the sacrifice it cost would certainly have been less, incalculably less, if we think that the sacrifice included Nelson himself." I cannot adopt this view. I have shown above that there was not a moment to be lost if the business was to be made decisive, and I think we owe it to Nelson to believe that for this reason alone did he hurry on as he did. Nor can we for a moment attribute his own death to his haste. He was slain in the *mêlée*, not in the attack. It was after he had broken the line and when several of the ships which followed him were already engaged that the fatal bullet from the mizentop of the *Redoubtable* laid him low on the quarter-deck of the *Victory*.

I am well aware that these conclusions are not at all likely to be accepted without challenge. I shall have to face the broadsides of all those who hold that the accepted version of the battle cannot be overthrown after the lapse of a hundred years, and apparently that the attempt to overthrow it is paradoxical, and even presumptuous, especially in a civilian. I shall perhaps also draw the fire of those who, like Admiral Bridge and other followers of the late Admiral Colomb, or like Mr. Corbett and Mr. Newbolt, have presumed, like myself, to criticize the accepted version but have reached conclusions more or less different from my own on some of the points in dispute. This, however, is the inevitable consequence of independent critical inquiry, and as such I shall welcome it. I do not pretend to have solved the problem finally and absolutely. All that I can claim to have done is to have advanced certain considerations, founded on

authentic data, which must be taken into account before a final conclusion can be reached. If the inferences I have drawn from these data are unsound, my professional critics will very soon set me right, and no one will be more grateful than I shall for their correction. I will only ask them, in applying it, to deal with my arguments solely on their merits, and not to disparage or dismiss them merely because I have not enjoyed their advantages in the study of signals and the handling of fleets. A very high tactical authority once told me that, when officially engaged in the study of tactical problems, he systematically declined to consider any plans or diagrams submitted to him for the solution of this or that problem unless they were drawn to scale, wherever necessary, and with strict regard to compass bearings and other critical conditions of the supposed situation. I have not forgotten that admonition in the preparation of my own diagrams, and I would invite my prospective critics to follow the same salutary rule. Only by this method shall we reach the truth at last. The only way to find out how the battle was fought is to start entirely afresh, to take nothing for granted, to eschew all preconceived theories and opinions, to examine and weigh all the accessible evidence, and then to draw from it only such conclusions, whether vague or precise, as it may be found legitimately to warrant. Of such a process the result must point to one of only three possible conclusions. Either the evidence may prove to be so conflicting as to warrant no definite conclusion at all. In that case we must all acknowledge that the problem is insoluble. Or it may prove that the plan of the Memorandum was, after all, substantially carried out so far as the conditions of the situation permitted. In that case we must all rejoice that Nelson's fame remained unsullied to the last. Or it may prove that, at the last moment, he threw the famous plan to the winds, as so many of his critics have affirmed, and adopted another, of which no inkling whatever was given to the flag-officers and captains whom he had taken so gener-

ously and so fully into his tactical confidence and trusted so implicitly to carry out his declared intentions. In that case we must acknowledge, with infinite sorrow, that in the last hours of his glorious life the balance of his mind was overthrown, the moral foundation of his incomparable ascendancy over men was destroyed, and that, in his hurry to attack, in his eagerness to "surprise and confound the enemy," he did not scruple to surprise and confound far more effectually the very men whose loyal and intelligent co-operation was taken for granted in every line of the Memorandum.

If that is, indeed, to be the final conclusion, we must, I think, further acknowledge that it destroys, once and for all, every notion that the world has hitherto formed of Nelson's character and career. I do not know how it may strike a seaman; but it certainly seems to me that an admiral who did what, if this conclusion were established, Nelson would be proved to have done, would deserve something very different from the unbounded honour which the whole world has accorded him—and this in spite of the triumph of the victory and the tragedy of the hero's death. If there was one thing that Nelson prided himself on more than any other, it was the cordiality and confidence that always existed between himself and his captains. "I had the happiness to command a band of brothers," he said of the captains who fought under him at the Nile. A band of brothers is not to be commanded by a man who, having taken his captains into his confidence as fully as any admiral ever did, could not be trusted not to make fools of them by changing his mind without saying a single word to any one of them. I do not say that Nelson was bound not to change his plan. On the contrary, I think he was bound to change it, if circumstances so required. But then, surely, he was equally bound to tell his subordinates that he had changed it. A single signal would have sufficed—such a signal as I make bold to affirm no admiral would in these days omit to make—to the effect that the Memor-

andum of October 9 was to be disregarded. Yet no scrap of evidence has ever yet been adduced to show that any such signal was made, or that any information of like purport was conveyed to the fleet in any manner whatever. It is this total omission to make his change of mind known to his followers that, if it could be established, would, in my judgment, inflict a lasting stain on Nelson's honour and fame. Surely, before we admit even the possibility of such dishonour, we must scrutinize the evidence that points to it with the utmost jealousy.

After all, what does this evidence amount to? There are certain entries in the logs, which, if they stood alone, might seem to be more or less inconsistent with the view of the situation which I have endeavoured to delineate in the preceding chapters; but, when they come to be weighed against other evidence derived from the same source, I doubt if any fair-minded critic could accept them as either decisive or preponderant. Then there is the *obiter dictum* of Moorsom, the captain of the *Revenge*, who says, in a private letter to his father written some weeks after the battle, "A regular plan was laid down by Lord Nelson some time before the action, but not acted upon." Against this may be set in the balance another private letter from Eliab Harvey, captain of the *Téméraire*, written two days after the battle, in which the man who followed Nelson into the fight, and was to have led the weather line if Nelson had not led it himself, says, "It was noon before the action commenced, which was done according to the instructions given to us by Lord Nelson." I dare say there was much discussion of the point between the captains who survived, and that two schools of opinion existed from the very outset. I feel sure that very few, if any, of them fully understood the whole content of the Memorandum, and I should myself measure their tactical insight by their adhesion to the school of Harvey rather than to that of Moorsom. I am aware that one officer belonging to the latter school

is the author of a criticism of the battle which has been pronounced by Admiral Bridge to be "one of the most important contributions to the investigation of tactical questions ever published in the English tongue." I concur in that judgment so far as regards the ability of the critic and the lucidity of his criticism. But the anonymous officer of the *Conqueror* was avowedly defending a thesis, and I have shown already that, in describing the plan of the Memorandum, he attributed to Nelson an intention which Nelson nowhere avows, and which is, in fact, directly at variance with the text of the Memorandum itself. On this criticism, thus shown to be unsound at its very foundation, are, as Admiral Bridge says, "based nearly or quite all the unfavourable views expressed against the British tactics at Trafalgar." I do not know whether I need treat as serious, or worthy of serious attention, the views of the battle propounded by James in his *Naval History*. As James was a civilian, like myself, perhaps I may be permitted to say without presumption that his tactical insight was, as I have already remarked, beneath contempt. Alone, so far as I know, among all commentators on the battle, he defends the perpendicular attack in line ahead as perhaps the best form of attack that could be devised, and in support of this amazing thesis he advances the still more amazing hypothesis that the most important passage in the whole Memorandum contains a clerical error which distorts its entire purpose and scope. On such evidence as this no one would hang a dog. Of the several plans of the battle to which appeal is so often made, it suffices to say that their evidence cannot be of the first order, in any case, and that, so far as they are inconsistent with the evidence supplied by the logs concerning wind, course, and formation, they are not evidence at all.

Lastly, there is the evidence of certain French witnesses of the battle. Of this I have to say that it cannot, in any case, be decisive, and that it is for the most part of no

very high order and weight.¹ Magendie, flag-captain of the *Bucentaure*, is known to have certified a plan which was probably the first ever drawn; and a copy of this plan, bearing the signature of Magendie, is preserved among the papers of Lord Barham, who was First Lord of the Admiralty when Trafalgar was fought. This is the plan which was pronounced by the late Admiral Colomb—who knew that the authority of Villeneuve himself had been claimed for it, but did not apparently know that Magendie's attestation was in existence—"to have been drawn by some one who had no notion of the facts, and who could not have used them if he had known them." It seems to be thought that the subsequent discovery of Magendie's attestation is peculiarly unfortunate for Colomb's reputation as a tactical critic. I cannot so regard it. I should accept the plan as good *prima facie* evidence for the formation of the allied fleet, with which Magendie must of necessity have been better acquainted than any observer on the British side, but as scarcely any evidence at all for the formation of the British fleet—certainly no such evidence as could be set in the balance against evidence derived either from the narratives, official or other, of British eye-witnesses, or from the logs of the ships under their command. Nothing is more difficult, even to a practised naval eye, than to determine the exact formation in which a fleet is disposed at a distance of several miles. It is true that this argument cuts both ways, but it has to be considered that Nelson's tactical discernment was altogether exceptional, and that the allied fleet was in a normal formation, while the British fleet was in a very unusual one. If, then, I rate the tactical discernment of Magendie, and of other French eye-witnesses who have been quoted, as much lower than

¹ Since the above was originally written a very great deal of fresh collateral evidence has been collected from the French and Spanish archives and published by Colonel Desbrière. But inasmuch as the solution of the problem propounded by that distinguished writer is, as I have pointed out in the Preface, substantially identical with my own, I am content to leave the passage in the text as it originally stood.

that of Nelson, corroborated as he is by a cloud of other witnesses, I am only making legitimate allowance for the difference between the observers and between the things observed. "It is not easy," as Admiral Bridge has said, "to decide the order or formation even of a fleet at anchor without prolonged observation or frequent changes of the observer's position"; and, *a fortiori*, it must be much more difficult to decide the order or formation of a fleet in motion, viewed from a great distance and in a changing perspective—especially when, as at Trafalgar, the formation of the British divisions was, by common consent, a very irregular one. I can corroborate this proposition from a somewhat exceptional personal experience. I do not profess to view things afloat with the practised eye of a seaman; but, as a landsman, I have probably seen more fleets in motion and evolution than any other civilian, and certainly more fleets in action during manœuvres than the majority of naval officers. If, immediately after the event, I had been cross-examined by an expert as to the evolutions executed and the formations adopted by the opposing fleet on any of these occasions, I should certainly have cut a very sorry figure indeed. It is well known that, when tactical exercises are being practised by modern fleets, no conclusions are formulated concerning their character and effects until the course and speed of each ship engaged and its bearings from at least two other ships, recorded at short intervals by trained observers told off for the purpose, have been collated with similar observations concerning all the other ships, and accurately plotted down on a diagram. Admirals themselves have told me that, when this has been done, they have often found not only that the effect of what they did themselves was quite other than what they had intended, but that they had attributed movements and dispositions to their opponents which the opponents themselves were shown never to have executed. In the action off the Azores, during the manœuvres of 1903, the X Fleet at a certain period of its advance seemed to every observer

on the deck of the *Majestic* to be disposed in a huddled mass, in which no definite formation could be discerned and no determinate evolution detected. I am quite sure that no officer on board the *Majestic* could explain or understand what the X Fleet was doing at that moment ; and in the detailed official narrative of the manœuvres there is not a single word to account for the appearance it presented. Such an experience, which is no isolated one, certainly makes me, at least, exceedingly sceptical as to the evidence derived from French sources concerning the British dispositions at Trafalgar. What they may attest is the dispositions of the allied fleet, and in that order of evidence I have found nothing to disallow, or even appreciably weaken, the conclusions I have reached in the course of this inquiry.

Lastly, I must repeat that almost the only evidence that ought to convince any one to whom Nelson's reputation and honour are dear would be the proof of a direct avowal on Nelson's part that he had changed his plan at the last moment. No such proof is forthcoming. The evidence is all the other way. It is all very well for Captain Mahan to say, as he does, " Thus, as Ivanhoe at the instant of the encounter in the lists shifted his lance from the shield to the casque of the Templar, so Nelson, at the moment of engaging, changed the details of his plan," and then, by diagram and description, to attribute dispositions to Nelson which point to no mere modification of detail, but to a fundamental change of principle. That is a very pretty gloss to put on a very ugly situation. Ivanhoe was fighting in single combat. He had no one to consider but himself. Nelson had in his keeping the fate of his country, the confidence, the loyalty, the devoted affection of officers who knew his plans and were ready to die in executing them. How could he be said not to have betrayed that trust, if he jeopardized his country's fate by deceiving those who had so trusted him, and impaired even their tried efficiency by expecting them, without a word of notice or warning, to execute a plan

of which they had never even heard? We have no right to judge by results in this case. If this is a true account of the battle, it was indeed a pell-mell battle with a vengeance—a mere gambler's throw, which success might condone but could never justify. Few admirals have ever taken their officers so fully into their confidence as Nelson did. He gave them what he could of his own strength, and in return gathered all theirs into himself. Others have kept their own counsel and taught their officers, when in action, merely to look for their signals and obey them. Each method has its merits, but there can be no compromise between the two. To abandon a plan of action carefully explained beforehand, and well understood by every one concerned, and to substitute for it another which has never been explained at all, is to combine the disadvantages of both methods in the most disastrous fashion, and virtually to proclaim that tactics are of no account at all, that one way of fighting a battle is just as good as another way, especially if those who are to fight it do not know in the least how it is going to be fought. Surely the moral evidence against a Nelson doing this is far more overwhelming than the most cogent of circumstantial evidence to the contrary ever could be. Those who hold this belief must reconcile it, if they can, with his last noble signal, "England expects that every man will do his duty"—with his last dying words, "Thank God, I have done my duty." For myself, I cannot.

THE LIFE OF NELSON ¹

UNIVERSAL acclaim on this side of the Atlantic has declared *The Life of Nelson* to be a masterpiece eminently worthy of the author of *The Influence of Sea Power on History*. The task undertaken by a modern biographer of Nelson must needs be a supremely difficult one. He has to sustain comparison with a great writer who was never more happily inspired than when he expanded an article originally contributed to *The Quarterly Review* into a classic. He has to do what Southey never attempted—to justify to a generation which has happily never known naval war on a grand scale, the conviction of his contemporaries that Nelson was the greatest seaman that ever lived. He has to grapple with manifold difficulties which are inherent in all forms of biography, and never more baffling than when the canvas on which he paints presents a great historic crisis in the affairs of men largely determined in its issues by the character and achievements of his subject. Moreover, Captain Mahan in particular is confronted with a rivalry which few but himself could sustain. In the far more difficult field of biography he has to maintain a reputation already achieved in another field, in which, by common consent, he stands pre-eminent. It is a mere truism nowadays to say that Captain Mahan has taught all serious students of naval warfare in two worlds how to think rightly on the problems it presents. The phrase "sea power," as applied, though not invented, by him, is one of those happy inspirations of genius which flash the light of philosophy on a whole department of human action. Its analysis in his pre-

¹ *Quarterly Review*, January 1898.

vious works is a contribution to human thought of which many of the larger issues and consequences are perhaps even yet unexplored. In this direction, however, he has already done his work so well that he has no new lessons to teach us, though he has many old ones to enforce, when he undertakes to show us Nelson as "the embodiment of the sea power of Great Britain." But he has to justify the title and to convince us that it is not unworthily bestowed. I need waste no time in proving that in this he has triumphantly succeeded. *Securus judicat orbis terrarum.*

Though purely as a piece of literature the new *Life of Nelson* is worthy of high praise, yet Captain Mahan has not directly essayed to rival Southey in his own field. Of Nelson, the hero and the idol of his countrymen, Southey still remains the classical biographer. But of Nelson the seaman, "the embodiment of the sea power" of his country, the man who, better than any other that ever lived, understood the eternal principles of sea-warfare, and illustrated them more splendidly, Captain Mahan stands now and henceforth as the one incomparable exponent. It was no part of Southey's purpose to make his *Life of Nelson* an analysis of Nelson's strategic genius or a commentary on the principles of naval warfare as illustrated by his career. "There is but one Nelson," said the greatest of Nelson's naval contemporaries, the seaman who best understood him. All his countrymen felt the same, and Southey, who wrote only a few years after the hero's death, never attempted to expound Nelson's genius, because he never could have imagined that it would be disputed. It is true that a recent editor of Southey explains the matter quite differently. If we do not find intellectual power in Nelson, the real reason is, we are asked to believe, that intellectual power was by no means one of his conspicuous endowments. In his writings there is no thought, we are told, or at least none "in any higher form than a quite measurable sagacity"; and even in action "it was his misfortune never to have

the highest to do." Manifestly, unless we accept this view of the matter, it was high time for a new Life of Nelson to be written—a biography at once critical and sympathetic, which, accepting St. Vincent's *dictum*, "There is but one Nelson," might serve to show, as Southey hardly needed to show, and was perhaps scarcely qualified to show, why Nelson was unique, and in what special gifts and aptitudes the unique quality of his genius consisted.

This Captain Mahan has done once for all. It may be that in so rare a character and so vivid a personality as Nelson's, the moral force which sustained him in all emergencies, and communicated itself, by that contagious inspiration which is the surest sign of genius, to all who came in contact with him, was more directly conspicuous than the intellectual power which accompanied and sustained it. But it was the complement of the latter, not a substitute for it. Intellectual power is not displayed merely in the written word or the recorded thought. In the man of action it takes the form of sure insight and rapid intuition, which seize at once on the essential features of a situation and shape action accordingly. Intellectual power of this kind, implicit rather than explicit, displayed in action rather than in the written word, and always associated with an unquenchable fervour of moral impulse, was among Nelson's pre-eminent gifts. No one has ever shown this so well as Captain Mahan, and the following passage must surely settle the whole question. It refers to the moment when Nelson sailed for the Mediterranean in 1798, when he was already an admiral, and after the world had learnt at St. Vincent what manner of man he was :

Before him was now about to open a field of possibilities hitherto unexampled in naval warfare ; and for the appreciation of them was needed just those perceptions, intuitive in origin, yet resting firmly on well-ordered rational processes, which, on the intellectual side, distinguished him above all other British seamen. He had

already, in casual comment upon the military conditions surrounding the former Mediterranean campaigns, given indications of these perceptions, which it has been the aim of previous chapters to elicit from his correspondence, and to marshal in such order as may illustrate his mental characteristics. But, for success in war, the indispensable complement of intellectual grasp and insight is a moral power, which enables a man to trust the inner light,—to have faith—a power which dominates hesitation, and sustains action, in the most tremendous emergencies, and which, from the formidable character of the difficulties it is called to confront, is in no men so conspicuously prominent as in those who are entitled to rank among great captains. The two elements—mental and moral power—are often found separately, rarely in due combination. In Nelson they met, and their coincidence with the exceptional opportunities afforded him constituted his good fortune and his greatness.

The intellectual endowment of genius was Nelson's from the first ; but from the circumstances of his life it was denied the privilege of early manifestation, such as was permitted to Napoleon. It is, consequently, not so much this as the constant exhibition of moral power, force of character, which gives continuity to his professional career, and brings the successive stages of his advance, in achievement and reputation, from first to last, into the close relation of steady development, subject to no variation save that of healthy and vigorous growth, till he stood unique—above all competition. This it was—not, doubtless, to the exclusion of that reputation for having a head, upon which he justly prided himself—which had already fixed the eyes of his superiors upon him as the one officer, not yet indeed fully tested, most likely to cope with the difficulties of any emergency. In the display of this, in its many self-revelations—in concentration of purpose, untiring energy, fearlessness of responsibility, judgment sound and instant, boundless audacity, promptness, intrepidity, and endurance beyond all proof—the restricted field of Corsica and the Riviera, the subordinate position at Cape St. Vincent, the failure of Teneriffe, had in their measure been as fruitful as the Nile was soon to be, and fell naught behind the bloody harvests of Copenhagen and Trafalgar. Men have been

disposed, therefore, to reckon this moral energy—call it courage, dash, resolution, what you will—as Nelson's one and only great quality. It was the greatest, as it is in all successful men of action; but to ignore that this mighty motive force was guided by singularly clear and accurate perceptions, upon which also it consciously rested with a firmness of faith that constituted much of its power, is to rob him of a great part of his due renown.

It is thus that Captain Mahan conceives of Nelson and his work, as the finely tempered instrument fashioned by a rare combination of genius with opportunity, and destined thereby to beat back the Napoleonic spirit of aggression and to save England and Europe by the overthrow of the "ablest of historic men." It will be seen at once that the method appropriate to such an undertaking differs largely and fundamentally from that pursued by Captain Mahan in his previous works. In his historical works the facts are grouped round a central idea—that of sea power. In *The Life of Nelson* the same facts, so far as they are relevant, are grouped round and dominated by a central personality, that of Nelson himself. Nevertheless, the organic relation between the two is persistently and most instructively kept in view. If *The Life of Nelson*, regarded as a biography, is the best and most finished portrait of the hero of Trafalgar ever drawn, it is so because Captain Mahan has eclipsed all his predecessors in his grasp of that philosophy of naval warfare which Nelson was destined so superbly to illustrate in practice. Indeed, it may be said that no one who has not, like Captain Mahan, steadily conceived and profoundly studied "the influence of sea power upon history," is qualified in these days to write the life of Nelson at all. But this qualification, rare as it is, is not sufficient in itself. History is abstract, biography is concrete. On the historical page the elements of human personality, character, motive, passion, and even prejudice are, for the most part, subordinated to the larger issues of circumstance and event. In biography they are factors never to be over-

looked. The historian studies character from the outside, the biographer from the inside. No man will ever be a great biographer who does not see the personality of his subject as an ordered and coherent whole, fashioned to the likeness and consistency of an individual man, who is not endowed with sufficient imagination to reconstruct the living figure out of the scattered and lifeless records of action, thought, and speech.

With this rare gift Captain Mahan shows himself to be endowed in no ordinary measure. He has saturated his mind with Nelson's despatches and correspondence, so that each critical moment of the great seaman's career derives appropriate and convincing illustration, not so much from the biographer's independent reflection as from the power he has thus acquired of shedding on it the light furnished by Nelson's own unconscious revelation of his thought and character. But such a method has its snares for all but the most fastidious of writers, and Captain Mahan has not entirely escaped them. Unless employed with vigilant self-restraint it encourages iteration and prolixity. It would be too much to say that Captain Mahan repeats himself unduly, but a severe critic will, nevertheless, detect certain passages in which the same ideas, and more or less the same illustrative material, are applied more than once to the elucidation of different incidents and circumstances. Each of such passages may be, and generally is, admirable in itself; but classical severity of form would have been more fully attained by the excision of some of them and the transposition and fusion of others. The strategic exposition is nearly always cogent, lucid, and terse. The historical analysis displays Captain Mahan at his best. If here and there the portrait seems to be a little over-laboured, the fault, such as it is, at any rate attests the conscientiousness of the artist without seriously discrediting his skill.

The skill of the artist is, in fact, the main difficulty of the critic. Mere eulogy is tiresome, and for anything but eulogy there is not much occasion in dealing with so

masterly a production. Nevertheless, there are one or two features in the portrait drawn by Captain Mahan which seem to me to be somewhat less happily touched than the rest, and to these attention will in the main be directed. No biographer of Nelson can overlook his relations with Lady Hamilton or shrink from the task of considering how far they affected his character and career. Nelson's attitude towards women was that of a man little versed in the ways of society, and endowed by nature with an eager, inflammable, and even volatile temperament. He married in 1787, at the age of twenty-eight, but his biographers record at least two previous attachments. The first occasion was in 1782, when he was on the point of sailing from Quebec, and was only prevented by his friend Davison from offering his hand to a lady, presumably of no very exalted station, for whom he had conceived an ardent attachment. Again, in the next year, Nelson, while staying in France, fell in love at St. Omer with a Miss Andrews, the daughter of an English clergyman, and the sister of a naval officer who afterwards served with him, and is frequently mentioned in his correspondence. On this occasion he wrote with rapture of Miss Andrews' beauty and accomplishments, and applied to his uncle William Suckling for an allowance of 100*l.* a year to enable him to marry. The request was granted, but immediately afterwards Nelson returned hastily and unexpectedly to England, and the name of Miss Andrews appears no more in his letters. It seems certain, therefore, that he proposed to her and was refused. Less than two years after this disappointment, in November 1785, he became engaged to Mrs. Nisbet, describing his new attachment in a letter to his uncle as already "of pretty long standing." But from first to last it lacked the ardour of his former loves. It may be that such love-making as there was was rather on Mrs. Nisbet's side than on Nelson's, for she is described in the letter of a friend, who had failed to penetrate Nelson's silence and reserve, as being "in the habit of

attending to these odd sort of people." This was in April or May 1785, and at the end of June Nelson writes to his brother, "Do not be surprised to hear I am a Benedict, for, if at all, it will be within a month." But his attachment for Mrs. Nisbet was never a passion; for though he was quick in his affections, and told his uncle, in announcing his engagement, that he would smile and say, "This Horatio is ever in love," he seldom, perhaps never, used the language of passion in speaking of her or even in writing to her. To his uncle he wrote nine months after he became engaged, "My affection for her is fixed upon that solid basis of esteem and regard that, I trust, can only increase by a longer knowledge of her"; and to herself he wrote some two months before their marriage, "My love is founded on esteem, the only foundation that can make the passion last."

This is not the language of a Nelson in love, of the man who could write many years afterwards to Lady Hamilton, "I am ever, for ever, with all my might, with all my strength yours, only yours. My soul is God's, let Him dispose of it as it seemeth fit to His infinite wisdom; my body is Emma's." It is rather the language of a man who has yielded easily, as was his nature, and willingly enough, but certainly not passionately, to the innocent artifices of a lady who had "the habit of attending to these odd sort of people." His wedded life was founded only on esteem, and the foundation endured, as it was certain to endure in a man of his loyal temper and chivalrous honour, until the volcanic depths of his nature were stirred by the shock of a mighty passion; then it crumbled into dust, as might also have been anticipated in a man of his titanic impulses. He was, in fact, wedded to his profession rather than to his wife, who in truth was little fitted to respond to the heroic impulses of his soul. At last he met his fate in Lady Hamilton, and the quick passions of his youth were once more aflame when the most fascinating woman in Europe threw herself into the arms of the great seaman whose

glorious victory of the Nile had filled the world with his fame. He idealized her as he idealized everything except his relations with his wife, as Captain Mahan shrewdly observes. But there was that in her which, though only "coarsely akin to much that was best in himself," was more akin than anything that Lady Nelson had to give. Probably such affection as she ever felt for him was little more than the flattered vanity and reflected sense of importance which her unfortunate experience of men had forced her to accept in lieu of a genuine and ennobling passion. But she was not without impulses responsive to phases of his nature which his wife had never understood. "It never could have occurred to the energetic, courageous, brilliant Lady Hamilton, after the lofty deeds and stirring dramatic scenes of St. Vincent, to beg him, as Lady Nelson did, 'to leave boarding to captains.' Sympathy, not good taste, would have withheld her."

It was in September 1798 that Nelson first fell under the spell of Lady Hamilton's enchantments. A year later, but more than a year before his final rupture with his wife, he wrote thus coldly of the latter in his brief fragment of autobiography: "In March of this year—1787—I married Frances Herbert Nisbet, widow of Dr. Nisbet, of the Island of Nevis, by whom I have no children." When he wrote these words, in 1799, he must have been conscious of estrangement, though he had as yet no thought of separation. Before he returned to England, rather more than a year afterwards, he must have known that Lady Hamilton was shortly to become a mother, and that, unless he afterwards deceived himself, her child would be his. That he could reconcile it with his honour still to keep up the appearance of conjugal fidelity, and, with his sense of common propriety, to expect his wife to associate with his mistress, is a paradox much more startling than his subsequent relations with Sir William Hamilton himself. Lady Nelson was the last woman alive to accept a situation such as even Harriet Shelley rejected, although she might not know, as we

know, that her husband's relations with Lady Hamilton were an outrage on her wifely dignity. But the point to be observed and insisted on is that the whole of this pitiful tragedy belongs only to the last seven years of Nelson's life. Captain Mahan allows its shadow to overhang his whole career. From first to last throughout his pages we are shown the fatal passion for Lady Hamilton rising up like an avenging Nemesis to besmirch the radiant fame of a man who for nearly forty years of a noble life had been chivalrous as a Lancelot and loyal as an Arthur.

I can discern no sufficient reason in morals, and therefore none in literary art, for this method of treatment. It is often possible, and where possible it is always becoming, for a biographer to draw a veil over the sexual irregularities of great men. Nelson's own conduct disallows such a proceeding in his case. But the biographer is not a censor. It is rather his business, in such a matter, to record than to judge; and so far as judgment is required of him, he is bound to temper it with that charity which "hopeth all things" and "thinketh no evil." There are some men whose riotous and unbridled passions infect and defile the whole tenor of their lives. Nelson was not one of these men. "Doctor, I have *not* been a *great* sinner." "Thank God, I have done my duty." "God and my country." These were his last words—the passionate but surely irresistible pleading of a dying man at the bar of posterity and eternity. For forty years Nelson had done his duty to all men. To his dying day he did his duty to his country. For less than seven years he failed to do his duty to his wife and to himself. Why should the seven years of private lapse be allowed to overshadow the splendid devotion of a lifetime to public duty? I can only suppose that by way of protest against the ill-judged efforts of some writers, not of the first rank, to throw a halo of false romance over what was really a very commonplace, and, in some of its aspects, a very ignoble story, Captain Mahan has rightly resolved

to tell it in all its nakedness as it appears in those amazing letters preserved in the Morrison Collection, but has wrongly allowed the natural repulsion so engendered unduly to enlarge the scope of his moral judgment, and to project its condemnation retrospectively over the long period of Nelson's life which really was nobly free from the taint of illicit passion."¹

Of course, if it could be shown that Nelson's professional judgment was warped, and his sense of public duty distorted, by his passion for Lady Hamilton, the attitude assumed by Captain Mahan would be to some extent justified. But on this point I shall endeavour to show that judgment must, on the whole, be given in Nelson's favour. The battle of Copenhagen is represented by Captain Mahan as Nelson's most arduous achievement, and in the Trafalgar campaign the whole world has recognized the sign and seal of his genius. On the other hand, no one would deny that during the two years after the battle of the Nile that genius suffered some eclipse. These, of course, were the two years when his passion for Lady Hamilton was in its first transports, when he seemed tied to the Court of the Two Sicilies by other bonds than those of duty, when he annulled the capitulation at Naples and insisted on the trial and execution of Caracciolo, and when he repeatedly disobeyed the orders of Lord Keith. But they were also the years during which his mental balance was more or less disturbed by the wound he had received at the Nile, and his *amour-propre* was deeply and justly mortified by the deplorable blunder of the Admiralty in appointing Lord Keith to the chief

¹ In a later essay on "Subordination in Historical Treatment," republished in his work on *Naval Administration and Warfare*, Captain Mahan refers, very good-humouredly, to this or to some similar criticism, and avows that he regards it as a compliment paid to the artistic success he has unwittingly achieved. Nevertheless his apologia seems to me to imply a theory of biographical method which belongs rather to the domain of art than to that of history proper. It is the method of the Greek tragedians and of the painter who gave us "The Shadow of the Cross"; but it does not seem to me to be the function of biography to let coming events cast their shadows before in this way.

command in succession to Lord St. Vincent. "Cessante causa cessat et effectus" is not a maxim of universal application; but combined with what logicians call "the method of difference," it may reasonably be held to sustain the contention that the influence of Lady Hamilton, which ceased only with Nelson's life, cannot have been the sole cause, even if it was a contributory cause, of an attitude and temper of mind which lasted only while other causes were in operation and disappeared with their cessation. The evil spirit which beset him, whatever it may have been, had been exorcised for ever by the time that he entered the Sound. Never in his whole career did his rare combination of gifts, professional and personal—"concentration of purpose, untiring energy, fearlessness of responsibility, judgment sound and instant, boundless audacity, promptness, intrepidity, and endurance beyond all proof"—shine forth more brilliantly than it did at Copenhagen. Yet the influence of Lady Hamilton was not less potent then and afterwards than it was during the period of eclipse. There are no letters in the Morrison Collection more passionate than those which Nelson wrote to Lady Hamilton at this time, none which show more clearly that, as regards Lady Hamilton, and yet only in that relation, his mental balance was still more than infirm, his moral fibre utterly disorganized.

It was during this period of moral hallucination that Nelson wrote his last heartless letter to his wife, in which he says of her son, that "he may again, as he has often done before, wish me to break my neck, and be abetted in it by his friends, who are likewise my enemies"; and concludes, with amazing self-deception and a brutality utterly foreign to his real nature, "I have done my duty as an honest, generous man, and I neither want nor wish for anybody to care what becomes of me, whether I return, or am left in the Baltic. Living, I have done all in my power for you, and if dead, you will find I have done the same; therefore, my only wish is, to be left

to myself; and wishing you every happiness, believe that I am your affectionate Nelson and Bronte." Two days later he was writing to Lady Hamilton: "I worship—nay, adore you, and if you was single and I found you under a hedge, I would instantly marry you"; and over and over again he assures her that he has never loved any other woman. But he wilfully deceived himself when he wrote of his wife to Lady Hamilton, a few days after the battle of Copenhagen: "He does not, nor cannot, care about her; he believes she has a most unfeeling heart." For conduct and language such as this there can be no excuse, unless indeed passion and genius are held to be a law to themselves.

On the other hand, I find it hard to follow Captain Mahan in holding his conduct towards Sir William Hamilton to be equally inexcusable. It seems to be more than probable that Sir William Hamilton never deceived himself, and that if Lady Hamilton and Nelson ever pretended to deceive him, it was only as part of a comedy played by all three of them with their eyes open, for the purpose of deceiving others. It is certain that, during his absence at sea in the early part of 1801, Nelson believed, and was tortured by the belief, that Sir William Hamilton was scheming to sell his wife to the Prince of Wales, and was only waiting for the latter to be proclaimed Prince Regent in order to sell her at a higher figure. He could hardly be expected to be very careful of the honour of a man whom he thought capable of such baseness; and so complete was his moral hallucination that he was probably quite capable of thinking that the obligation of friendship really rested, not upon himself, but on the complaisant husband and friend, who, having assigned his conjugal rights to another, was not at liberty to traffic in them further without the consent of the assignee. It is true that in his will Sir William Hamilton called Nelson his dearest friend, and described him as "the most virtuous, loyal, and truly brave character I have ever met with." But this can only have been the final

touch given by a master-hand to the comedy he deliberately chose to play when he consented to share with his friend the affections of the "fine woman," as he called her, who had been his mistress before she became his wife. *Qui trompe-t-on ici?*

Now all this moral confusion in Nelson's personal sentiments and conduct was contemporary with one of the most brilliant of his public achievements. Nelson was never more himself than during the Baltic campaign. He was least like himself during the two years which preceded it. The influence of Lady Hamilton was common to both periods, and, as I have shown, the latter period was marked by circumstances peculiarly trying to a man of Nelson's passionate and eager temperament. Yet in this case the needle did not swerve by a hair's breadth from the pole of duty, endeavour, and achievement. If it seemed to swerve for a time in the Mediterranean, surely the cause of deflection must be sought elsewhere than in an influence which, though still operative with not less intensity at Copenhagen, was there powerless to effect the slightest adverse disturbance. Now we have seen that there were other disturbing elements at work in the Mediterranean. It is true that a few days after his arrival at Naples from the Nile Nelson wrote to his father, "My head is quite healed." But though the acute symptoms which troubled him for some weeks had subsided, it seems likely enough that some more or less permanent effects remained of a wound so severe that at first he thought it mortal, and showed themselves at intervals for the rest of his life in a peevish, despondent, and quasi-hysterical temper.¹ But even this

¹ I would instance, as collateral evidence on this point, the portrait of Nelson which appears as a frontispiece to this volume. It was painted at Palermo, for Sir William Hamilton, in 1799, by Leonardo Guzzardi, a Neapolitan artist who also painted two other portraits of Nelson about the same time. One of these was presented to the Sultan of Turkey, and the other is, or was, in the possession of Mrs. Alfred Morrison. The portrait reproduced in this volume now hangs in the Board Room at the Admiralty, and a tablet affixed to it states that it was painted just after Nelson's recovery from a

hypothesis is not necessary to explain Nelson's conduct at this period. It is urged that he allowed the influence of Lady Hamilton, the blandishments of her friend the Queen, and the flatteries of the Court, to imbue him with an undue sense of the particular interests of the Two Sicilies, and to persuade him that they were really the paramount factor in the general trust placed in his hands. It is doubtful, however, whether he needed any such persuasion. A student of naval history, Nelson was not likely to forget the battle of Cape Passaro and the instructions issued to Byng. Long before the battle of the Nile he had persuaded himself of the importance of Naples and its kingdom. In the critical letter of October 3, 1798, apparently the first he ever wrote to Lady Hamilton, he says: "The anxiety which you and Sir William Hamilton have always had for the happiness of their Sicilian Majesties was also planted in me five years past." When Jervis was ordered to withdraw from the Mediterranean in 1796, it was for the desertion of Naples that Nelson's regrets were most poignant; and Captain Mahan himself admits that, "in the impression now made upon him, may perhaps be seen one cause of Nelson's somewhat extravagant affection in after days for the royal family of Naples, independent of any influence exerted upon him by Lady Hamilton." It is true that when he first returned from the Levant he took a larger and juster view of the general situation, and seemed to recognize that the main object of his efforts should be the destruction of the French army in the East and the

severe fever. It is very unlike most of the other portraits of Nelson known to me, and its expression is that of a man who is not at ease with himself. This may be due to Nelson's passion for Lady Hamilton, which was at the time in its first transports; but there are at least two other *veræ causæ* to be taken into account. One is the wound received by Nelson at the Nile, the traces of which are very visible in the portrait, and the other is the severe fever from which he suffered at Palermo just before the portrait was painted. I claim this portrait, therefore, as collateral evidence for the view I have advanced in the text, and it is for that reason that I have sought and obtained the permission of the Board of Admiralty to reproduce it, although it is not in itself a very pleasing presentation of the hero of the Nile.

recovery of the Mediterranean positions captured by Napoleon. But apart from any influence of Lady Hamilton or of the Neapolitan Court, his change of view was subsequently justified, as Captain Mahan allows, by the instructions sent to St. Vincent after the victory of the Nile. Long before he received these instructions Nelson had anticipated their purport, and largely by his influence and advice Naples was precipitated into war. As the event showed, it was a very ill-judged proceeding; but it may well have commended itself to Nelson for reasons quite independent of anything that Lady Hamilton or the Queen might say or do. He had rightly, or wrongly, come to the conclusion that, as he wrote to St. Vincent on October 4, "War at this moment can alone save these kingdoms." There is no doubt that Lady Hamilton was the medium of communication with the Queen and Court, and that Nelson's advice was rather forced upon the Neapolitan Ministers than sought for by them. But Nelson assures St. Vincent in the same letter that he has not "said or done anything without the approbation of Sir William Hamilton"; adding, however, "His Excellency is too good to them, and the strong language of an English Admiral telling them plain truths of their miserable system may do good." He had previously said in the same letter, "This country by its system of procrastination will ruin itself; the Queen sees this, and thinks as we do." On this Captain Mahan observes, "That Lady Hamilton was one of the 'we' is very plain." It is very far from plain from the context of the letter itself. Lady Hamilton had only once been mentioned in his letters to St. Vincent written after his arrival at Naples, and then only in the following terms, on September 29: "This being my birthday, Lady Hamilton gives a fête." The next day he wrote, "I trust my Lord in a week we shall all be at sea. I am very unwell, and the miserable conduct of this Court is not likely to cool my irritable temper. It is a country of fiddlers and poets, wh—s and scoundrels"—an opinion which it would

certainly have been well for Nelson's fame and happiness if he had continued to entertain. It was five days before this, on September 25, that he wrote to his father "If it were necessary, I could not at present leave Italy," so that this expression cannot be pressed as showing that Lady Hamilton had already cast her spells around him. In these circumstances it is almost incredible that the "we" of the letter of October 4 to St. Vincent should have been intended by the writer to include Lady Hamilton, and very unlikely that St. Vincent should so have understood it. It is far more probable that it merely indicates Nelson's conviction that St. Vincent would think as he did—as in fact he did, for he wrote to Nelson on October 28, apparently in answer to the letter under discussion, "You're great in the Cabinet as on the Ocean, and your whole conduct fills me with admiration and confidence"; nor would his suspicions be aroused any more than his confidence was shaken by the concluding words of Nelson's letter: "I am writing opposite Lady Hamilton, therefore you will not be surprised at the glorious jumble of this letter. . . . Naples is a dangerous place, and we must keep clear of it."

Yet it must be acknowledged that Nelson's judgment was gravely at fault when he urged the Neapolitan Government to make war at once. But even when Mack was defeated, and the King's army routed, he never seems to have repented of the advice he had given—which had, as we have seen, the concurrence of St. Vincent—and still held that he had judged the situation correctly. His real mistake was that he took Mack to be a man like himself, and failed to realize, as he should have done, that the Neapolitan army was worthless as a fighting force. But he was not without grave misgivings when he came to understand what manner of man Mack was. On October 9 he wrote to Lord Spencer, "I have formed my opinion; I heartily pray I may be mistaken." All his other errors followed almost inevitably from the initial mistake of not acting on the opinion here recorded.

When he left Naples, after refitting his fleet, he wrote to Lord Spencer, "Naples sees this squadron no more, except the King calls for our help." Far sooner than he expected, the King did call for his help. He was back at Naples before the end of the year, and with the efficient aid of Lady Hamilton—in this crisis indispensable, and certainly given with rare address and devotion—he succeeded in carrying off the Royal Family to Palermo.

Here for several months his personal conduct was deplorably wanting in discretion and dignity, and provocative of much open scandal; but there is little or no evidence to show that his growing infatuation affected in any material degree his sense of professional duty or his discharge of the obligations it imposed on him. It is true that Syracuse had originally been selected by him as his intended base of operations, and that his abandonment of this intention, as Captain Mahan remarks, "suggests the idea, which he himself avows, that his own presence with the Court was political rather than military in its utility." But Captain Mahan also points out that the preference for Palermo rests upon sound strategic considerations, which may very well have been present to Nelson's mind, though he does not specifically mention them. Again, though he seemed to tarry at Palermo when he might have been better employed elsewhere, there was for the moment no urgent call to take him elsewhere. When the call came, with the entry of Bruix into the Mediterranean, he responded to it with a promptitude and decision all his own. "An emergency so great and so imminent," writes Captain Mahan, "drew out all his latent strength, acute judgment, and promptitude." Measures were instantly taken for the concentration of his forces in a position best calculated to intercept the enemy and to frustrate his designs, and even when Duckworth refused to join him he never faltered for a moment:

"I am under no apprehension for the safety of His Majesty's squadron," he said in a circular letter to his

scattered vessels, designed to heighten their ardour. "On the contrary, from the very high state of discipline of the ships, I am confident, should the enemy force us to battle, that we shall cut a very respectable figure; and if Admiral Duckworth joins, not one moment shall be lost in my attacking the enemy." To St. Vincent he expressed himself with the sober, dauntless resolution of a consummate warrior, who recognized that opportunities must be seized, and detachments, if need be, sacrificed, for the furtherance of a great common object. "Your Lordship may depend that the squadron under my command shall never fall into the hands of the enemy; and before we are destroyed, I have little doubt but the enemy will have their wings so completely clipped that they may be easily overtaken"—by you. In this temper he waited. It is this clear perception of the utility of his contemplated grapple with superior numbers, and not the headlong valour and instinct for fighting that unquestionably distinguished him, which constitutes the excellence of Nelson's genius.

This is not the portrait of a man who has allowed the wiles of a woman to lure him from the path of duty and to silence the promptings of his own matchless genius for war.

I need not consider in detail the two most controverted episodes in Nelson's career, the capitulation of Naples and the execution of Caracciolo, which occurred in immediate sequence to his vigorous but fruitless efforts to intercept Bruix. Captain Mahan holds that Nelson was within his rights in disallowing the capitulation. He does not doubt that "Nelson had been given full power by the King of the two Sicilies to act as his representative," though there exists no documentary evidence of the fact. But he comments with some severity on the epithet "infamous," applied by Nelson to the instrument he set aside in a letter written a fortnight afterwards to Lord Spencer. "Such an adjective, deliberately applied after the first heat of the moment had passed, is, in its injustice, a clear indication of the frame of mind under the domination of which he was." The domination of

this frame of mind must be admitted, and need not be defended ; but its seeds were sown long before Nelson ever saw Lady Hamilton, and there is no direct evidence that its growth was unduly fostered by her influence.

Similar reasoning applies to the execution of Caracciolo. This, Captain Mahan regards as, like the treatment of the capitulation, technically unimpeachable, but morally reprehensible, and here his opinion is, in my judgment, not only unassailable in substance, but expressed with singular felicity :

Nelson himself failed to sustain the dispassionate and magnanimous attitude that befitted the admiral of a great squadron, so placed as to have the happy chance to moderate the excesses which commonly follow the triumph of parties in intestine strife. But, however he then or afterwards may have justified his course to his own conscience, his great offence was against his own people. To his secondary and factitious position of delegate from the King of Naples, he virtually sacrificed the consideration due to his inalienable character of representative of the King and State of Great Britain. He should have remembered that the act would appear to the world, not as that of the Neapolitan plenipotentiary, but of the British officer ; and that his nation, while liable like others to bursts of unreasoning savagery, in its normal moods delights to see justice clothed in orderly forms, unstained by precipitation or suspicion of perversion, advancing to its ends with the majesty of law, without unseemly haste, providing things honest in the sight of all men. That he did not do so, when he could have done so, has been intuitively felt ; and to the instinctive resentment thus aroused among his countrymen has been due the facility with which the worst has been too easily believed.

Nevertheless the biographer himself acquits Nelson in this case of the suspicion which long rested on him of having yielded his better judgment to sinister and secret influences.

There remains the question of Nelson's subsequent

disobedience of Lord Keith. Now there is no disguising the fact that Nelson's genius was splendidly impatient of mediocrity, and never submitted tamely to its authority. He chafed under Hotham as he chafed under Hyde Parker, and he disobeyed both. In fact his whole career is perhaps more remarkable for the light it throws on the conditions and limits of military obedience than for any other single characteristic. "You did as you pleased in Lord Hood's time," said some one to him in 1796, "the same in Admiral Hotham's, and now again with Sir John Jervis; it makes no difference to you who is commander-in-chief." With men like Lord Hood and Sir John Jervis—men whose genius and impulses were akin to his own, and from whom he certainly derived no small share of inspiration—he could do as he liked, without fear of disciplinary collision, because between him and them there existed perfect confidence and complete understanding. Even Parker, for whom Nelson entertained no great respect, had the good sense and magnanimity to approve, or at any rate not to censure, an act of disobedience more direct but not less splendid, which the popular imagination has ever since seized upon as one of the most glorious episodes in Nelson's career. Hotham, too, sanctioned by acquiescence an act of disobedience which Nelson acknowledged and defended. "The orders I have given," he said, "are strong, and I know not how my admiral will approve of them, for they are, in a great measure, contrary to those he gave me; but the service requires strong and vigorous measures to bring the war to a conclusion." Hotham subsequently approved, recognizing no doubt that, as Nelson said, "political courage in an officer abroad is as highly necessary as military courage"; and in this connection Captain Mahan takes occasion to expound what seems to be unimpeachable doctrine:—

It is possible to recognize the sound policy, the moral courage, and the correctness of such a step in the particu-

lar instance, without at all sanctioning the idea that an officer may be justified in violating orders, because he thinks it right. The justification rests not upon what he thinks, but upon the attendant circumstances which prove that he *is* right; and, if he is mistaken, if the conditions have not warranted the infraction of the fundamental principle of military efficiency,—obedience,—he must take the full consequences of his error, however honest he may have been. Nor can the justification of disobedience fairly rest upon any happy consequences that follow upon it, though it is a commonplace to say that the result is very apt to determine the question of reward or blame. There is a certain confusion of thought prevalent on this matter, most holding the rule of obedience too absolutely, others tending to the disorganizing view that the integrity of the intention is sufficient; the practical result, and for the average man the better result, being to shun the grave responsibility of departing from the letter of the order. But all this only shows more clearly the great professional courage and professional sagacity of Nelson, that he so often assumed such a responsibility, and so generally—with, perhaps, but a single exception—was demonstrably correct in his action.

Now it may be conceded at once that none of the tests here applied to Nelson's previous acts of disobedience—acts which were really among the most cogent proofs of his transcendent genius for war—will apply to the "single exception" indicated by Captain Mahan,—the case, namely, of his persistent disobedience to the orders of Lord Keith. As before, he felt he was right, and never could be brought to admit that he was wrong. But as Captain Mahan pointedly observes, "no military tribunal can possibly accept a man's conscience as the test of obedience." On former occasions he had acted contrary to orders, it is true, but fairly within the limits of his own responsibility and discretion, and in the assured confidence, justified by the event, that his superior would have acted as he did had he known the circumstances—in other words, that his estimate of the situation was a sound one, and that his

action was in accordance with right reason, taking a just view of all the conditions of the case. This is not to plead the *ex post facto* justification of success, but to insist on the antecedent justification of an appeal to right reason sanctioned in the event by the concurrent judgment of those authorized by their position or entitled by their experience to decide. But a far wider issue is raised by his refusal to obey Lord Keith; and though little exception need be taken to Captain Mahan's treatment of it, it is worth while to point out, first, that Keith manifestly rated the strategic value of Minorca far too highly, since its security must in all cases have depended on the general situation in the Mediterranean and on the supremacy of the British flag in that sea; and secondly, that only a few months before Keith himself had afforded a precedent, technically unimpeachable though strategically quite indefensible, when, neglecting St. Vincent's instructions, he finally lost the opportunity of intercepting Bruix by going direct to Minorca instead of taking a position off the Bay of Rosas. "Although a military tribunal may think me criminal," said Nelson, "the world will approve my conduct." The world has done nothing of the kind. It has felt, rightly in the main, that for this once Nelson allowed his self-esteem, even if no less worthy motive were at work, to get the better of his sense of military duty. No great harm came of it in the end; but if we cannot allow mere success to justify disobedience as such, still less can we allow lack of evil consequences to be pleaded as the justification of disobedience not otherwise defensible.

Nevertheless, extenuating circumstances may, and indeed in justice ought to be, pleaded. Such a man as Nelson never should have been placed under the orders of such a man as Lord Keith. When St. Vincent resigned the command-in-chief, none but Nelson should have succeeded him. The appointment of Lord Keith was little short of grotesque, and Nelson was the last man not to feel it bitterly. He knew his own value, and perhaps his

self-esteem was only saved from degenerating into vanity by his real greatness of soul. The great-souled man, says Aristotle, is one who, being worthy of great things, deems himself to be so. The definition applies pre-eminently to Nelson. Not to deem himself the fittest man to succeed St. Vincent would have been unworthy of the victor of the Nile. Not to resent the preference given to Lord Keith would have been a submissiveness quite foreign to Nelson's nature and altogether incompatible with his genius. "It is not every one," says Captain Mahan, "that can handle an instrument of such trenchant power, yet delicate temper, as Nelson's sensitive genius." St. Vincent had done it, because he was himself a man of Nelson's mould. Lord Keith, on the other hand, "was an accomplished and gallant officer, methodical, attentive, and correct, but otherwise he rose little above the commonplace; and while he could not ignore Nelson's great achievements, he does not seem to have had the insight which could appreciate the rare merit underlying them, nor the sympathetic temperament which could allow for his foibles." Herein, I am convinced, lies the real and only secret of Nelson's disobedience in this case. Nelson was not a Samson caught in Delilah's toils, but the piteous victim of that bitterest of pangs, the sense of thwarted genius, as the father of history calls it in one of the saddest sentences ever penned: *Ἐχθίστη ὀδύνη πολλὰ φρονέοντά περ μηδενὸς κρατέειν*. His position may be illustrated by two well-known anecdotes. "My Lord," said the great Lord Chatham to the Duke of Devonshire, "I am sure that I can save this country, and that no one else can." This was Nelson's feeling; and assuredly, if he could not save his country, it was not at all likely that Lord Keith would. Again, when the younger Pitt was invited to join Addington's ministry, he was informed that his brother, the Earl of Chatham, was to be Prime Minister. Here the negotiation ended. "Really," said Pitt, "I had not the curiosity to ask what I was to be." Nelson, who, without being consulted

in the matter, had had to serve under Keith, would certainly have sympathized with his old friend.

The consideration of Nelson's relations with Lady Hamilton and of their influence on his professional conduct has carried me far in the analysis of his character and the survey of his career. I have dwelt on it at length for that reason, and also because it is now almost the only question regarding Nelson which still remains open to controversy. There are three questions which must naturally suggest themselves to the critic of any new biography of Nelson:—Does the biographer draw a convincing portrait of Nelson as a man? Does he explain his pre-eminence as a seaman in terms of his character and career? Does he take a just view of the moral catastrophe of his life? To two of these questions the answer must be an affirmative so emphatic as almost to supersede detailed criticism. To the third, as we have seen, the answer must be more hesitating, though even here the faithful biographer may be more easily excused for leaning to the side of severity than for yielding to the maudlin sentiment which allows the glamour of a rather tawdry romance to silence the moral judgment altogether, and to obscure the pitiful tragedy of a hero dragged by his senses into the mire of an unworthy passion.¹ If it be further asked whether Captain Mahan is a better exponent than his predecessors of Nelson's unparalleled genius for war and of the historic import of his campaigns, it suffices to answer once for all that he is the author of the *Influence of Sea Power upon History*. In this domain he is without a rival.

There is one other point, however, on which I am constrained with no little reluctance, and with profound respect for a judgment and authority which I cannot pretend to rival, in some measure to join issue with Captain Mahan. The doctrine of the "fleet in being," as

¹ There are letters in the Morrison Collection, too coarse to quote, which show plainly enough that Nelson's infatuation for Lady Hamilton was essentially and passionately physical, and never rose to the level of an ennobling and redeeming inspiration.

originally formulated by Torrington after the battle of Beachy Head, and expounded in his comments on that action by Admiral Colomb, has more than once been advanced in former writings of my own as pregnant with instruction and worthy of all acceptance. It is, says Captain Mahan, a doctrine or opinion which "has received extreme expression . . . and apparently undergone equally extreme misconception." To the latter proposition I can assent without reserve; whether the former applies to myself I am not greatly concerned to inquire. It will suffice to recall my own definition of the doctrine, and to show, as I think I can, that it is little, if at all, at variance with the opinions repeatedly advanced by Captain Mahan and illustrated in the most brilliant and convincing fashion by Nelson's practice from first to last. Indeed, if I were to say that Nelson's strategic practice and his biographer's luminous exposition of it are both alike saturated with the doctrine of the "fleet in being," I should, in my own judgment, only be insisting on the characteristic merit of both.

He who contemplates a military enterprise of any moment across the sea, must first secure freedom of transit for his troops. To do this he must either defeat, mask, or keep at a distance, any hostile force which is strong enough, if left to itself, to interfere with his movements. In default of one or other of these alternatives it is safe to say, either that his enterprise will not be undertaken, or that it will fail. This is the true doctrine of the fleet in being—which is a fleet strategically at large, not itself in assured command of the sea, but strong enough to deny that command to its adversary by strategic and tactical dispositions adapted to the circumstances of the case.

So I wrote some years ago in discussing "The Armada."¹ The fact is that the doctrine of the fleet in being is merely a definition of the conditions which, so long as they exist,

¹ *The Navy and the Nation*, p. 158.

are incompatible with an established command of the sea. "I consider," said the late Sir Geoffrey Hornby, "that I have command of the sea when I am able to tell my Government that they can move an expedition to any point without fear of interference from an enemy's fleet." In other words, a fleet in being, as defined above, is, in the judgment of that great seaman, incompatible with an established command of the sea; and to any one who is prepared to maintain that Sir Geoffrey Hornby would ever have undertaken to conduct a military enterprise of any moment across the sea without having first established his command of the sea to be crossed, it must suffice to say, *Naviget Anticyram*.

Now let us see how far Captain Mahan really traverses the propositions advanced above. After the siege and reduction of Bastia, the British troops in Corsica were placed in transports which assembled in the bay of San Fiorenzo, under the convoy of Nelson in the *Agamemnon*, with a view to the immediate prosecution of the siege of Calvi. Just previously a French fleet of seven sail of the line put to sea from Toulon unresisted by Hotham, who was watching off that port. Hotham, having failed to intercept them, fell back upon Calvi, which he regarded as their objective, and was there joined by Hood with the main body of the British fleet. Having obtained information of the enemy's whereabouts, Hood at once made sail in pursuit, and, as Captain Mahan relates, "in the afternoon of June 10th, caught sight of the enemy, but so close in with the shore that they succeeded in towing their ships under the protection of the batteries in Golfe Jouan"—generally called Gourjean by Nelson—"where for lack of wind, he was unable to follow them for some days, during which they had time to strengthen their position beyond his powers of offence. Hotham's error was irreparable." In other words, the French fleet had been allowed by Hotham to escape, and therefore still to remain a formidable strategic menace. Baffled by an enemy whom he could not reach, Hood remained to

watch him, and sent Nelson back in the *Agamemnon*, to resume the work of embarking the troops from Bastia. In a few days the whole force, consisting of the *Agamemnon*, two smaller ships of war, and twenty-two transports, was anchored at San Fiorenzo.

Here he met General Stuart. The latter was anxious to proceed at once with the siege of Calvi, but asked Nelson whether he thought it proper to take the shipping to that exposed position; alluding to the French fleet that had left Toulon, and which Hood was then seeking. Nelson's reply is interesting, as reflecting the judgment of a warrior at once prudent and enterprising, concerning the influence of a hostile "fleet in being" upon a contemplated detached operation. "I certainly thought it right," he said, "placing the firmest reliance that we should be perfectly safe under Lord Hood's protection, who would take care that the French fleet at Gourjean should not molest us." To Hood he wrote a week later: "I believed ourselves safe under your Lordship's wing." At this moment he thought the French to be nine sail of the line to the British thirteen,—no contemptible inferior force. Yet that he recognized the possible danger from such a detachment is also clear; for, writing two days earlier, under the same belief as to the enemy's strength, and speaking of the expected approach of an important convoy, he says: "I hope they will not venture up till Lord Hood can get off Toulon, or wherever the French fleet are got to." When a particular opinion has received the extreme expression now given to that concerning the "fleet in being," and apparently has undergone equally extreme misconception, it is instructive to recur to the actual effect of such a force, upon the practice of a man with whom moral effect was never in excess of the facts of the case, whose imagination produced to him no paralyzing picture of remote contingencies. Is it probable that, with the great issues of 1690 at stake, Nelson, had he been in Tourville's place, would have deemed the crossing of the Channel by French troops impossible, because of Torrington's "fleet in being"?

Certainly Nelson, had he been in Tourville's place, could not have deemed the crossing of the Channel by

French troops impossible so long as he "could place the firmest reliance that he would be perfectly safe under some Lord Hood's protection, who would take care that Torrington's fleet, whether at the Gunfleet or elsewhere, should not molest him." But in order to establish anything like a parallel to Torrington's case, it would be necessary to suppose that Nelson would have sanctioned the descent on Calvi and the prosecution of the siege if Lord Hood's force had not been in a position to protect him. He neglected the menace of the French fleet only because he believed that force to be effectually masked, and himself to be perfectly safe "under Lord Hood's wing." Even the justly high authority of Captain Mahan cannot persuade me that this incident affords a proof or even a presumption that Nelson would have thought it prudent to transport the troops from San Fiorenzo to Calvi, and to prosecute the siege of the latter, if the French fleet had not been, as he believed, masked by Hood. On the contrary, the whole subsequent story, so well told and so admirably appreciated in all its strategic implications by Captain Mahan, of the proceedings of this fleet, of Hotham's failure to destroy it on two occasions, when, in Nelson's judgment at any rate, he had the opportunity, of its potent and even its disastrous influence on the campaign until it was finally destroyed by Nelson himself at the Nile, is to my mind a most pregnant and conclusive proof that the doctrine of the fleet in being was one which Nelson uniformly illustrated in practice, even if he did not always fully grasp it in theory.

That the doctrine has two distinct aspects is a proposition so obvious as scarcely to need stating. For an admiral who seeks to command the sea it means that the only way to secure that end is to dispose of, that is, to destroy, mask, or otherwise neutralize, any and every organized force capable of interfering with his movements. This is what Nelson meant when he wrote to Lord St. Vincent, "Not one moment shall be lost in bringing the

enemy to battle ; for I consider the best defence for his Sicilian Majesty's dominions is to place myself alongside the French." This also is the basis and justification of his criticism of Hotham, and of his own dogged pursuit in later days of Villeneuve to the West Indies and back again. The Toulon fleet was always "my fleet," as he called it, the fleet which it was his business, whatever happened, to watch, pursue, and destroy. As it was at the Nile and at Trafalgar, so it was at Copenhagen. The organized naval force of the enemy was the one objective which Nelson ever placed before himself. He implored Hotham on March 14 to pursue the enemy and destroy him there and then. "Sure I am," he said, "had I commanded our fleet on the 14th, that either the whole French fleet would have graced my triumph, or I should have been in a confounded scrape." But Hotham, "much cooler than myself, said, 'We must be contented, we have done very well.' Now had we taken ten sail, and had allowed the eleventh to escape, when it had been possible to have got at her, I could never have called it well done." And surely the doctrine of the fleet in being as it applies to the dispositions of an admiral who seeks to command the sea, could not be better stated than it is stated by Captain Mahan in his comment on this engagement :

The fact is, neither Hotham nor his opponent, Martin, was willing to hazard a decisive naval action, but wished merely to obtain a temporary advantage,—the moment's safety, no risks. "I have good reason," wrote Hotham in his despatch, "to hope, from the enemy's steering to the westward after having passed our fleet, that whatever might have been their design, *their intentions are for the present frustrated.*" It is scarcely necessary to say that a man who looks no further ahead than this, who fails to realize that the destruction of the enemy's fleet is the one condition of permanent safety to his cause, will not rise to the conception presented to him on his quarter-deck by Nelson. The latter, whether by the sheer intuition of genius, which is most probable, or by the result of well-

ordered reasoning, which is less likely, realized fully that to destroy the French fleet was the one thing for which the British fleet was there, and the one thing by doing which it could decisively affect the war.

On the other hand, an admiral who is not for the moment strong enough to seize the command of the sea, must endeavour so to use his own fleet in being as to prevent that command passing to his enemy. This was what Torrington did; and this, too, was what Nelson, after Hotham had twice failed to destroy the French fleet, found himself compelled to do. It is not to be supposed that Torrington imagined for a moment that the fleet which, in spite of the disastrous orders of Mary and Nottingham, he had saved from destruction, would by its mere existence prevent a French invasion. He had kept it in being in order that he might use it offensively whenever the occasion should arise. His own words are decisive on this point: "Whilst we observe the French, they cannot make any attempt on ships or shore, without running a great hazard; and if we are beaten, all is exposed to their mercy." These words, it is true, were written before the battle of Beachy Head; but they enunciate the principle which governed his conduct in that action, and was afterwards to be stated in language which, in spite of all that has been said, I, for one, must still regard as embodying the quintessence of naval strategy, "I always said that whilst we had a fleet in being they would not dare to make an attempt." It is no doubt quite true, as Mr. David Hannay says in his introduction to the *Letters of Sir Samuel Hood*, that "the fleet in being must be strong enough for its work, and that the admiral in command of it must not merely trust to his presence to deter the enemy"; but when the same writer adds that an admiral in such a case "must strike at once and hard," he seems to me entirely to miss the point. Strike hard such an admiral must when he does strike, even if his stroke involves the loss of his whole fleet; but the time at which he should strike

thus must be determined by circumstances and opportunity. To sacrifice his whole fleet, as Nottingham and Mary would have had Torrington do, without frustrating the enemy's purpose, may be magnificent, but it is not war. Nelson, as Captain Mahan tells us, "expressed with the utmost decision his clear appreciation that even a lost battle, *if delivered at the right point or at the right moment*, would frustrate the ulterior objects of the enemy, by crippling the force on which they depended." But though he was thus prepared to strike hard when the time came, he was certainly by no means eager to strike at once and before the time came. On this point, at any rate, there is no room for doubt, either as to his own views or as to those of his biographer. In his vivid narrative of the final pursuit of Villeneuve, Captain Mahan pauses to interpolate the following impressive comment :

It was about this time that Nelson expressed to one or more of his captains his views as to what he had so far effected, what he had proposed to do if he had met the hostile fleets, and what his future course would be if they were yet found. "I am thankful that the enemy have been driven from the West India Islands with so little loss to our Country. I had made up my mind to great sacrifices ; for I had determined, notwithstanding his vast superiority, to stop his career, and to put it out of his power to do any further mischief. Yet do not imagine I am one of those hot-brained people, who fight at an immense disadvantage, *without an adequate object*. My object is partly gained," that is, the allies had been forced out of the West Indies. "If we meet them, we shall find them not less than eighteen, I rather think twenty sail of the line, and therefore do not be surprised if I do not fall on them immediately : *we won't part without a battle*. I think they will be glad to leave me alone, if I will let them alone ; which I will do, either till we approach the shores of Europe, or they give me an advantage too tempting to be resisted."

It is rare to find so much sagacious appreciation of conditions, combined with so much exalted resolution and sound discretion, as in this compact utterance.

Among the external interests of Great Britain, the West Indies were the greatest. They were critically threatened by the force he was pursuing; therefore at all costs that force should be so disabled, that it could do nothing effective against the defences with which the scattered islands were provided. For this end he was prepared to risk the destruction of his squadron. The West Indies were now delivered; but the enemy's force remained, and other British interests. Three months before, he had said, "I had rather see half my squadron burnt than risk what the French fleet may do in the Mediterranean." In the same spirit he now repeats: "Though we are but eleven to eighteen or twenty, we won't part without a battle." Why fight such odds? He himself has told us a little later. "By the time the enemy has beat our fleet soundly, they will do us no harm this year." Granting this conclusion,—the reasonableness of which was substantiated at Trafalgar,—it cannot be denied that the sacrifice would be justified, the enemy's combination being disconcerted. Yet there shall be no headlong, reckless attack. "I will leave them alone till they offer me an opportunity too tempting to be resisted,"—that speaks for itself,—or, "until we approach the shores of Europe," when the matter can no longer be deferred, and the twenty ships must be taken out of Napoleon's hosts, even though eleven be destroyed to effect this. The preparedness of mind is to be noted, and yet more the firmness of the conviction, in the strength of which alone such deeds are done. It is the man of faith who is ever the man of works.

Singularly enough, his plans were quickly to receive the best of illustrations by the failure of contrary methods. Scarcely a month later fifteen British ships, under another admiral, met these twenty, which Nelson with eleven now sought in vain. They did not part without a battle, but they did part without a decisive battle; they were not kept in sight afterwards; they joined and were incorporated with Napoleon's great armada; they had further wide opportunities of mischief; and there followed for the people of Great Britain a period of bitter suspense and wide-spread panic.

Now it may be that Torrington was rather a Calder

than a Nelson ; but even if so much be granted, all that the admission proves is that Torrington, though he enunciated a sound doctrine and gave it expression in very memorable words, did not apply it as Nelson would have done. That is a matter of opinion about which it is not very profitable to dispute. But the doctrine itself is a matter of principle about which, so far as I can see, Nelson's own practice affords no solid ground for dispute. In any case, it is important to note that on one occasion, at any rate, Nelson acted exactly as Torrington did ; that is, he declined to " strike at once and strike hard," at a time when he saw clearly that by so doing he would play his enemy's game, and not his own. Singularly enough, Captain Mahan, in his comment on this incident, appears to recognize and insist on the doctrine of the fleet in being as emphatically as any of its supporters could desire :

With this unsatisfactory affair, Nelson's direct connection with the main body of the fleet came to an end for the remainder of Hotham's command. It is scarcely necessary to add that the prime object of the British fleet at all times, and not least in the Mediterranean in 1795,—the control of the sea,—continued as doubtful as it had been at the beginning of the year. The dead weight of the admiral's having upon his mind the Toulon fleet, undiminished in force despite two occasions for decisive action, was to be clearly seen in the ensuing operations. On this, also, Nelson did much thinking, as passing events threw light upon the consequences of missing opportunities. " The British fleet," he wrote, five years later, and no man better knew the facts, " could have prevented the invasion of Italy ; and, if our friend Hotham had kept his fleet on that coast, I assert, and you will agree with me, no army from France could have been furnished with stores or provisions ; even men could not have marched." But how keep the fleet on the Italian coast, while the French fleet in full vigour remained in Toulon ? What a curb it was appeared again in the next campaign, and even more clearly, because the British were then commanded by Sir John Jervis, a man not to be checked by

ordinary obstacles. From the decks of his flagship Nelson, in the following April, watched a convoy passing close in shore. "To get at them was impossible before they anchored under such batteries as would have crippled our fleet; and, had such an event happened, *in the present state of the enemy's fleet*, Tuscany, Naples, Rome, Sicily, &c., would have fallen as fast as their ships could have sailed along the coast. Our fleet is the only saviour at present for those countries."

Here I must make an end. But I cannot make a better end than by insisting that the one broad lesson of Nelson's life is his unfailing perception and splendid illustration of the doctrine that the paramount object of a sea-captain in war must always be to destroy, disable, or otherwise neutralize the organized naval force of his enemy or such portion of it as represents his immediate adversary. If exception be taken to calling this doctrine the doctrine of the fleet in being, I am not concerned to insist on a phrase which has certainly, as Captain Mahan says, undergone extreme misconception. But on the doctrine itself I still insist as the beginning and the end of all sound thinking on naval warfare and its principles. It was because Napoleon never understood it, and Nelson never lost sight of it, that Napoleon's schemes for the invasion of England were brought to naught. Napoleon seems to have thought that if he could get his fleets into the Channel without an action, the invasion could take place. Nelson knew better. He knew that whatever combinations Napoleon might make, however successfully his Villeneuves, his Ganteaumes, his Missiessys, might evade the watch of the British admirals for a time, however adroitly they might strive to "decoy" them away, they could never attain such a command of the Channel as would enable the Army of Boulogne to cross until they had fought those same admirals on no very unequal terms, and beaten them as thoroughly as he himself beat Villeneuve at Trafalgar. "They should not have stirred," wrote Howard of the Armada, "but we would

have been upon their jacks." Nelson was ever "upon the jacks" of Villeneuve. Cornwallis held Ganteaume in a vice. Calder, if he had been a man like Nelson, and not a man like Hotham, would have anticipated Trafalgar. Napoleon's whole combination was in truth vitiated throughout by the colossal blunder of supposing, if he ever did suppose, that even if his fleets had succeeded in escaping, combining, and reaching the Channel they could have availed him anything so long as Nelson, Cornwallis, and Calder, to say nothing of ample forces nearer home, were behind, before, and around them, resolved, as Nelson said, "not to part without a battle," or as Drake had said, two hundred years before, "to wrestle a pull" with them. But Napoleon never grasped the lessons of the Armada. He did not know that evasion cannot secure the command of the sea except as a preliminary to fighting for it, and that all his combinations were vain unless or until they could enable his admirals to sweep the sea of his foes. This is the open secret of the sea, which whoso divines is its master and whoso ignores is its victim. The Sphinx of history has propounded its riddle to nation after nation, and each, as it failed to guess it, has paid the inexorable penalty. At Gravelines the sceptre of the world's sea power passed from Spain to England. At Trafalgar "it was not Villeneuve that failed, but Napoleon that was vanquished; not Nelson that won, but England that was saved." Yet Napoleon, in his defeat, dealt the nation he never could subdue an insidious blow which smote her as with the blindness of *Œdipus*. More than a hundred years after Trafalgar was fought we are still wrangling over those eternal principles of sea-defence which Nelson illustrated so splendidly in his life, and consecrated so gloriously in his death. The blunders of Napoleon have for long been far more potent to guide and inspire our defensive policy than the genius and teaching of Nelson; and the conqueror of Europe might have found a sinister consolation in his final discomfiture could he have foreseen that, for more

than a century after the campaign which undid him, the mistress of the seas, whose supremacy he never could shake, would bury the secret of her victory fathoms deep in the blue waters of Trafalgar, and close her eyes, as they wept for Nelson, to the things which belong to her peace.

EPILOGUE

THE SECRET OF NELSON¹

“THERE is but one Nelson,” said Lord St. Vincent. All Englishmen know that Nelson is the most beloved of national heroes. All the world acknowledges that, as Lord Rosebery has said, “there is no figure like his among those who have ploughed the weary seas.” To Captain Mahan he is “the embodiment of the sea power of Great Britain,” the symbol, the type, the unique and towering incarnation of that spirit of the sea which has made of a little island a great Empire, which has carried the British flag and the British race to the uttermost parts of the earth. More than a hundred years after his death he still holds a place in the national imagination which we give to no other of those whom none of us have ever seen. To all of us whose outlook on national life and history has any scope at all his personality is still almost as vivid and as winning, as powerful to inspire all the love and all the pity that are due to the poignancy of human things, as it was to those who knew him in the flesh, and first heard with stricken hearts the tidings of his glorious death. There is no other man in our history of whom this can be said; and it is worth while to consider why it is that his name and memory thus stand alone in our hearts.

It is not merely that he was, as Sir Cyprian Bridge has said, “the only man who has ever lived who by universal consent is without a peer.” *Vixere fortes ante Agamemnona*, and the nation which had known men like

¹ *The Times*, October 21, 1905.

Drake, and Blake, and Hawke, and Rodney, and Howe, and St. Vincent, not to mention Hood, who was perhaps the peer of all of them except in opportunity, would hardly have put Nelson on his solitary pinnacle merely because he transcended them all. Nor is it merely because he is the last of a great line, because the warfare of the sailing-ship period culminated and ended with him. Nor, again, is it merely because Trafalgar was a great deliverance from a great and imminent national peril. Napoleon's naval combinations might have been overthrown even if Nelson had had no hand in their undoing, though the task would have been infinitely harder for any other man; and it would be unjust to the memory of men like Cornwallis and Collingwood to say that it is impossible to think of a Trafalgar without a Nelson. In truth, it was not by Trafalgar alone that Napoleon's naval combinations were overthrown, nor even by Nelson's own transcendent share in the dispositions which overthrew them. Long before Trafalgar was fought Napoleon had abandoned all his schemes for the invasion of England, had broken up his camps at Boulogne, and marched the Grand Army to the overthrow of Austria. Ulm had capitulated on the day before Nelson died at Trafalgar, and Austerlitz had been fought and won more than a month before his body was carried to its last resting-place in St. Paul's. Napoleon knew nothing of the final destruction of his hopes at Trafalgar when he said to the generals who capitulated at Ulm, "I want nothing further upon the Continent; I want ships, colonies, and commerce." That was what Nelson and his companions in arms—Cornwallis and Collingwood afloat, and Barham at the Admiralty—had denied him, and he knew full well that he had lost it when he broke up his camps at Boulogne. Trafalgar was thus in a sense only the tactical consummation of a strategic conflict which had been finally decided against Napoleon when Villeneuve, hunted unceasingly from east to west and back again from west to east by Nelson, foiled even by Calder, and intimidated

by the matchless tenacity of Cornwallis, had lost heart and turned southward to Cadiz, instead of keeping the sea and putting his fate to the touch. In that tremendous drama, the greatest ever acted on the seas, Nelson was assuredly the first and the greatest of the actors, but not the only occupant of the stage. In truth, his transcendent personality distorts in some measure the proper perspective of history, for neither was Trafalgar the real crisis of the conflict nor was Nelson the sole agent by whom its issue was determined. "I had their huzzas before, I have their hearts now," he said to Hardy as he quitted the shore of England for the last time. It was Nelson, the great incomparable warrior, the victor of the Nile and Copenhagen, that attracted their huzzas; it was Nelson, the man with that large, loving, eager, wistful, and infinitely lovable soul of his, that even before Trafalgar had found an abiding-place in his countrymen's hearts. The fame of the warrior is fleeting; it remains a tradition, it may be, but not an active memory. "The tumult and the shouting dies" in time. But the love of men is not so fleeting. The rare souls that inspire it possess a passport to immortality far more durable than any that their greatest deeds can confer. In the case of Nelson, as in that of Wolfe, this love was consecrated and confirmed for ever by the death of the hero in the hour of victory. No man was ever more blessed in the opportunity of his death than Nelson was. There were no more battles for him to fight for his country. The battle of his own guilty love must have been decided in the end against him. If Emma Hamilton was not altogether the "vulgar adventuress" that Lord Rosebery calls her, she was, at any rate, not the woman to share without tarnishing the laurels of his unparalleled feats of arms. Nelson's life's work was done, he had achieved imperishable renown, and, happily for him and for all of us, the rest is silence. It must have been some such feeling as this that inspired the noble words of Lady Londonderry—Camden's daughter, Castlereagh's step-

mother, and the mother of that other Stewart who was the friend of Wellington—in the letter which she wrote on hearing of Nelson's death :

The sentiment of lamenting the individual more than rejoicing in the victory, shows the humanity and affection of the people of England. . . . He now begins his immortal career, having nothing to achieve upon earth, and bequeathing to the English Fleet a legacy which they alone are able to improve. Had I been his wife or his mother, I would rather have wept him dead than seen him languish on a less splendid day. In such a death there is no sting, in such a grave there is everlasting victory.

We might well take that for his epitaph if Southey had not written it in even more memorable words :

He cannot be said to have fallen prematurely whose work was done ; nor ought he to be lamented who died so full of honours and at the height of human fame. The most triumphant death is that of the martyr ; the most awful that of the martyred patriot ; the most splendid that of the hero in the hour of victory : and if the chariot and horses had been vouchsafed for Nelson's translation he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory. He has left us, not indeed his mantle of inspiration, but a name and an example which are at this moment inspiring hundreds of the youth of England—a name which is our pride, and an example which will continue to be our shield and our strength. Thus it is that the spirits of the great and the wise continue to live and to act after them ; verifying in this sense the language of the old mythologist :

*Τοί μιν δαίμονές εἰσι, Διὸς μεγάλου διὰ βουλὰς
Ἐσθλοί, ἐπιχθόνιοι, φύλακες θνητῶν ἀνθρώπων."*

Τοί μιν δαίμονές εἰσιν. It is this dæmonic element in Nelson's personality that has given him his imperishable hold on the hearts and imaginations of his countrymen. Few among us are fully competent to understand, and not

many of us have ever tried to understand, how and why he was the greatest seaman the world has ever known. The popular conception of his qualities as a sea-officer is still largely a misconception ; it obscures his real merits and attributes to him a mere bull-dog impetuosity and tenacity which is supposed to embody the national ideal and certainly flatters the national prejudice in favour of the rule of thumb as superior to the rule of thought. " His recent biographers," says Sir Cyprian Bridge, " Captain Mahan and Professor Laughton, feel constrained to tell us over and over again that Nelson's predominant characteristic was not ' mere headlong valour and instinct for fighting ' ; that he was not the man ' to run needless and useless risks ' in battle. ' The breadth and acuteness of Nelson's intellect,' says Mahan, ' have been too much overlooked in the admiration excited by his unusually grand moral endowments of resolution, dash, and fearlessness of responsibility.' " These latter are, no doubt, the qualities which his countrymen saw first and admired most in their favourite hero ; but they are only half the qualities which gave him his supreme position above all the fighting seamen of history. There were really two men in Nelson, even in Nelson the seaman. In Nelson the man there were many more than two. Wellington saw two of them in the one brief interview he ever had with him. There was the vain, garrulous braggart whose conversation, " if it could be called conversation, was almost all on his side, and all about himself, and in, really, a style so vain and so silly as to surprise and almost disgust me." There was also the man who " talked of the state of this country and of the aspect and probabilities of affairs on the Continent with a good sense, and a knowledge of subjects both at home and abroad, that surprised me equally and more agreeably than the first part of our interview had done ; in fact, he talked like an officer and a statesman." A third will be seen, happily in only a few fleeting and forbidding glimpses, in some of the letters to Lady Hamilton, contained in

the Morrison Collection—letters in which it is only charitable to suppose that his mental balance was for the moment overthrown, in which the incomparable Nelson of the *Victory's* quarter-deck and cockpit is as completely degraded into the sensual, erotic, and frantically jealous paramour of Lady Hamilton as the Dr. Jekyll of Stevenson's story was ever transformed into Mr. Hyde. But even in Nelson the seaman there were at least two men. There was the wary, thoughtful, studious tactician full of reflection and circumspection, the man whom Hood had singled out when he was quite a young captain and had never served with a fleet as an officer to be consulted on questions of naval tactics, who had studied Clerk of Eldin and bettered the instruction of the landsman with the insight of a great seaman, who had meditated on the tactical methods of Rodney and Hood and Howe and many others, and had combined and improved on them all; and there was also the man who when he came into action never faltered for a moment, always saw the right thing to be done, and did it, even, as at St. Vincent, without waiting for orders, always kept the signal for close action flying, trusted absolutely in himself and in his comrades because he had inspired them, and never thought that all was done that ought to have been done unless all that was possible had been accomplished—*nil actum reputans dum quid superesset agendum*. It is the rare combination of these two different types in one personality that explains and justifies Captain Mahan's pregnant remark, "No man was ever better served than Nelson by the inspiration of the moment; no man ever counted on it less." He was one of those consummate men of action in whom the native hue of resolution is never allowed to be sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought. For this reason men of a different mould were too prone to believe that the thought was not there. In truth, it was ever-present and all-pervading, but it was so completely assimilated into a resolution alike unflinching and unerring that it acted with the precision and

rapidity of an instinct. As the late Admiral Colomb finely said in one of the most suggestive and most sympathetic appreciations of Nelson ever penned, "The courage of Nelson, not only the facing of the most imminent personal danger, but the acceptance of the most tremendous responsibilities, was a combination of fire and ice. His excitement never carried him away, his judgment let his excitement share alike with itself, and the two worked together in producing acts which the coolest criticism of after years only succeeds in commending as at once the simplest and the wisest. Nelson in action with an opposing fleet stands more nearly as a specially inspired being than any great man of modern times; and we cannot contrast him with any of his contemporary admirals, great souls though they bore, without seeing how immeasurably above them all he was when drawing in contact with the enemy."

This is the secret of Nelson's incomparable greatness as a seaman. But this secret was not fully grasped by his contemporaries, nor is it yet perhaps thoroughly understood by the nation which still so justly adores him. If it had been we should not have had to wait for a hundred years to find out whether his last battle was fought as he proposed to fight it in a Memorandum which displays his tactical genius at its very highest, or whether, on the other hand, it was fought on no principle at all and by a method which no critic has yet been able to explain, still less to defend—for so it must have been if the hitherto accepted plans, diagrams, and models are even approximately correct. It is not there, then, that we must look for the explanation of Nelson's abiding hold on the affections of his countrymen. Nor is it in his victories alone, many and transcendent as they were. Mere victory is no passport to the immortality of personal affection. If it were, the names of Marlborough and Wellington should stand side by side with that of Nelson, whereas it is idle to pretend that they do. Lord Rosebery finds a partial explanation in the fact that the sea

is the British element, that our sailors have generally been more popular than our soldiers. That was true, no doubt, in the time of the Great War, especially the earlier periods of it, when men could not but understand what their navy was doing for them and could not but realize how ill-fitted the organizers and leaders of Walcheren Expeditions and the like were to emulate the great deeds of their sailors and naval administrators. But it can hardly be true of the greater part of the last century when Englishmen well-nigh forgot for a time all that the sea had done for them and all that it must still do for them. We must look beyond the naval genius of Nelson, beyond even the splendid tale of his victories, if we would find a complete explanation. "There are," as Lord Rosebery has said, "other reasons. There was perhaps the fascinating incongruity of so great a warrior's soul being encased in so shrivelled a shell. Then there was his chivalrous devotion to his officers and men. There was the manifest and surpassing patriotism. There was the easy confidence of victory. In him the pugnacious British instinct was incarnate; with Nelson to see the foe was to fight him; he only found himself in the fury of battle. . . . His unwearied pertinacity was not less remarkable. . . . Again, he was brilliantly single-minded, unselfish, and unsordid. . . . All these qualities appealed irresistibly to mankind. But the main cause of his popularity, splendour of victory apart, is broader and simpler. Nelson was eminently human." Other reasons might perhaps be assigned, but the last includes them all. Not only was Nelson eminently human, he was also eminently, even pre-eminently lovable. He had no social advantages. He was not versed in the ways of society. Even in his profession his early experience of the sea was obtained in a merchantman, and as a young officer he served mostly in small ships and isolated commands. "It is clear," says Colomb, "that neither society nor its superiors were ever quite sure of Nelson. He was liable to be called 'an odd sort of person.' He was not altogether sure of

himself." He had, too, the restless, yearning, melancholy temperament of genius, and, like Wolfe, he had his moments, as we see from Wellington's anecdote, of vanity and gasconade. Thus neither education, nor society, nor even the training and traditions of his profession did much to make Nelson what he was. His rare gifts of human sympathy and fellowship were born of his personality, not of his environment, just as those higher qualities of hottest courage mated with coolest judgment, of that incomparable instinct for victory which seemed only to be quickened by the fury of battle, were his nature and his alone. Anyhow, to all his great qualities as a fighter and leader he added that rarest and most precious of all, the quality of loving and being loved. "The most brilliant leader," to quote Colomb again, "that the British Navy ever produced veiled his leadership and sank its functions in his followers. They were his companions and colleagues in all advances to the front, and they scarcely knew that it was his spirit that animated them all and made them 'a band of brothers,' " as he called those who fought under him at the Nile. Yet though they did not know all that they owed to him, they must have known and felt that they owed to him more than to any other man.

Moreover, it was not merely in the hour of battle that his presence and his influence were supreme. There was never an occasion when generosity, loving-kindness, and tender consideration were needed that Nelson did not display them to a degree that might put all other men to shame. The story is well-known how, when he was hastening in the *Minerve* to join Jervis just before the battle of St. Vincent and hotly chased in the Straits by several Spanish men-of-war, a man fell overboard, and Hardy, then a lieutenant, was lowered in a boat to pick him up. The man, however, could not be found, nor could the boat be recovered unless the way of the frigate was checked. The nearest Spaniard was almost within gun-shot, and perhaps any other man than Nelson would have felt that

the boat, even with Hardy in it, must be sacrificed to the safety of the frigate and all that it meant to Jervis. But Nelson was not made in that mould. "By God, I'll not lose Hardy!" he exclaimed, "back the mizen-topsail." The boat was picked up and Hardy was saved to give that last kiss to his dying chief in one of the great historic moments of the world. In the light of this anecdote are not the words of the dying hero, "Kiss me, Hardy," invested with a sublimer pathos than ever? Again, when returning from the one great failure of his life, at Teneriffe, baffled, disheartened, weak from the loss of blood, with his shattered arm hanging helpless in his sleeve, Nelson refused to be taken on board the *Seahorse*, the nearest ship to the shore, his own ship, the *Theseus*, lying much further out to sea. The *Seahorse* was commanded by Fremantle, who had been left on shore, whether dead or a prisoner no one knew, and Mrs. Fremantle was on board. Nelson was told that it might be death to him to refuse: "Then I will die," he exclaimed. "I would rather suffer death than alarm Mrs. Fremantle by her seeing me in this state and when I can give her no tidings whatever of her husband." He was then taken on board his own ship and there climbed up the side by one man-rope, calling for the surgeon as he reached the quarter-deck to come and take his arm off. None but a Nelson could have acted thus—so mighty and so indomitable and withal so truly gentle was the spirit that found its tenement in that puny and weakling frame.

Incidents such as these might be cited largely from the story of Nelson's life. But two more must suffice. We know how eager he always was in pursuit, how covetous he was of victory, and how jealous in husbanding the resources needed to secure it. Yet on two occasions during his last campaign he restrained those noble impulses altogether, out of consideration for two men, Keats and Calder, one of whom he loved and trusted, while the other he neither liked nor even greatly respected. Keats commanded the *Superb*, which was so rotten that, during the

blockade of Toulon, Nelson declared that no one but Keats could have kept her afloat. The *Superb*, in spite of her rotten condition, accompanied Nelson in his pursuit of Villeneuve to the West Indies, but she was the slowest ship in the squadron, though Keats had lashed his studding-sail booms to the masts, and obtained permission not to stop when other ships did, but always to carry a press of sail. Nelson feared that Keats might fret at this, for we may be very sure that he fretted at it himself, and it was just this that made him so sympathetic and considerate. "My dear Keats," he wrote, "I am fearful that you may think that the *Superb* does not go as fast as I could wish. However that may be (for if we all went ten knots I should not think we went fast enough), yet I would have you be assured that I know and feel that the *Superb* does all which is possible for a ship to accomplish, and I desire that you will not fret upon the occasion." For Calder, whom he disliked, his consideration was even more magnanimous. Calder, who had failed to bring Villeneuve to a decisive action when he had an opportunity which Nelson would assuredly have seized and improved, was ordered home, and left the fleet about a week before Trafalgar was fought. Nelson had been ordered to remove him from his own flagship and to send him home in another vessel which could better be spared. But though he neither liked Calder nor thought him a good officer, he was so touched by Calder's humiliation and distress that in defiance of orders he allowed him to take his flagship home. "Sir Robert felt so much," he wrote to the First Lord, "even at the idea of being removed from his own ship which he commanded, in the face of the fleet, that I much fear that I shall incur the censure of the Board of Admiralty. . . . I may be thought wrong, as an officer, to disobey the orders of the Admiralty, by not insisting on Sir Robert Calder's quitting the *Prince of Wales* for the *Dreadnought*, and for parting with a 90-gun ship before the force arrives which their lordships have judged necessary; but I trust that

I shall be considered to have done right as a man and to a brother officer in affliction. My heart could not stand it, and so the thing must rest." Accordingly Calder was allowed to take the *Prince of Wales* home, and Nelson, covetous as he was of victory, and convinced as he was that "numbers only can annihilate," parted with a 90-gun ship when he knew that the enemy's force was superior to his own. Such an act of intrepid generosity, generous even to the verge of quixotism, was characteristic of Nelson alone. No other man would have dared to do it. No other man would have been forgiven for doing it. Nor did it end in spirit even there. As the *Victory* was going into action, Nelson still thought kindly of the man whose only function in history is to afford a contrast to himself. "Hardy," he said, "what would poor Sir Robert Calder give to be with us now!"

This, his ruling passion of loving-kindness and tenderness of heart, was strong even in death. Just as he would not go on board the *Seahorse* at Teneriffe lest Mrs. Fremantle should be alarmed, so, as he was carried below at Trafalgar after receiving his death wound, he covered his face and stars with his handkerchief in order that, as Beatty, who tells the story, says, "he might be conveyed to the cock-pit at this crisis unnoticed by the crew." There at this supreme moment, still thinking of others and not of himself, and with "Thank God, I have done my duty" on his lips, let us leave him in all the majesty of a great hero's death. There is but one Nelson.



ADMIRAL DUNCAN

Painted by Hoppner in 1788. Reproduced by permission of the Earl of Camperdown, from the original in his possession

[To face p. 129]

DUNCAN¹

IN the middle of the eighteenth century a Member of Parliament became known to his contemporaries as "Single Speech Hamilton." On the memorable occasion which gave an opposition to the House of Commons, and the seals of a Secretary of State to the elder Fox, while it drew from Pitt one of the most famous of his speeches and quite the most celebrated of his metaphors, William Gerard Hamilton delivered his first and only speech. "He spoke for the first time," says Horace Walpole, who heard him, "and was at once perfection." He never spoke in the House of Commons again. "Yet a volume he has left of maxims for debating in the House of Commons proves," says Lord Stanhope, "how deeply and carefully he had made that subject his study." The unique effort of the debate on the Address in 1755—which placed Hamilton for the moment almost on a level with Pitt—was at once the fruit and the proof of the speaker's mastery of *Parliamentary Logic*. He spoke well because he had studied the whole art of parliamentary fence and fathomed all its secrets. He seemed to flash across the parliamentary sky like a sudden and brilliant meteor glowing only for a moment. But the *Parliamentary Logic* reveals the source from which the meteor derived its lustre, and proves that its fuel was not exhausted, though it never glowed again.

As Gerard Hamilton was called "Single Speech Hamilton," so Admiral Duncan, the victor of Camperdown, might well be called "Single Action Duncan." But the parallel must not be pressed too closely. The parlia-

¹ *Quarterly Review*, January 1899.

mentary combatant well equipped for the fray need never wait long for his opportunity. As a rule, he is prompt and even importunate to seize it. The naval commander, on the other hand, cannot make his opportunities. He can only take them when they come. "His object," as Nelson said in a pregnant sentence, "is to embrace the happy moment which now and then offers—it may be this day, not for a month, and perhaps never." For this his whole life must be a preparation. With an instant readiness to perceive, seize, and improve the happy moment when it comes, he must be content even if it never does come. To many a mute, inglorious Nelson it may never come. To Duncan it came at the battle of Camperdown. But it only came when he had been more than fifty years in the service. In this he at once resembles and differs from Hamilton. Each was master of his art. But Hamilton found his opportunity early in life and never sought another, though he might have found them by the score. Opportunity constantly passed Duncan by, and only found him at last when his course was well-nigh run. The two were alike in readiness of preparation, but unlike in felicity of opportunity. Hamilton was "Single Speech Hamilton" by choice; Duncan was "Single Action Duncan" by necessity. Hamilton lives only in a nickname; Duncan lives in the memory of a splendid victory.

And yet he does not all live. No contemporary biographer thought his life worthy of detailed record, and naval historians have for the most part treated his great victory as an insignificant episode in the vast drama of Napoleonic war—an episode which raised no strategic issues of more than subordinate moment. At last, just a hundred years after the battle of Camperdown was fought and won, the present Earl of Camperdown, the great-grandson of the victor who never himself bore the title which commemorates his victory, has laudably sought to place on record such memorials of his great ancestor as may still be salvaged from the wreck of time.

Writing on the hundredth anniversary of the battle which Duncan won, Lord Camperdown says :

Just one hundred years have passed since the sea-fight off Camperdown on October 11, 1797, which decided the fate of the Dutch Navy ; and a Centenary seems a not inopportune moment to place on record some incidents in the life and naval career of Admiral Duncan which have hitherto remained unpublished.

He had the honour to be one of the great Sea Commanders whom the perils of Great Britain in the eighteenth century called into existence. Boscawen, Hawke, Keppel, Howe, Rodney, Hood, St. Vincent, Nelson, Collingwood, were of the number. Of all these famous sailors there are written memorials, which will keep their memory green as long as there is a British Empire, and which tell how, in the eighteenth century, superior seamanship and daring time after time warded off and finally brought to naught combinations of Great Britain's enemies which seemed irresistible.

It is no longer possible to write such a life of Duncan as Southey, still quivering with the emotions of a great national struggle, wrote of Nelson at the beginning of the last century, or as Captain Mahan has written at its close, availing himself of all the materials which an abiding interest in the most romantic and most brilliant of naval careers has amassed in such profusion. Nor does the subject demand a treatment either so classical or so exhaustive. Duncan was not a Nelson. He lacked that dæmonic force of genius, that magnetic charm of personality which made Nelson unique. But he was a great seaman, and he lived in an age of great seamen. He entered the Navy in the year of Culloden and died the year before Trafalgar. He was Keppel's pupil and afterwards his favourite captain. " He may truly be said to have received his professional education in Keppel's school, having served under him in the several ranks of midshipman, third, second, and first lieutenant, flag and post captain ; indeed, with the exception of a short time

with Captain Barrington, he had no other commander during the Seven Years' War."

At different times he served under Boscawen, Hawke, Rodney, and Howe. Jervis was his contemporary and friend. Nelson himself wrote after the battle of the Nile that he had "profited by his example," and a close resemblance may be traced between the mode of attack adopted by Duncan at Camperdown and that adopted by Nelson at Trafalgar. But though he lived in an age of war and fought in many a famous fight, his career reached no heroic level until his opportunity came at last after fifty years of service. Yet, little as we now can know of the details of his youthful years, it is plain from that little that whenever his opportunity had come he would have been equal to it. It is certain that quite early in his career he acquired a reputation for courage and coolness; and "there is a tradition," says his biographer, "that he was always first to volunteer for the boats or to lead the boarders." After Camperdown a blue-jacket wrote home to his father: "They say as how they are going to make a Lord of our Admiral. They can't make too much of him. He is heart of oak; he is a seaman every inch of him, and as to a bit of a broadside, it only makes the old cock young again." Many anecdotes attest his skill as a seaman, and one in particular deserves to be quoted as showing what seamanship meant in those days:

The *Monarch* was a notoriously indifferent sailer, and uncoppered when Duncan commanded her; and yet he was able in sailing to hold his own with ships far superior to her, in Rodney's action with Langara off Cape St. Vincent in 1780, and on other occasions. As an instance of her smartness, his nephew, Mr. Haldane, has narrated how on one occasion, when pursuing some French men-of-war, "the *Monarch*, outsailing the rest of the Squadron, got into the midst of a Convoy, and her discipline was such that boats were let down on each side without swamping, filled with armed crews to take possession of the prizes, whilst the *Monarch* never slackened her speed,

but with studding sails set, bore down on the flying ships of war."

There is evidence, too, to show that, like all great sea-captains, from Drake to Nelson, Duncan possessed that rare instinct for war which never lets an opportunity slip, is never daunted by mere numbers, and knows when to yield to what Captain Mahan calls "an inspired blindness which at the moment of decisive action sees not the risks but the one only road to possible victory." Perhaps no campaign in which a British fleet has ever engaged is a finer touchstone of this instinct than that which ended so ingloriously when Sir Charles Hardy retreated up the Channel before D'Orvilliers in 1779. Lord Camperdown briefly describes it and Duncan's share in it as follows :

During the summer of 1779 the *Monarch* was attached to the Channel Fleet, now under the command of Sir Charles Hardy owing to the resignation of Admiral Keppel.

Spain had declared war in the month of June, and on July 9 it was announced by Royal Proclamation that an invasion by a combined French and Spanish force was to be apprehended.

The French fleet sailing from Brest under Count D'Orvilliers was permitted without opposition to unite with the Spanish fleet under Don Luis de Cordova, and on August 16 sixty-six sail of the line were off Plymouth. The Channel Fleet had missed them, and was to the south-west of Scilly.

In the Channel Fleet were men who were burning to engage the enemy. Captain Jervis in the *Foudroyant* wrote to his sister :

"August 24, twenty leagues south-west of Scilly.

"A long easterly wind has prevented our getting into the Channel, to measure with the combined fleets. What a humiliating state is our country reduced to! Not that I have the smallest doubt of clearing the coast of these proud invaders. The first westerly wind will carry us into the combined fleets. . . . I and all around me have the fullest confidence of success and of acquiring immortal reputation."

On August 29 a strong easterly wind forced the combined fleets down the Channel, and on September 1 they found themselves in presence of the British Fleet a few miles from the Eddystone.

Sir Charles Hardy had only thirty-eight ships, and deciding that it would be imprudent to risk an engagement, he retreated up the Channel, and on September 3 anchored at Spithead, much to the disgust of some of his officers. Captain Jervis, who in the *Foudroyant* was second astern of Sir Charles Hardy in the *Victory*, wrote : " I am in the most humbled state of mind I ever experienced, from the retreat we have made before the combined fleets all yesterday and all this morning."

Captain Duncan told his nephew of his own impotent indignation and shame, and how he could " only stand looking over the stern gallery of the *Monarch*."

This was probably the only occasion on which either of those officers retreated before an enemy. The fundamental article of their nautical creed was that an enemy when once encountered must not be permitted to part company without an action. From this line of conduct neither of them willingly ever deviated one hair's-breadth. It is safe to assert that if either had on that day been in a position to give orders to the Channel Fleet a larger Cape St. Vincent or a larger Camperdown would have been fought off Scilly, though not impossibly with a different result. If, however, the *Foudroyant* and the *Monarch* had been sunk, it is certain from their record that French and Spanish ships would have gone down as well, and that even if the combined fleets had come off victorious, their condition would have been such as to give England no cause for apprehension on the score of invasion.

As events happened, the combined fleets held for some weeks undisputed command of the Channel, but, happily for Great Britain, neglected to make any use of their advantage. The Spaniards wished to effect a landing ; the French wished before landing to defeat the British fleet. The crews became sickly ; the ships were defective, and the season for equinoctial gales was at hand. The Spanish commander declared to Count D'Orvilliers that he must relinquish the present enterprise and return to the ports of his own country ; and the French admiral

had no other course open to him but to acquiesce and to retire to Brest.

This critical episode in our naval history has perhaps never been quite adequately appreciated. The odds were tremendous—thirty-eight British ships of the line against sixty-six in the combined French and Spanish fleets—far greater odds than Nelson encountered when he attacked thirty-three ships of the line with twenty-seven at Trafalgar. The late Admiral Colomb thought that “the only reasonable strategy for Sir Charles Hardy was that adopted so long before by Lord Torrington, a policy of observation and threatening; and such a policy would have left the British fleet at St. Helen’s with abundant scouts . . . to give the earliest information of the enemy’s approach.” But Hardy adopted neither Torrington’s strategy nor that of his critics. For nearly the whole of the month of August he cruised aimlessly in the Soundings—as the region between Ushant and Cape Clear, known as “the Sleeve” to Elizabethan seamen, was then called—leaving D’Orvilliers to the eastward with the whole of the Channel open to him, though he was by no means in “undisputed command” of it. More by good luck than by any skill in tactics or the pursuit of any strategic purpose that can now be discerned, Hardy managed, towards the end of the month, to get to the eastward of an antagonist apparently as supine or else as incapable as himself; and, though the fleets were now in contact, his one thought was retreat. On the evening of September 3, he anchored in comparative safety at Spithead.

These proceedings are quite unintelligible. If Hardy did not intend to risk an action except on his own terms, he never should have been in the Soundings at all. On the other hand, D’Orvilliers’ proceedings seem to have been equally inept, and can only be explained by supposing that his fleet was paralysed by sickness, by ill-equipment, and by divided counsels. Now what would

Nelson have done in such a case? He was, says Captain Mahan, "a man with whom moral effect was never in excess of the facts of the case, whose imagination produced in him no paralysing picture of remote contingencies." Shortly before Trafalgar "he expressed with the utmost decision his clear appreciation that even a lost battle would frustrate the ulterior objects of the enemy, by crippling the force upon which they depended." Torrington, we know, would have temporized. He would never have gone to the Soundings. Before all things he would have striven to keep his fleet "in being." "Whilst we observe the French," he said, "they cannot make any attempt on ships or shore without running a great hazard; and if we are beaten all is exposed to their mercy." To have gone to the Soundings would have been to put himself, as Howard of Effingham said on a like occasion, "clean out of the way of any service against" the enemy. He would rather have placed himself where he could best observe the enemy's movements, and would at any rate have taken care never to lose touch of them. This is no doubt the correct strategy of the situation, and had Hardy adopted it none could have blamed him. But it is not necessarily the strategy that would have commended itself to a consummate master of naval war. Nelson would not have been daunted by the mere disparity of numbers. When with eleven ships of the line only he was following Villeneuve back from the West Indies, he said to his captains:

I am thankful that the enemy has been driven from the West India islands with so little loss to our country. I had made up my mind to great sacrifices; for I had determined, notwithstanding his vast superiority, to stop his career, and to put it out of his power to do further mischief. Yet do not imagine that I am one of those hot-brained people who fight at immense disadvantage without an adequate object. My object is partly gained. If we meet them we shall find them not less than eighteen, I rather think twenty sail of the line, and therefore

do not be surprised if I should not fall on them immediately: we won't part without a battle. I think they will be glad to let me alone, if I will let them alone; which I will do, either till we approach the shores of Europe, or they give me an advantage too tempting to be resisted.

In these memorable words the strategy of Torrington is transfigured, but not superseded, by the genius of Nelson. Had he been in Hardy's place, Nelson, we may be sure, would never have gone to the Soundings; he would have observed and threatened, as Admiral Colomb said; he would not have "fought at a great disadvantage without an adequate object," as Nottingham insisted on Torrington's doing; but he would not have parted without a battle. Had he found D'Orvilliers inclined to "let him alone," that would have been his reason for not letting D'Orvilliers alone. He would have seen at once that D'Orvilliers' obvious reluctance to risk a decisive engagement, notwithstanding his vast superiority, was just the reason why he on his side should seize an advantage too tempting to be resisted. He might not know what D'Orvilliers' precise reasons were for not risking an engagement; but his unerring instinct for war and its opportunities would have told him that this was just one of the occasions on which he might make great sacrifices in order to stop his adversary's career, and "put it out of his power to do any further mischief."

It is, indeed, hardly possible to doubt that had Nelson been in Hardy's place the defeat of D'Orvilliers would have been as crushing as that of the Armada. So much is clear from the general character of the situation viewed in the light of Nelson's recorded opinions. The conclusion is confirmed and rendered practically certain by the known attitude of Jervis and Duncan. Both were prepared to fight against the odds that had daunted their chief, and both were confident of victory. Both must have satisfied themselves that D'Orvilliers had no stomach for fighting, and each must have felt that that was the

best reason for attempting, at all hazards, out of the nettle danger to pluck the flower safety. Lord North said afterwards in the House of Commons that "had Sir Charles Hardy known then, as he did afterwards, the internal state of the combined fleet, he would have wished and earnestly sought an engagement notwithstanding his inferiority of force." Hardy knew this only when it was too late. Jervis and Duncan knew it or divined it at the time. Nelson's spirit was theirs, and they had not served under Hawke for nothing. The man who wins in battle, said Napoleon, is the man who is last afraid. *Bene ausus vana contemnere*, as Livy says of Alexander's conquest of Darius, is the eternal secret of triumphant war. This is the temper that wins great victories, and may even defy overwhelming odds. Jervis had it, and it won him his famous victory at St. Vincent, where he fearlessly attacked and vanquished twenty-seven Spanish ships with fifteen British, because, as he said, "a victory is very essential to England at this moment." Duncan showed it at the Texel when, as Mr. Newbolt sings :

Fifteen sail were the Dutchmen bold,
 Duncan he had but two ;
 But he anchored them fast where the Texel shoaled,
 And his colours aloft he flew.
 " I've taken the depth to a fathom," he cried,
 " And I'll sink with a right good will :
 For I know when we're all of us under the tide,
 My flag will be fluttering still."

Such a man was Duncan in those earlier days of which no full record can now be recovered. We see how skilfully he could handle his ship as a captain, how soundly he could estimate a situation as critical as British naval history presents. In person " he was of size and strength almost gigantic. He is described as six feet four in height, and of corresponding breadth. When a young lieutenant walking through the streets of Chatham his grand figure and handsome face attracted crowds of admirers, and to the last he is spoken of as a singularly

handsome man." His bodily strength was effectively displayed on a memorable occasion during the mutiny :

On May 13 there was a serious rising on board the *Adamant*. The Admiral proceeded on board, hoisted his flag, and mustered the ship's company. " My lads," he said, " I am not in the smallest degree apprehensive of any violent measures you may have in contemplation ; and though I assure you I would much rather acquire your love than incur your fear, I will with my own hand put to death the first man who shall display the slightest signs of rebellious conduct." He then demanded to know if there was any individual who presumed to dispute his authority or that of the officers. A man came forward and said insolently, " I do." The Admiral immediately seized him by the collar and thrust him over the side of the ship, where he held him suspended by one arm, and said, " My lads, look at this fellow, he who dares to deprive me of the command of the fleet."

But in spite of these great qualities, well known to his comrades and superiors and not unknown to his countrymen at large, Duncan never came to the front until the close of his career. He became a captain in 1761, when he was only thirty years of age, and was promoted to flag rank twenty-six years later, in 1787. Of these twenty-six years more than half were spent upon half-pay. Even after he became an admiral he had to endure another period of inactivity, lasting for eight years, until his appointment in 1795 to the command of the North Sea fleet. Political sympathies and antipathies may have had something to do with this, for in those days a man often obtained employment in the Navy, not on account of his professional fitness, but in virtue of his political influence and complexion. But though Duncan belonged to a Whig family and inclined to Whig principles, he " never at any time in his life took any active part in politics," and his close association with Keppel's fortunes does not seem to have injured his professional prospects. The truth seems to be, as Lord Camperdown acknow-

ledges, that the alternations of peace and war, of rapid and slow promotion, of frequent and infrequent employment, occurred in Duncan's career not favourably for his advancement :

It was his ill-luck to be born at the wrong time for advancement as a captain. As a lieutenant he came in for the Seven Years' War, and took every advantage of his opportunities, but he became a captain just before the peace of 1763, and had only had time for the expedition to Belle-isle and the Havannah.

The years which followed his promotion to flag rank—

were likewise years of peace ; and a junior rear-admiral could hardly expect a command under such circumstances. Nor does it seem that he would have fared better if he had been born ten or fifteen years sooner or later. If he had been a captain early in the Seven Years' War, he would have had nothing to do as an admiral. If he had entered the service at the end of the Seven Years' War he would have had no opportunity of making his name as a lieutenant.

Thus the early promotions of the last century, which naval officers of these days sometimes regard with envy, were no guarantee of a distinguished career. Duncan was a captain at thirty, but he became an admiral only at fifty-six, and he never commanded a fleet at sea until he was sixty-four. The only advantage he had over officers of the present day is that " the blind Fury " of compulsory retirement never came " with th' abhorred shears and slit the thin-spun life " of his active service. In these days Duncan would have been retired as a captain a year before he was promoted to flag-rank. As a rear-admiral or as a flag-officer who had not hoisted his flag he would again have been retired four years before he took command of the North Sea fleet. Even as a vice-admiral in command of that fleet he would have been retired a year before the battle of Camperdown was fought. Com-

pulsory retirement is no doubt a necessity, but it is not always an advantage. The promotion of a dozen men of the stamp of Sir Charles Hardy would be dearly purchased by the retirement of a single Jervis or a single Duncan.

Duncan has been called, not without reason, one of the "suppressed characters" of naval history. There is another "suppressed character" with whom his name is closely and most honourably associated. Perhaps no man's share in the overthrow of Napoleon and the triumph of British naval arms has been less adequately appreciated by historians in general than that of the second Earl Spencer, Pitt's First Lord of the Admiralty from 1794 to 1801. Assuming office shortly after Howe's victory of the First of June, Lord Spencer remained First Lord of the Admiralty until Pitt resigned at the beginning of the first year of the century. In this period the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore were encountered and composed—we can hardly call them suppressed—and the victories of St. Vincent, Camperdown, and the Nile were won. But this was perhaps as much Spencer's fortune as his merit. His true glory consists in his admirable devotion to the affairs of the navy, in the insight, judgment, and tact with which he selected and supported such men as St. Vincent, Duncan, and Nelson. Some of his own letters are preserved in the correspondence of Nelson and some in the papers of Duncan. But unfortunately the bulk of his private correspondence with these and other great naval heroes was destroyed by accident at Althorp, and thus the world has been deprived of an authentic and detailed record of his administration, though students of naval history will find in the materials we have indicated abundant evidence of its quality. Nor will they fail to appreciate the part played by his gifted wife in furthering the triumphs of his administration. A leader and queen of society, fascinating, generous, and nobly impulsive, Lady Spencer knew how to second her husband's labours by her rare gift of sympathy without

ever attempting to usurp his responsibilities. Her ecstatic letter to Nelson congratulating him on his triumph at the Nile is well known. It has passed into the literature of the battle. Lord Camperdown enables us to compare it with the letter she wrote to Duncan after the battle of Camperdown, and from the comparison to draw the inference, sustained by other letters from the same pen, that no First Lord of the Admiralty was ever happier in the generous sympathies of a wife who knew so well how to touch a sailor's heart :

What shall I say to you, my dear and victorious Admiral? Where shall I find words to convey to you the slightest idea of the enthusiasm created by your glorious, splendid, and memorable achievements? Not in the English Language; and no other is worthy of being used upon so truly British an exploit. As an English woman, as an Irish woman, as Lord Spencer's wife, I cannot express to you my grateful feelings. But amongst the number of delightful sensations which crowd upon me since Friday last, surprise is not included. The man who has struggled thro' all the difficulties of everlasting N. Sea Cruizes, of hardships of every kind, of storms, of cold, of perpetual disappointments, without a murmur, without a regret, and lastly who most unprecedentedly braved an enemy's fleet of sixteen or twenty sail of the line, with only two Men of War in a state of mutiny to oppose them: *That Man*, acquiring the honour and glory you have done on the 11th of October did not surprize me. But greatly have you been rewarded for your past sufferings. Never will a fairer fame descend to posterity than yours, and the gratitude of a great nation must give you feelings which will thaw away all that remains of your Northern mists and miseries. God, who allowed you to reap so glorious an harvest of honour and glory, who rewarded your well borne toils by such extraordinary success, keep you safe and well to enjoy for many years the fame He enabled you to acquire on this most distinguished occasion.

Ever yours with gratitude and esteem,
LAVINIA SPENCER.

If we except Sir John Laughton, whose notice of Lord Spencer in the *Dictionary of National Biography* only anticipated by a few weeks the publication of Lord Camperdown's volume, Lord Camperdown is perhaps the first writer to recognize the full splendour of Lord Spencer's services and to do tardy justice to his memory. It is due to both to extract the following just and graceful tribute :

It is not possible to allow Lord Spencer to pass off the scene without a word of tribute to his administration. When he became First Lord of the Admiralty he found the Navy sunk in disorder and neglect, and among the Officers a want of confidence in the Administration at home. He succeeded in selecting capable Admirals for every command, with all of whom he by incessant labour maintained intimate and constant relations. He was full of energy and ideas. If he did not always appreciate and realize so fully as they did through their experience the defects of the ships under their command, both in number and quality, he did the best that he could in the way of apportioning and manipulating the forces which were at his disposal, while he never ceased to urge the necessity of an energetic and vigorous policy, and to express his conviction that the British Fleets would prove victorious. All the Admirals felt confidence in him, as their memoirs and letters show, and at the time of his resignation the Navy was animated by a splendid spirit, and contained a large number of Officers whose names afterwards became household words. He performed a great service to his country, which ought always to be kept in remembrance. To use Lady Spencer's eloquent words, "England, Ireland, and India were all saved by victories won during his term of office," and in no inconsiderable degree through his means. Taking his administration and policy as a whole he did as much as any man—perhaps more than any one man—to ruin the fortunes of Napoleon upon the ocean.

It was to Lord Spencer's sagacity that the country owed Duncan's appointment to the command in the North Sea. It is recorded that "in going over the list

of Admirals with Mr. Henry Dundas, Lord Spencer said, 'What can be the reason that "Keppel's Duncan" has never been brought forward?' Upon this Mr. Dundas said that he thought he would like employment, and added that he had married his niece. The same night he was appointed Commander-in-Chief in the North Sea."

The story is characteristic. Very likely Dundas's recommendation of his niece's husband turned the scale; but he owed at least that much to his kinsman, for before the marriage he had pledged his niece never, directly or indirectly, to use any influence to induce Duncan to give up his profession, and she had faithfully kept the pledge—no difficult task perhaps in the case of a husband so wedded to the sea. In any case it is clear, however, that Spencer had his eye on Duncan before he was made aware of Dundas's interest in him, and certainly no appointment did greater credit to his insight.

Duncan's position was a very difficult one from first to last. The North Sea was no established station for a British fleet. It was improvised for the occasion when Holland fell under the sway of Napoleon and the Dutch fleet became an important factor in the European conflict. As was the station so was the fleet. It was necessary to blockade the Texel, but it was not possible to tell off a fully organized and well equipped fleet for the purpose. Duncan had to take such ships as he could get, and such as he had were constantly ordered about by the Admiralty on detached or independent service without so much as consulting him beforehand. A letter from Sir Charles Middleton—afterwards that Lord Barham who fortunately for his own fame and his country's welfare was First Lord of the Admiralty at the close of the Trafalgar campaign—well serves to illustrate the situation. In August 1795 he wrote :

My own wish is to have your force very strong, but I plainly perceive from the many irons we have in the fire that I shall be overruled. The same cause obliges us to

employ your frigates on many extra services, and which I have charged the secretary to acquaint you with as often as it happens ; but necessary as this information is for your guidance I am afraid it is often forgot.

Several letters from Lord Spencer himself are to the same effect, and though very few of Duncan's own letters are preserved it is plain that the difficulties of the situation weighed heavily upon him. At various times during his command he had a large Russian squadron under his orders. The Russian ships were, however, unfit for winter cruising, and therefore, during the worst season of the year, the brunt of the blockade often fell upon Duncan's attenuated and overworked squadron. Moreover, the presence of the Russian ships was not without its embarrassments. He had no very high opinion of their quality, and on two occasions at least he went so far as to protest against his being expected to go to sea with Russian ships alone under his command, his own ships being employed on various detached services. In November 1795 he wrote to Lord Spencer :

I never could see any reason for the Russian fleet being detained through the winter, but to be ready early in the spring, and it always was my opinion that they were unfit for winter cruising. Now, as to myself, I will say what I once did before : I am the first British Admiral that ever was ordered on service with foreigners only, and I must beg further to say that I shall look upon it as an indignity if some British ships are not directed to attend me.

It is significant of much that a man of Duncan's self-possession and sense of discipline should write in this strain. He was not the man to complain needlessly, and his tact, patience, and good sense had reduced to a *minimum* the friction that inevitably attends the co-operation of allied fleets ; but he felt that a great charge had been entrusted to him, and that the means with which he was furnished were inadequate to enable him to satisfy the

country's expectations. But in spite of an occasional complaint, which was assuredly not ill-founded, his whole attitude was that which Torrington long ago expressed in words which the British Navy has often so splendidly justified: "My Lord, I know my business and will do the best with what I have." On the other hand, it may fairly be held that had a Byng, a Hardy, or a Calder been in Duncan's place the country might have had to rue a very different issue from the campaign in the North Sea. Opinions may differ as to the quality and temper of the Dutch fleet. But the quality of any fleet which is preparing to take the sea cannot prudently be taken by its enemy at any estimate but a high one. The war was in its early stages, its area was widening, the contagion of the French Revolution was fast spreading beyond the borders of France, and in the spring of 1795 an alliance was concluded between the French and Batavian Republics, by which it was agreed that Holland should aid France with twelve ships of the line and eighteen frigates, as well as with half the Dutch troops under arms. This was no insignificant addition to the naval forces of a Power which, since the beginning of the war, had only once crossed swords with England in a fleet action at sea, and then, though defeated, had not been overpowered. The "glorious victory" of the First of June acquired that honourable epithet partly from the brilliant results immediately attained by it—the two sides were fairly matched at the outset and Lord Howe captured six French ships of the line—but still more perhaps from the fact that it was the first naval victory of a war which had then lasted more than a year. Though a decisive tactical victory, it was, in a strategic sense, of little moment. Villaret's fleet was not destroyed—as it might have been had not Montagu's squadron been injudiciously detached from Lord Howe's flag—and the great convoy which was coming across the Atlantic to the relief of Brest was not intercepted. In a strategic sense, in fact, Villaret had outmanœuvred his adversary.

Robespierre had told him that if the convoy was captured his head should pay the penalty. He lost the battle, but he saved the convoy and saved his head. Lord Howe missed the main object for which he had manœuvred and fought.

This was in 1794. A year later the French obtained strategic control of twelve Dutch ships of the line, twice the number they had lost in Lord Howe's action, and the theatre of war was enlarged by the inclusion of the North Sea. The scenes were now setting for the great drama which ended at Trafalgar, but no one could tell as yet where its main episodes would be enacted, nor who were the actors cast for its leading parts. Near at hand, in the north, Duncan was establishing that firm grip on the Texel which, notwithstanding his slender and fortuitous forces, in spite of the mutiny, and through all the vicissitudes of season, wind, and storm, was never relaxed until the Dutch fleet was defeated off Camperdown, and the Texel itself, together with all that remained of the Dutch fleet, was surrendered in 1799. Far away in the south Hotham was vainly striving to vanquish the fleet which Hood had failed to destroy at Toulon, and Nelson, still a captain, was chafing bitterly at his chief's repeated failure to do what he knew he could have done himself. Midway in the Atlantic Bridport was showing by his action with Villaret off Ile Groix that he, at least, was not the coming man.

Such was the situation in 1795. There were three fleets of the enemy, at the Texel, at Brest, and at Toulon, to be watched, encountered, and if possible destroyed, and Duncan, Bridport, and Hotham were the three men on whom, for the time, the fate of England depended. Bridport and Hotham each had his opportunity and missed it. Duncan alone remained steadfast to the end, waited for his opportunity, and seized it. Historians, wise after the event, have chosen to assume that Duncan's position was the least important of the three, but at the time no man could have foretold at which point the stress

of conflict was likely to be felt most urgently. From the Texel a fleet and an expedition might have issued, and could they have evaded Duncan's watch they might have gained the open either for a descent on Ireland, or for some combination with the other forces of the enemy. From Brest, as we know, a year after Bridport had failed to destroy Villaret at Ile Groix, a fleet and expedition did issue, and, evading Bridport's watch, effected a descent upon Ireland, which might have succeeded for anything that Bridport did to prevent it. From Toulon, as we also know, long after Hotham had failed to destroy Martin in the Gulf of Lions, a fleet and expedition also issued, which a greater than Hotham finally shattered at the Nile. It needed the untoward fortunes of a Hoch and a Morard de Galles to undo the neglect of Bridport. It needed the splendid genius of Nelson to repair the blunders of Hotham. Duncan neglected no opportunities and made no blunders. He watched the Dutch fleet, fought and defeated it as soon as it put to sea, and compelled its final surrender as soon as troops were sent for a military occupation of the Helder. Yet historians, viewing the whole situation in the light of its final outcome, persist in regarding Duncan's achievement as a mere episode devoid of strategic moment, and in concentrating their whole attention on the more central theatre of war. It is true that no fleet of the enemy, whether at the Texel, at Brest, or at Toulon, could compass any of the larger ends of naval war except by defeating the British fleet immediately confronting it. Hoche's expedition failed chiefly through defiance of this inexorable principle. It was an attempt to do by evasion what can only be done with safety and certainty by sea supremacy established beforehand. Napoleon's expedition failed for the same reason. The projected expedition from the Texel must also have failed for the same reason in the end, could it ever have succeeded in setting out. But of the three men charged in 1795 with the safety and fate of England, Duncan alone proved equal to his trust; Bridport and

Hotham failed. His name should stand in naval history, not merely as the hero of an isolated and barren victory, but as a seaman of like quality with Jervis and Nelson themselves—rather a Hood than a Howe, and far above the level of the Bridports, the Hothams, the Manns, the Ordes, the Keiths, and the Calders.

He had dogged persistency of purpose and a stern sense of discipline, without that inflexible austerity which made the discipline of Jervis' squadron a terror to seamen and a byword to captains trained in a laxer school. With Nelson he shared the rare gift of tempering firmness with kindness, of seeking to do by love what men of the mould of Jervis must fain compass by fear. With both he shared that grasp of the situation before him and its requirements which more than anything else is the note of a native genius for war. He would make no terms with mutiny. Had he commanded at the Nore the rule of Parker would assuredly have been a brief one. "I hear," he wrote, "that people from the ships at Sheerness go ashore in numbers and play the devil. Why are there not troops to lay hold of them and secure all the boats that come from them? As to the *Sandwich*, you should get her cast adrift in the night and let her go on the sands, that the scoundrels may drown; for until some example is made this will not stop."

This was his attitude towards open mutiny; but he never allowed it to blind him to the fact that the grievances of the seamen were real and serious, and the shortcomings of the Admiralty deplorable. Pitt said that the best service Duncan ever performed for his country was in respect of the mutiny, and no one who reads Lord Camperdown's chapter on the subject can doubt that Pitt was right. The mutiny occurred at the very crisis of the blockade of the Texel, when the Dutch fleet was ready to sail accompanied by troops, and when, if ever, it might have sailed with some prospect of success. Duncan was fully informed of what was happening at Spithead and the Nore. He knew very well that the spirit of dis-

content there displayed was rife throughout the whole navy, that it rested on solid grounds of grievance, and that it might at any moment break out in his own fleet. It did break out, and for some days only two ships of the line recognized the authority of his flag, the remainder going off to join their revolted comrades at the Nore. Yet he never allowed his own flag to be hauled down, and so quickly and thoroughly did he re-establish his personal ascendancy, that although his own ship the *Venerable* had at the outset shown some alarming signs of disaffection, he was ready, if called upon, to lead it against the mutineers at the Nore, and was assured by his ship's company that they would obey his orders even in that emergency. "It is with the utmost regret," they wrote, "we hear of the proceedings of different ships in the squadron, but sincerely hope their present agrievances will be redressed as soon as possible, as it would appear unnatural for us to unsheath the sword against our brethren, notwithstanding we would wish to show ourselves like men in behalf of our Commander should necessity require."

A few days later, when Duncan set sail for the Texel, all his ships deserted him but two, his own flagship and the *Adamant*, both of which, as we have seen, had previously been reduced to obedience by his own personal prowess. Nevertheless, he held on for the Texel without a moment's hesitation, for he knew that the Dutch fleet was ready to sail, that the wind was fair, and that the paralysis which had smitten the British Navy was well known to the enemy. Two or three smaller ships accompanied him, and at least one of these, the *Circe*, was only kept from open mutiny before the enemy by the splendid fortitude of her captain, who for six days and nights sat back to back on deck with his first lieutenant, "with a loaded carbine in hand and cocked pistols in their belts, issuing orders to the officers and the few men who remained dutiful." How Duncan bore himself in this crisis has already been told in Mr. Newbolt's stirring lines,

which are really only a metrical paraphrase of the original narrative :

When the Admiral found himself off the Texel with only one ship of fifty guns besides his own, he quickly made up his mind what to do. " Vice-Admiral Onslow came on board the *Venerable* and suggested Leith Roads as a retreat of security against either an attack from the Texel or, what was infinitely more to be dreaded, the return of a detachment of the rebel fleet from the Nore. Admiral Duncan instantly declined entering into any measure of this kind, and laughingly said they would suppose he wanted to see his wife and family and would charge him with being home-sick." His plan was of a different kind. The great duty with which he was charged was to keep the Texel closed ; and, with ships or without ships, that he intended to do. He sent for Captain Hotham of the *Adamant* and ordered him to fight her until she sank, as he intended to do with the *Venerable*. He then mustered the *Venerable's* ship's company and told them plainly what lay before them, in an address of which only the substance is preserved ; that the *Venerable* was to block the Texel, and that " the soundings were such that his flag would continue to fly above the shoal water after the ship and company had disappeared " ; and that if she should survive this performance of her duty in Dutch waters, she was then to sail to the Nore and to reduce " those misguided men " to obedience. The ship's company replied, as was their custom : they said that they understood him and would obey his commands.

Those misguided men were reduced, however, before Duncan's task at the Texel was accomplished, and his splendid audacity and fortitude were rewarded by the complete success with which the Dutch were hoodwinked and prevented from sailing until the crisis was past. He reached the Texel on June 1. For three days and three nights the wind remained in the eastward, and the two ships' crews were kept at their quarters day and night. Then the wind changed, and reinforcements began to come in. It was not until the crisis was over

that the Dutch learnt that two ships alone, the aggrieved but not disloyal remnant of a Navy in open mutiny, had been so handled as to make them believe that a superior force of the enemy had been at hand during the whole time that the wind had remained favourable to their enterprise.

The signals and manœuvres of the Admiral's two ships were recalled to him afterwards by Lieutenant Brodie, who had been present in the *Rose* cutter, in a letter written on February 26, 1798. "You passed the Texel in sight of the Dutch Fleet with a Red Flag, Rear Admiral at the Mizzen, this was your First Squadron of two sail of the line: next day you appeared off the Texel with two private ships, the *Venerable* and *Adamant* with pendants only. This was two English Squadrons by the Dutch account. A few days after we were joined by the *Russel* and *Sanspareil*, when the wind came Easterly. Then the third Squadron of British ships came under their proper Admiral with Blue at the Main, and anchored in the mouth of the Texel, with four sail of the line, to block up sixteen or eighteen sail of the line, Frigates, etc., in all thirty-seven sail. It was then, my Lord, you confirmed your former manœuvres by throwing out pendants to your ships or imaginary ships in the offing, for the Dutch believed all your Fleet to be there. The next day, my Lord, all was confirmed by an American Brig which I was sent to board, coming out of the Texel. The Master informed me that the Dutchmen positively asserted that the four ships were only come in there for a decoy, and that there was a large fleet in the offing, as they saw the English Admiral making signals to them the evening he came to an anchor."

Assuredly the victory of Camperdown itself is no juster title to undying fame than the whole of Duncan's proceedings from the beginning of the mutiny to its close.

"The advantage of time and place," said Drake, "in all martial actions is half a victory; which being lost is irrecoverable." The Dutch were soon to realize the truth

of this pregnant saying. The wind was fair during the crisis of the mutiny, but the troops, though at hand, had not been embarked. By the time they were embarked, early in July, it became foul again, and Wolfe Tone, that stormy petrel of Irish disaffection and French aggression, was on board waiting in vain for a favourable turn. But "foul, dead foul"—as Nelson bitterly wrote after Ville-neuve's escape from Toulon—it remained. On July 19 Tone writes, "Wind foul still"; and on July 26, "I am to-day eighteen days on board, and we have not had eighteen minutes of fair wind." Unlike Nelson, who, as Captain Mahan tells us, "never trifled with a fair wind or with time," the Dutch had lost their opportunity. Perhaps they had not been over keen to seize it; for though the Batavian Republic ruled in Holland, and France guided its counsels, the monarchical party was by no means extinct, and its cause had many supporters in the Dutch fleet. On June 10 a British officer was sent into the Texel under a flag of truce. He was very courteously received and entertained, and reported on his return that the officers whom he had seen "expressed their hopes of a speedy peace, and by their conversation appeared very adverse to the war. They, however," he added, "speak very confidently of their force, and they have great confidence in it." The wind remained foul, however, and time wore on. Towards the middle of August the Dutch admiral, De Winter, pointed out to Tone that "Duncan's fleet had increased to seventeen sail of the line, and that the Dutch troops, so long pent up on shipboard, had consumed nearly all the provisions. It would be necessary to relinquish the expedition to Ireland."

The game in fact was up, but Duncan's task was not accomplished. So long as the Dutch fleet lay at the Texel ready for sea it was his duty to watch it, and to fight it, if it ventured out. From the 1st of June, when he appeared before the Texel with his two ships and outwitted the Dutch by "setting on a brag countenance,"

as Howard of Effingham said, until September 20, when he was directed by the Admiralty to return to Yarmouth to refit, fill up with stores and provisions, and again proceed with all despatch to his station, he never relaxed his hold, and never gave the Dutchmen a chance. At times reinforced from home, only to be weakened again by the withdrawal of ships required by the Admiralty to strengthen Jervis in the Mediterranean, harassed by winds which, though they kept the Dutch in port, constantly drove him to leeward of his station, shattered by violent gales which sorely tried his none too seaworthy ships and constantly interrupted his supply of stores, he held on with a tenacity not unworthy of Nelson off Toulon, or of Cornwallis off Brest.

But like Nelson at Toulon, Duncan was destined by an untoward fate to be away from his station when the moment of crisis came at last. Shortly after he was recalled to Yarmouth by the Admiralty, De Winter was ordered to take the Dutch fleet to sea. All thought of a military expedition to be covered by it had now been abandoned. But the Naval Committee at the Hague appear to have thought that the time had come for attempting to destroy or at least to cripple the hostile fleet which had so long blockaded their ports. De Winter's instructions were dated July 10, a time when Wolfe Tone was daily expecting a military expedition to set out, under cover of the fleet, for the invasion of Ireland; but their terms would seem to imply that the Dutch plan was the far sounder one of striving to dispose of Duncan before allowing the troops to start. De Winter was instructed to destroy the enemy's fleet if possible; carefully to avoid a battle "in the case of the enemy's forces being far superior to his own": but at the same time to bear in mind "how frequently the Dutch Admirals had maintained the honour of the Dutch flag, even when the enemy's forces were sometimes superior to theirs"; and "in the case of an approaching engagement, as far as circumstances permit, to try and draw the enemy as near

to the harbours of the Republic as will be found possible in conformity with the rules of prudence and strategy." On October 5 he was ordered to put to sea "as soon as the wind should be favourable," and to act in accordance with these instructions.

Admiral Colomb held that the battle of Camperdown was "wasteful of naval force, and unmeaning as to any possible advantage to be gained. The Dutch fleet had landed all the troops and abandoned the idea of invasion, so that when it was determined to put to sea in the face of a known superior fleet of British ships, the enterprise was objectless." The fact of the troops having been landed can hardly be held to have militated against the success of De Winter's enterprise, since it is difficult to see how the presence of troops either on board or under the wing of the fighting force could in any way have added to its naval strength. So long as Duncan was, in Elizabethan phrase, "on the jacks" of De Winter the latter could do nothing, with or without troops, until he had disposed of his adversary. This was what he was sent out to do. He was instructed to "try and cause as much damage to the enemy as possible," to fight him if he found him not so superior in strength as to destroy all hope of victory, but in the opposite alternative "carefully to avoid a battle." These instructions were, in my judgment, well conceived. They were foiled, not by Duncan's superior force, for on the day of battle the two fleets were approximately equal, but by his superior energy and his brilliant tactical intuition. The issue was by no means fore-ordained. The forces were equal and the Dutch enjoyed the advantage of position which had been contemplated in De Winter's instructions. The object to be attained, the "possible advantage to be gained," was the destruction of the fleet which for months had paralysed all his undertakings. Could he have compassed that end it might have been cheaply purchased by almost any sacrifice of naval force which left him master of the field. In war, as in love—

He either fears his fate too much,
Or his desert is small,
Who dares not put it to the touch
And win or lose it all.

But it was not to be. The long conflict between the Dutch and the English at sea was destined to end at Camperdown in the final overthrow of the Dutch. De Winter put to sea on October 7. Duncan with the main body of his fleet was still at Yarmouth. But some of his ships were on the watch, and by the morning of the 9th he was informed that the Dutch fleet was at sea. At 11 a.m. on that day he wrote to the Admiralty: "The squadron under my command are unmoored, and I shall put to sea immediately." The next day he was off the Texel with eleven ships of the line, and found that De Winter had not returned. What followed is best told in his own words:

At Nine o'clock in the Morning of the 11th I got Sight of Captain Trollope's Squadron, with Signals flying for an Enemy to Leeward; I immediately bore up, and made the Signal for a general Chace, and so got Sight of them, forming in a Line on the Larboard Tack to receive us, the wind at N.W. As we approached near I made the Signal for the Squadron to shorten sail, in order to connect them; soon after I saw the land between Camperdown and Egmont, about Nine Miles to Leeward of the Enemy, and finding there was no Time to be lost in making the Attack, I made the Signal to bear up, break the Enemy's Line, and engage them to Leeward, each Ship her Opponent, by which I got between them and the Land, whither they were fast approaching. My Signals were obeyed with great Promptitude, and Vice-Admiral Onslow, in the *Monarch*, bore down on the Enemy's Rear in the most gallant Manner, his Division following his Example; and the Action commenced about Forty Minutes past Twelve o'Clock. The *Venerable* soon got through the Enemy's Line, and I began a close action, with my Division on their Van, which lasted near Two Hours and a Half, when I observed all the Masts of the Dutch Admiral's Ship to go by the Board; she was,

however, defended for some Time in a most gallant Manner ; but being overpressed by Numbers, her Colours were struck, and Admiral De Winter was soon brought on Board the *Venerable*. On looking around me I observed the Ship bearing the Vice-Admiral's Flag was also dismasted, and had surrendered to Vice-Admiral Onslow ; and that many others had likewise struck. Finding we were in Nine Fathoms Water, and not farther than Five Miles from the Land, my Attention was so much taken up in getting the Heads of the disabled Ships off Shore, that I was not able to distinguish the Number of Ships captured ; and the Wind having been constantly on the Land since, we have unavoidably been much dispersed, so that I have not been able to gain an exact Account of them, but we have taken Possession of Eight or Nine ; more of them had struck, but taking Advantage of the Night, and being so near their own Coast, they succeeded in getting off, and some of them were seen going into the Texel the next Morning.

Trollope's squadron, together with other reinforcements which joined before the action, brought the two fleets to an equality ; but De Winter still had, on the whole, the advantage of position. He was nearing his port and drawing fast inshore, so that any attempt of Duncan to get between him and the land must prove a very hazardous undertaking. To do him justice he made no attempt to escape, but leisurely forming his line as soon as Duncan was sighted, he ordered his ships to square their mainyards and awaited the enemy's onslaught. Duncan's ships, on the other hand, were in a very loose and scattered formation, caused by his bold but judicious order for a general chase at an early stage of the proceedings. A general chase signifies that the ships of a squadron no longer preserve their appointed stations but proceed individually to the attack or pursuit of the enemy, the fastest sailers going to the front. It is a very hazardous proceeding, because it exposes the assailant to the risk of being overpowered in detail, but in certain circumstances it offers the only means of bring-

ing a flying enemy to action, and for this reason its judicious employment is a sure criterion of the tactical capacity of an admiral who resorts to it. Duncan employed it, but countermanded it as soon as he saw that De Winter was awaiting his onslaught. Then he "made the signal for the squadron to shorten sail in order to connect them"—that is, to recover the order disturbed by the general chase. But while he was re-forming his line with the evident intention of attacking in the orthodox fashion, "each ship," as he said in his signal, "to engage her opponent in the enemy's line," he saw that De Winter was gradually drawing closer and closer to the land, so that unless he acted promptly, and without waiting for his line to be accurately formed, he would lose the opportunity of getting inshore of the enemy and cutting off his retreat by forcing him out to sea. Accordingly, as Sir John Laughton puts it, "without waiting for the ships astern to come up, without waiting to form line of battle, and with the fleet in very irregular order of sailing . . . he made the signal to pass through the enemy's line and engage to leeward." Some of his captains were not a little perplexed by the rapid succession of apparently inconsistent signals. One of them threw the signal-book on the deck, and "exclaimed in broad Scotch: 'D——,' &c. &c. 'Up wi' the hel-lem and gang into the middle o't.'" This was exactly what Duncan meant and wanted. With such followers, a leader so bold, so prompt, and so sagacious might make certain of victory. De Winter afterwards acknowledged to Duncan himself that he was undone by his adversaries' finely calculated but wholly unconventional impetuosity. "Your not waiting to form line ruined me: if I had got nearer to the shore and you had attacked I should probably have drawn both fleets on it, and it would have been a victory to me, being on my own coast."

The Dutch fought gallantly, but all in vain. Duncan's onslaught was irresistible, and its method was an inspiration which places him in the front rank of naval com-

manders. Had he waited to form his line with precision, De Winter might have given him the slip. Had he fought in the orthodox fashion, not yet abandoned in principle, though discarded with signal effect by Rodney at the battle of the Saints, he might have fought a brilliant action, but could hardly have achieved a decisive victory. De Winter, like Brueys at the Nile, never dreamt that his assailant would venture into the narrow and treacherous waters between his own line and the land. Like Ville-neuve at Trafalgar, he had a safe port under his lee, and, more fortunate than Villeneuve, he had a lee shore close at hand. Manifestly his purpose was to make a running fight of it, without surrendering either of these advantages. The only way to defeat this purpose was to break through his line and to attack him from to leeward. There was no time to be lost, and at best the operation was full of hazard, for at the close of the action the British ships were in nine fathoms of water, and not more than five miles from the shore. Even with ample sea room the operation would have been novel, opposed to the tradition of the service, disallowed by the prescription of the *Fighting Instructions*, and sanctioned by no recent precedent save that of Rodney at the Saints. In the actual conditions of wind, land, and soundings it was bold beyond example. But its boldness was reasoned and calculated, based on a clear grasp of the situation. The manifold disadvantages of the attack from to windward, especially when associated with the traditional British respect for the formal line of battle, had been forcibly pointed out by John Clerk of Eldin, "that celebrated apple of naval discord," as Lord Camperdown aptly calls him. Duncan possessed a copy of Clerk's famous work, and to all appearance had studied it carefully. Yet the naval tradition was still so strong that, in spite of Clerk's teaching, it would seem that, had time permitted, he would have formed his line to windward and attacked in the orthodox fashion. But as soon as he saw that this might enable the enemy to escape he resolved at once

to throw tradition to the winds and to attack in the only way that could make the action decisive. His intuition was as rapid, as unerring, and as triumphant as was that of Nelson a few months before at St. Vincent—a kindred stroke of genius, or a like touch of that “inspired blindness which at the moment of decisive action sees not the risks but the one only road to possible victory.” It is instructive to note and contrast the comments of Jervis on the two cases. Of the battle of St. Vincent and Nelson’s share in it, I have already¹ told how Calder spoke of Nelson’s wearing out of the line as an unauthorized departure from the method of attack prescribed by the admiral. “It certainly was so,” replied Jervis, “and if ever you commit such a breach of your orders, I will forgive you also.” But of Duncan’s action and its method St. Vincent wrote, “Lord Duncan’s action was fought pell-mell² (without plan or system); he was a gallant officer (but had no idea of tactics, and being soon puzzled by them), and attacked without attention to form or order, trusting that the brave example he set would achieve his object, which it did completely.”

Thus was the sure judgment of the quarter-deck superseded by the formalism of the desk. There is a touch of littleness about this criticism of Duncan by his old comrade-in-arms which contrasts painfully with the large generosity of the rebuke to Calder. Duncan’s inattention to form and order was the calculated means to an end clearly perceived, instantly pursued, and triumphantly attained. It was not the puzzle-headed impetuosity of the captain who shouted, “Up wi’ the hel-lem and gang into the middle o’t!” It was the sure insight and splendid intrepidity of a commander who sees the only way to victory and takes it at all risks.

Such a man was Duncan, and such was his one victory,

¹ See p. 37.

² Even if Duncan’s action was “fought pell-mell,” that was, as we have seen, exactly the way in which Nelson, by his own avowal, intended to fight, and did fight, the battle of Trafalgar.

and it ill becomes even a St. Vincent to belittle either. At any rate, those who were there held, with one accord, that the mode of attack adopted, confused and disorderly as it was, was the only one which offered any prospect of a decisive victory. Captain Hotham of the *Adamant* wrote: "There was no time for tactique or manœuvre: the day was advanced, the wind on shore, the water shoal; and hence the charge against the Admiral of going down in some confusion on the enemy's fleet. Had he done anything else but what he did the day would not have been so decided."

The action was desperately fought on both sides. "I have assured Admiral De Winter, and with justice, nothing could exceed his gallantry," wrote Duncan of his vanquished foe. An officer of the flagship, in his evidence given at a court-martial which arose out of the action, stated that "from the time we beat the *States General* out of the line until Admiral De Winter's ship was dismasted, the *Venerable* had seldom less than two and sometimes three line of battle ships upon her, besides a Dutch frigate and a brig who fired as opportunity offered." The *Ardent*, whose captain was killed, had two ships of the enemy upon her at the beginning of the action, "and about 2 p.m. she had four line of battle ships and a frigate." "Our enemies," wrote De Winter, "respect us on account of the obstinacy of our defence. No action could have been so bloody." Story, another of the Dutch admirals, described the action as "one of the most obstinate engagements, perhaps, that ever took place on the ocean."

The appearance of the British ships at the close of the action [says James] was very unlike what it generally is, when the French or Spaniards have been the opponent of the former. Not a single lower mast, not even a top-mast was shot away; nor were the rigging and sails of the ships in their usual tattered state. It was at the hulls of their adversaries that the Dutchmen had directed their shot; and this, not until the former were so near that no aim could well miss.

Eleven ships of the enemy surrendered to the victors, but of these two were lost at sea and a third was driven on shore and recaptured. The remainder, with the whole of Duncan's fleet, notwithstanding the serious damage the ships had sustained in their hulls, were brought safely into port, although for several days the wind continued to blow on to the Dutch coast, and the lee shore was only avoided with great difficulty. On October 15, Duncan, in the *Venerable*, anchored off Orfordness, the ship "being so leaky that with all her pumps going we could just keep her free." On the same day he effectively, though quite undesignedly, disposed of St. Vincent's criticism beforehand in a letter to his kinsman, the Lord Advocate :

We were obliged, from being so near the land, to be rather rash in our attack, by which we suffered more. Had we been ten leagues at sea none would have escaped. Many, I am sure, had surrendered, that got off in the night, being so near shore. We were much galled by their frigates where we could not act. In short, I feel perfectly satisfied. All was done that could be done. None have any fault to find.

I have said that Hotham in the Mediterranean and Bridport in the Channel were charged with exactly the same duty as was imposed on Duncan in the North Sea. Perhaps the best way to appreciate the brilliancy of his performance is to compare it with theirs. Hotham might have anticipated the Nile. Bridport ought to have destroyed Villaret and saved Ireland from Hoche. Duncan waited more than two years for his opportunity, he never relaxed his grip even at the height of the mutiny, and when at last the enemy ventured to sea, he pounced upon him at once and destroyed him. Well might Lady Spencer write as she did a year later to St. Vincent after the battle of the Nile :

I am sure it must be needless to attempt expressing to your Lordship my delight at the recollection of the last eighteen months. Lord Spencer's naval administration

has witnessed during that period three victories, which, since naval records have been kept in this or any other country, are not to be equalled. Your magnificent achievement saved this Country; Lord Duncan's saved Ireland; and I must hope Lord Nelson's saves India.

In that illustrious but not unmerited association I may well leave Duncan's name and fame to the tardy appreciation of his countrymen and of history. Nor can I part more impressively with a personality remarkable alike for nobility of presence and for splendour of achievement than by quoting a contemporary account of Duncan's conversation and demeanour at a banquet given on the first anniversary of Camperdown to celebrate the victory of the Nile :

I used the opportunity his affability afforded me, to inquire some particulars of his own state of feeling before and after the action. He said he went upon deck about six o'clock, having had as sound a night's rest as ever he enjoyed in the whole course of his life. The morning was brilliant, with a brisk gale; and he added that he never remembered to have been exalted by so exhilarating a sensation as the sight of the two fleets afforded him. He said, however, that the cares of his duties were too onerous to allow him to think of himself; his whole mind was absorbed in observing and in meeting the occasion by orders; all other feelings were lost in the necessity of action.

The night after the battle he never closed his eyes—his thoughts were still tossing in the turmoil through which he had passed; but his most constant reflection was a profound thankfulness to God for the event of the engagement.

All this was said in so perfectly natural a tone, and with a manner so simple, that its truth was impressed at once, together with veneration for a man who could regard thus humbly an event in which much of human life had been sacrificed, so much of personal honour and so much of national glory and advantage attained. . . .

When the moment arrived for the departure of Lord

Duncan he rose slowly from his seat, drew himself up to his full height, and in a few simple words announced that he must take his leave. A dead silence ensued. He turned to the Russian admiral, and folding his vast arms round him, expressed his farewell in this solemn embrace. It was then that the voices of his companions in arms broke forth, and he was saluted with three such cheers, so hearty, so regular, so true, that they vibrated through every fibre of my frame. The venerable man bent his head upon his breast for a moment, and seemed deeply impressed : he then bowed low and majestically, tucked his triangular gold-laced hat under his huge arm, and walked gravely down the room to the door amid a silence so intense that his measured tread sounded like minute-drops. He stopped ; he turned ; he again reared himself to his noble height, took his hat from under his arm, waved it over his head, gave three loud, articulate, and distinct hurrahs in return for the former salutation, placed his hat upon his brow, and closed the door. It was the last time I ever beheld him, but the vision still remains with me.



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PAUL JONES

From a painting by Charles Willson Peale

[To face p. 165

PAUL JONES¹

I

IN the United States Paul Jones is universally regarded as the father of the American Navy. His spirit still dominates the great Naval College at Annapolis. His remains were, in 1905, disinterred in Paris, transported to the sea amid the respectful homage of the French nation, embarked on board an American man-of-war with all the honours of the French Navy, and, having once more crossed the Atlantic, were solemnly reinterred with great pomp at Annapolis, the President of the United States himself pronouncing the funeral oration. In this country the estimate generally entertained of his character and achievements has been a very different one. In 1825 a writer of whom I shall have more to say presently spoke of him as follows: "Paul Jones is known as a rebel and a pirate. Five and twenty years have not elapsed since the nurses of Scotland hushed their crying infants by the whisper of his name, and chap-books are even now to be purchased in which he is depicted in all the plenitude of terrific glory, the rival of Blackbeard and the worthy successor of the Buccaneers." It was, moreover, not

¹ I have to thank the publishers of Mr. Buell's *Paul Jones* for their permission, courteously accorded, to reproduce the portrait of Paul Jones which faces this page. It forms the frontispiece to Mr. Buell's second volume. It is the work of Charles Willson Peale and is stated by Mr. Buell to be one of the only two portraits of Jones which are known to have been painted from sittings. It was painted in America in 1787. A reproduction of the other portrait known to have been painted from sittings stands as a frontispiece to Mr. Buell's first volume. The original is a miniature painted in 1780 by a Dutch artist named Van der Huydt, and now preserved in the Hermitage at St. Petersburg. It is more attractive as a picture, perhaps, but as it bears very little resemblance to the portrait by Peale, here reproduced, I should infer that it is a less faithful presentation of the man as he actually was.

merely in Scotland, nor only at the beginning of the last century, that the name of Paul Jones was still potent in the nurseries. A friend of my own, born at Hull twenty years after the words just quoted were written, tells me that even in his childhood the name of the captor of the *Serapis* was still one to conjure with on the east coast of England. By the British Government of his day Paul Jones was, of course, denounced as a rebel, and his extradition as a pirate was demanded by its diplomatic representative at the Hague. There is no greater living authority on naval biography than Sir John Knox Laughton. In the *Dictionary of National Biography* the professor cannot bring himself to describe Paul Jones as anything better than a "naval adventurer," and his final estimate of his character is exceedingly unfavourable. "Jones was a man of distinguished talent and originality, a thorough seaman, and of the most determined and tenacious courage. His faults were due to defective training. Excessive vanity and a desire for 'glory,' which was, as he wrote, 'infinite' and recognised no obstacles, made him a traitor to his country, as it made him quarrelsome, mean, and selfish." This was written in 1892. In an earlier and fuller biographical essay, first published in 1878 and reprinted in 1887 in the professor's *Studies in Naval History*, the estimate is still more unfavourable: "His moral character may be summed up in one word—detestable. I do not here speak only of the damning fact that, without sense of injury on the one side or of affection on the other, but merely as a matter of vulgar self-interest, he waged war against his native country. . . . I speak equally of his character in its more personal relations. The same selfish vanity which made him a renegade made him a calculating liar, incapable of friendship or love. . . . Whenever his private actions can be examined, they must be pronounced to be discreditable; and as to many others that appear to be so, there is no evidence in his favour, except his own unsubstantiated and worthless testimony."

No evidence in his favour! Franklin loved him as a son; and though Franklin may have been no saint, he did not consort with scoundrels. After Franklin's death his daughter wrote to this despicable and unscrupulous adventurer, assuring him that almost the last utterances of the doctor were expressions of unimpaired confidence in the integrity and of undiminished admiration for the courage of Paul Jones. Lafayette loved him as a brother. In a letter written in 1781, he said, "You so well know my affectionate sentiments and my very great regard for you that I need not add anything on that subject." The rugged Suwaroff addressed him as "my good brother." In England he was respected and entertained by Lord Shelburne, by Fox, by Horace Walpole, and by Sheridan. He won and retained the friendship of Pearson, whom he had vanquished in the *Serapis*. He was the honoured guest of Lord Barham when the latter was Commander-in-Chief at Portsmouth, and there he met many of the young officers who were afterwards to share the glories of Nelson and his comrades in arms—men such as Troubridge, Foley, Ball, Hood, Harvey, Saumarez, and others. Louis Philippe wrote of him: "One of my proudest memories is that, when a little boy, I enjoyed the society of that wonderful man, to promote whose success was my mother's most ardent ambition." The parents of Louis Philippe, the Duc and Duchesse de Chartres, were his earliest and staunchest friends in France. Louis XVI. decorated him, and treated him with high confidence and respect. He was the darling of that monarch's proud fastidious Court. He was held in high respect by Washington, Jefferson, Madison, Morris, and other leaders of the American Revolution. When his conduct in France and his charges against Arthur Lee were investigated by Congress in 1781, that assembly unanimously resolved "that the thanks of the United States, in Congress assembled, be given to Captain Paul Jones for the zeal, prudence, and intrepidity with which he has supported the honour of the American flag; for his bold and suc-

cessful enterprises to redeem from captivity the citizens of these States who had fallen under the power of the enemy ; and in general, for the good conduct and eminent services by which he has added lustre to his character and to the American arms." When this resolution was reported to Washington, he wrote to Paul Jones a highly complimentary letter expressing his concurrence, and concluding with his "sincere wish" that he might long enjoy the reputation he had so justly acquired. All this, to which much more might be added, must surely be taken as at least *prima facie* evidence that Jones's personal character was by no means regarded as "detestable" by some of the most eminent and distinguished of his contemporaries. I am not concerned to present Paul Jones as a paragon of all the virtues. His vanity was excessive, his self-esteem was inordinate, some of his actions were questionable, and much of what he wrote about them is turgid, bombastic, and even ridiculous. But I have found little or nothing in the story of his life to sustain the scathing depreciation of Sir John Laughton, nor can I pay so poor a compliment to the perspicacity and good faith of those who loved, respected, and honoured him in his lifetime as to believe either that they were one and all deceived, or that they gave their outward confidence and esteem to a man whom they knew to be of no moral worth at all.

"His faults," says Sir John Laughton, "were due to defective training." In this judgment I concur. But I cannot reconcile it with the rest of the professor's estimate. Defective training, associated with a native habit of self-assertion, with a vanity never corrected in early years by contact with good society, may explain and excuse many errors of taste, manners, and expression. But it cannot account for sustained moral obliquity such as renders a man's character detestable and turns him into "a calculating liar, incapable of friendship or love." A double dose of original sin is required for such a development as that. And the paradox of it all is that those

who knew Paul Jones best never detected or suspected in him these abysmal profundities of wickedness. But without pursuing this question further at present, I will try to show what manner of man Paul Jones really was ; what his origin, circumstances, and early training were ; how he rose far above them by sheer force of character and will ; how in genius for naval warfare and in sure grasp of the essential conditions of its successful conduct he transcended nearly all his contemporaries, and might, had his opportunities been worthy of his conceptions, have taken high rank among the great sea-captains of all time. It is from this point of view that his title to be regarded as the father of the American Navy is at once unimpeachable and fraught with the loftiest and most enduring inspiration.

II

John Paul, to give him his true patronymic, was of Scottish birth and origin. His father was gardener, fisherman, and perhaps factor to a laird who lived at Arbigland, a seaside hamlet of the parish of Kirkbean in the Stewartry of Kirkcudbright. Here John Paul was born in 1747, the youngest of five sons, and here he spent his childhood, being educated at the parish school, and early taking to the sea in the fishing-boats of his native hamlet. At the age of twelve he was bound apprentice to a shipowner of Whitehaven, and embarked on his first voyage in the brig *Friendship*, bound for Virginia. Thither his eldest brother, William Paul, had already migrated, and, having married the daughter of a planter named William Jones, had assumed the name of his father-in-law and undertaken the management of his business. John Paul first saw his elder brother, his senior by many years, when the *Friendship* anchored in the Rappahannock at no great distance from the landing-stage of William Jones's plantation. William Jones was then alive, and desired to adopt John Paul as he had previously adopted his elder brother. But John was still wedded to the sea

and stuck to his ship, returning in her to Whitehaven early in 1760. He appears to have remained in the service of his original employer for several years, making a succession of voyages and rapidly rising to the positions of second and first mate. In 1766 he took service as first mate in a ship trading to the West Indies, and obtained a sixth share in her ownership. In this ship he subsequently engaged with her captain, who was also part owner, in the slave trade, making at least two voyages between the African Coast and the West Indies. But at the end of the second voyage he sold his share in the ship to her captain, and quitting her in Jamaica he took passage home in a brig bound for Whitehaven. In this brig the captain, mate, and all but five of the crew died of yellow fever during the voyage, and Paul, with the survivors, brought the vessel safely into port. She was owned by the principal shipowners of Whitehaven, and as a reward for his services they gave him the command of one of their newest and finest ships, in which he made three more voyages to the West Indies and the American coasts, visiting his brother William on two occasions. In the course of these voyages he established business relations on his own account with a firm in Tobago, but to judge from a letter written by him some years later, these relations brought him little advantage and much trouble and embarrassment. During one of these voyages, the crew having been reduced by fever to five or six hands, one of the survivors—a powerful mulatto named Maxwell—became mutinous, and Paul, being at the time the only officer able to keep the deck, struck Maxwell with a belaying pin. Maxwell died shortly after the ship reached Tobago, and Paul at once reported the circumstances to the authorities and demanded an immediate trial. He was acquitted in the Colonial Court, the sentence being confirmed by the Governor of Tobago; but on his return to Whitehaven he was again placed on his trial for murder on the high seas. He was again acquitted, and so little did his trial injure his character with his owners—who

bore the now historic name of Donald Currie, Beck & Co.—that they forthwith gave him the command of a new ship, the *Grantully Castle*—another historic name—the largest vessel then trading from Whitehaven. Originally destined for the West Indian trade, like the other ships in which he had served, the *Grantully Castle* was taken up as a transport by the East India Company, and sailed for her eastern destination in 1771. Returning from this voyage in 1772, Paul again took the command of a vessel, once more bound for the West Indian and American ports. This proved to be his last mercantile voyage, for on arriving in the Rappahannock in April 1773, he found his brother William at the point of death, and himself the next heir to the whole of the property which William Jones had bequeathed to his brother in 1760. It has been stated that at one period during his early career Paul had engaged for a year or two in the smuggling trade between the Isle of Man and the Solway Firth. The foregoing record of his almost continuous employment at sea from 1759 to 1773 would seem to disallow this story; but if it were true, it would argue little or no discredit according to the ethical standard of the time. He was certainly engaged for a time in the slave trade, and probably no one in those days thought any the worse of him for it. In like manner no one was likely to think any the worse of him for having been a smuggler.

So far there is little or nothing to show that the career of John Paul differed in any essential respect from that of many a master-mariner of his time. Had he never been heard of again after he settled in Virginia he would have seemed to be no more than a man of energy, resource, and determination, of undaunted courage, of wide maritime experience, and of consummate nautical skill, who, having risen early by his merits to independent command, was nevertheless content to settle down at the age of six and twenty to a modest Colonial competence almost fortuitously bequeathed to him. That would probably have been his obscure history and his undistinguished

fate had George III. been less obstinate and his Ministers wiser men. But *Dís aliter visum*. With John Paul's arrival in the Rappahannock in the spring of 1773 the scene changes altogether, and with it the character and even the name of the actor. Much speculation has been wasted on the reasons for his change of name. There is, however, no sort of mystery about it. His elder brother William had already assumed the surname of his father-in-law, William Jones, when John Paul saw him for the first time in 1759. Even then the old man wanted to adopt the younger brother, and offered to provide for him. But John Paul preferred the sea, and apparently never saw William Jones again. For the latter died in 1760, and by his will he gave John Paul the reversion of the estate he had bequeathed to the elder brother in the event of the latter dying without issue. He had also made it a condition of the bequest that John Paul should follow his brother's example and take the name of Jones in his turn. During one of his visits to his brother, in 1769, John Paul recorded in due legal form his assent to the provisions of the will of William Jones, and thus automatically acquired the surname of Jones on the death of his brother without issue in 1773.

Henceforth, then, until he took service in the new American Navy, we have to deal not with John Paul, master-mariner, of Scottish origin and British nationality, but with John Paul Jones, Esq., planter, of Virginia. On the death of his brother, which occurred within a few hours of his arrival in the Rappahannock, he turned over the command of his ship to his first mate and settled on the estate which had now become his own. It was a small estate as Colonial plantations were then measured, consisting of about three thousand acres, with the usual equipments and buildings and the usual complement of negro slaves. Jones was not ill fitted to enjoy and adorn the society in which he now found himself—the society so graphically depicted in the opening chapters of Thackeray's *Virginians*. His early education had only been

that of a Scottish parish school, which he quitted at the age of twelve. But the scanty leisure of his fourteen years of seafaring life was sedulously employed in supplying the deficiencies of his training at school. He was eminently social in his tastes, but select in the society he frequented. Mariner, skipper, slaver, trader, perhaps smuggler, he devoted himself steadily all through his *Wanderjahre* to the cultivation of his mind, the extension of his knowledge, and the refinement of his manners. All this is perhaps rather matter of inference than of direct knowledge, but the inference is confirmed by the fact that when he settled in Virginia he had already made many friends among the leading men of the American Colonies, from New York to Charleston; had made himself master of French and acquired a passable knowledge of Spanish; had studied public affairs with keen intelligence and insight; had learnt to express himself on general topics with propriety, vigour, and point; and had thought more deeply and more profitably than most naval officers of his time on the organisation of navies and the principles of naval warfare. This is a truly marvellous achievement for a man of his years, training, and opportunities, but his subsequent history shows that the picture I have drawn is in no sense exaggerated. It may be that the finishing touch to these varied accomplishments was given during the two years he spent in Virginia, of which little or no record is preserved. He gave little attention to the affairs of his plantation, leaving them, as he had found them, in the hands of the faithful and capable Scottish steward who, with his master, William Paul Jones, had served in Braddock's ill-fated expedition and survived its disastrous rout. This enabled him to enjoy such leisure and such social and intellectual converse as life in Virginia then afforded. But books and their study were not greatly to the taste of Virginian planters in those days—Washington himself was probably a rare exception—and it is likely enough that Paul Jones sported and idled with the rest. It is true that he afterwards told Lady

Selkirk in a famous letter that he had "withdrawn from the sea-service in favour of 'calm contemplation and poetic ease.'" But the facts and dates seem to show that Paul Jones owed the greater part of his intellectual culture to the solitude of a merchantman's cabin and not to the more stirring and distracting atmosphere of a plantation in tidewater Virginia.

His espousal of the American side in the great conflict which gave birth to the United States, needs, in my judgment, neither apology nor defence. His adoption of a seafaring life at a very tender age must have cut him adrift from the political passions and even weakened his sympathy with the patriotic sentiments of his native land. During the years of his maritime wanderings he must have seen quite as much of Virginia and the American seaboard as he ever did of the shores of Great Britain. From 1769 onwards he must have regarded his brother's estate in Virginia as his own future home, and, knowing America as he did and its bitter resentment at the passing of the Stamp Act in 1765, it is hardly possible that, when he elected to settle in Virginia in 1773, he had not already taken the side on which were found many of the most upright and honourable of the subjects of the British Crown, both British and Colonial born. To say that he took it "without sense of injury on the one side or of affection on the other, but merely as a matter of vulgar self-interest," is, in my judgment, to go far beyond all warrant of the facts, and to deny to Paul Jones even the criminal's benefit of the doubt. His friends were among the leaders of the American Revolution. He settled in Virginia only a few months before the "Boston Tea Party," and little more than a year before the assembling of the first Congress at Philadelphia. In those days it was hardly possible for any man living in the American Colonies not to take one side or the other. It needed no sense of personal injury on the one hand, and very little of local affection on the other, to compel any and every man who thought for himself to decide

once for all on which side his sympathies lay. If self-interest was the motive, it must have rested on an extremely hazardous calculation of chances, for the prospects of distinction or even of employment in an American Navy, still to be created, must have seemed extremely remote to any man who knew as Paul Jones did the overwhelming might of England on the seas. If Washington, who had fought under the British flag, could take up arms against it, if three of his major-generals were men of British origin and birth and had served in the British Army, if Chatham, who had conquered Canada, would not allow his son to unsheath his sword for the coercion of the American Colonies, why should it be denied to Paul Jones to share the sympathies of men such as these? To call him a rebel is altogether beside the point. They were all rebels in one sense, and all patriots in another. To call him a traitor is absurd. As Captain Mahan pithily puts it, "If Paul Jones be a traitor, what epithet is left for Benedict Arnold?" It is true that in his more expansive and bombastic moments he disavowed all narrow and exclusive patriotism. "Though I have drawn my sword in the present generous struggle for the rights of men," he wrote to Lady Selkirk, "yet I am not in arms as an American. I profess myself a citizen of the world, totally unfettered by the little mean distinctions which diminish the benevolence of the heart and set bounds to philanthropy." He subsequently used the same language to the French Minister of Marine. But this is merely the philosophic jargon of the eighteenth century. All it means is that, since he could not be neutral in the conflict, Paul Jones had espoused the cause which he deemed to be that of liberty, justice, and humanity. History has at any rate decisively ratified his choice.

"On the library wall of one of the most famous writers of America, there hang two crossed swords, which his relatives wore in the great War of Independence. The one was gallantly worn in the service of the King, the

other was the weapon of a brave and honoured Republican soldier." So writes Thackeray in the opening chapter of the *Virginians*. The apologue serves to explain the attitude of Paul Jones towards the American conflict. Virginia was divided in sentiment. The planters were mainly Tories and Royalists, yet Washington himself was a Virginian planter. Paul Jones followed Washington. The two years between 1773 and 1775 were apparently spent by him for the most part in the study and observation of public affairs. Yet his sympathies were never disguised. He openly sought the society of the leaders of what was then known as the Continental party. By the end of 1774 it was plain that the issue between the American Colonies and the Crown could only be decided by force, and every man in America was compelled to make his choice for one side or the other. The choice of Paul Jones was already made. Early in 1775, Philip Livingstone of New York visited Virginia for the purpose of conferring with Washington and the other leaders of the Continental party in that State. Jones was present at many of these conferences, a sufficient proof that he already enjoyed the confidence of the Continental leaders. In one of his journals, written in 1782, he says :

Mr. Livingstone had recently been at Boston, and his reports of conferences he had with the Adamses, Mr. Otis, Dr. Warren, and others, were of the utmost gravity. . . . Colonel Washington, Mr. Jefferson, and in fact all the Virginians of note, agreed that whatever the Boston people might do, or whenever they should act, they must be sustained at all hazards. I availed myself of these occasions to assure Colonel Washington, Mr. Jefferson, and all the others, that my services would be at the disposal of the Colonies whenever their cause should require service on my own element, which would, of course, be coincident with the outbreak of regular hostilities on the land.

It was not to grave and serious men such as these that

Paul Jones appeared to be a traitor, a renegade, or a mere self-seeking adventurer.

III

Events were now to move rapidly. The battle of Lexington was fought on April 19, 1775, and that of Bunker's Hill on June 17. Jones was in New York when he heard of the former, and at once wrote to his friends to renew the offer of his services, inviting the Congress to call upon him "in any capacity which your knowledge of my seafaring capacities and your opinion of my qualifications may dictate." The Congress met for its second session on May 10. On June 14 it appointed a Naval Committee to "consider, inquire, and report with respect to the organisation of a naval force." On June 24 this Committee authorised its chairman, Robert Morris, "to invite John Paul Jones, Esquire, gent., of Virginia, Master-Mariner, to lay before the Committee such information and advice as may seem to him useful in assisting the said Committee to discharge its labours." Jones had by this time returned to his plantation, where he had cordially entertained the officers of two French frigates which had put into Hampton Roads under the command of Commodore de Kersaint, with the Duc de Chartres as his second-in-command. This was the beginning of a close friendship with these two famous Frenchmen, which ended only with Jones's life, and exercised no slight influence on his career. It was largely the goodwill of the Duc de Chartres which secured for Paul Jones his footing in French society, and largely the fortune of the Duchesse which enabled him to prosecute many of his undertakings. On receipt of the invitation of the Committee above quoted, Jones at once repaired to Philadelphia and placed himself at the disposal of the Congress. The first task entrusted to him was to serve on a Commission appointed "to survey and report upon

the condition, availability, and the expediency of purchasing certain vessels then in the Delaware at the disposal of the Congress." At the same time he was invited to advise the Committee on two more general questions, namely "The proper qualifications of naval officers," and "The kind or kinds of armed vessels most desirable for the service of the United Colonies, keeping in view the limited resources of the Colonies." The work of the Commission, in which he at once took the leading part, absorbed all Jones's energies for many weeks, and it was not until the middle of September that he was able to lay before the Committee a deeply considered answer to the first of the more general questions addressed to him. This masterly document is still, if I may so call it, the moral and intellectual charter of Annapolis, and the sure and everlasting warrant of Jones's title to be called the Father of the American Navy. I need offer no apology for quoting it almost in full :

As this is to be the foundation—or I may say the first keel-timber—of a new navy, which all patriots must hope shall become amongst the foremost in the world, it should be well begun in the selection of the first list of officers. You will pardon me, I know, if I say that I have enjoyed much opportunity during my sea-life to observe the duties and responsibilities that are put upon naval officers.

It is by no means enough that an officer of the navy should be a capable mariner. He must be that, of course, but also a great deal more. He should be as well a gentleman of liberal education, refined manners, punctilious courtesy, and the nicest sense of personal honour.

He should not only be able to express himself clearly and with force in his own language both with tongue and pen, but he should also be versed in French and Spanish—for an American officer particularly the former—for our relations with France must necessarily soon become exceedingly close in view of the mutual hostility of the two countries toward Great Britain.

The naval officer should be familiar with the principles of international law, and the general practice of admiralty

jurisprudence, because such knowledge may often, when cruising at a distance from home, be necessary to protect his flag from insult or his crew from imposition or injury in foreign ports.

He should also be conversant with the usages of diplomacy, and capable of maintaining, if called upon, a dignified and judicious diplomatic correspondence; because it often happens that sudden emergencies in foreign waters make him the diplomatic as well as military representative of his country, and in such cases he may have to act without opportunity of consulting his civic or ministerial superiors at home, and such action may easily involve the portentous issue of peace or war between great powers. These are general qualifications, and the nearer the officer approaches the full possession of them the more likely he will be to serve his country well and win fame and honors for himself.

Coming now to view the naval officer aboard ship and in relation to those under his command, he should be the soul of tact, patience, justice, firmness, and charity. No meritorious act of a subordinate should escape his attention or be left to pass without its reward, if even the reward be only one word of approval. Conversely he should not be blind to a single fault in any subordinate, though, at the same time, he should be quick and unflinching to distinguish error from malice, thoughtlessness from incompetency, and well-meant shortcoming from heedless or stupid blunder. As he should be universal and impartial in his rewards and approval of merit, so should he be judicial and unbending in his punishment or reproof of misconduct.

In his intercourse with subordinates he should ever maintain the attitude of the commander, but that need by no means prevent him from the amenities of cordiality or the cultivation of good cheer within proper limits. Every commanding officer should hold with his subordinates such relations as will make them constantly anxious to receive invitations to sit at his mess-table, and his bearing toward them should be such as to encourage them to express their feelings to him with freedom and to ask his views without reserve.

It is always for the best interests of the service that a cordial interchange of sentiments and civilities should

subsist between superior and subordinate officers aboard ship. Therefore it is the worst of policy in superiors to behave toward their subordinates with indiscriminate hauteur, as if the latter were of a lower species. Men of liberal minds, themselves accustomed to command, can ill brook being thus set at naught by others who, from temporary authority, may claim a monopoly of power and sense for the time being. If such men experience rude, ungentle treatment from their superiors, it will create such heart-burnings and resentments as are nowise consonant with that cheerful ardor and ambitious spirit that ought ever to be characteristic of officers of all grades. In one word, every commander should keep constantly before him the great truth, that to be well obeyed he must be perfectly esteemed.

But it is not alone with subordinate officers that a commander has to deal. Behind them, and the foundation of all, is the crew. To his men the commanding officer should be Prophet, Priest, and King! His authority when off shore being necessarily absolute, the crew should be as one man impressed that the Captain, like the Sovereign, "can do no wrong!"

This is the most delicate of all the commanding officer's obligations. No rule can be set for meeting it. It must ever be a question of tact and perception of human nature on the spot and to suit the occasion. If an officer fails in this, he cannot make up for such failure by severity, austerity, or cruelty. Use force and apply restraint or punishment as he may, he will always have a sullen crew and an unhappy ship. But force must be used sometimes for the ends of discipline. On such occasions the quality of the commander will be most sorely tried. . . .

When a commander has, by tact, patience, justice, and firmness, each exercised in its proper turn, produced such an impression upon those under his orders in a ship of war, he has only to await the appearance of his enemy's top-sails upon the horizon. He can never tell when that moment may come. But when it does come he may be sure of victory over an equal or somewhat superior force, or honorable defeat by one greatly superior. Or, in rare cases, sometimes justifiable, he may challenge the devotion of his followers to sink with him alongside the more powerful foe, and all go down together with the unstricken

flag of their country still waving defiantly over them in their ocean sepulchre!

No such achievements are possible to an unhappy ship with a sullen crew.

All these considerations pertain to the naval officer afloat. But part, and often an important part, of his career must be in port or on duty ashore. Here he must be of affable temper and a master of civilities. He must meet and mix with his inferiors of rank in society ashore, and on such occasions he must have tact to be easy and gracious with them, particularly when ladies are present; at the same time without the least air of patronage or affected condescension, though constantly preserving the distinction of rank. . . .

In old established navies like, for example, those of Britain and France, generations are bred and specially educated to the duties and responsibilities of officers. In land forces generals may and sometimes do rise from the ranks. But I have not yet heard of an Admiral coming aft from a fore-castle.

Even in the merchant service, master-mariners almost invariably start as cabin apprentices. In all my wide acquaintance with the merchant service I can now think of but three competent master-mariners who made their first appearance on board ship "through the hawse-hole," as the saying is.

A navy is essentially and necessarily autocratic. True as may be the political principles for which we are now contending, they can never be practically applied on board ship, out of port or off soundings. This may seem a hardship, but it is nevertheless the simplest of truths. Whilst the ships sent forth by the Congress may and must fight for the principles of human rights and republican freedom, the ships themselves must be ruled and commanded at sea under a system of absolute despotism. . . .

It should be borne in mind that when this memorable State Paper was penned, Paul Jones had never served on board a man-of-war. His life, his education, and his experiences had only been such as I have in briefest outline described. Yet I venture to affirm that no naval officer then living—and few naval officers of any age—

could have better defined the essential duties of a naval officer and the moral qualities which fit him to discharge those duties with loyalty, dignity, and distinction, than this master-mariner whom fortune had made by no seeking of his own a Virginia planter, and who, though born a British subject, like every other American "rebel," had espoused the cause which even in this country enlisted the sympathies of a Chatham, a Burke, and a Fox, and in America was not unworthy to be served by men such as Washington, Franklin, Hamilton, Jefferson, and many others whom he reckoned among his familiar friends. It was not men such as these that would admit a mere self-seeking adventurer to their intimacy. It was not to a man who knew so well what a naval officer ought to be and to do that the loyalty and devotion of comrades in arms who shared his own spirit was ever denied. It is true that he quarrelled with many of his associates and subordinates. But many of them were rogues, traitors, cowards, scoundrels, "scallywags." For these he had no use and with them he had no patience. With men of his own temper he lived, like Nelson, as with "a band of brothers."

The report of Paul Jones was at once adopted by the Committee to which it was made, but not before it had been submitted by Hewes to Washington, who made the following comment on it: "Mr. Jones is clearly not only a master-mariner within the scope of the art of navigation, but he also holds a strong and profound sense of the military weight of command on the sea. His powers of usefulness are great, and must be constantly kept in view." But his powers of usefulness were not confined to the survey of ships suitable for the Continental navy and the preparation of the foregoing report. He reported also on the nature of the *matériel* required for such a navy and the best method of employing it. This report was presented to the Committee on October 3, 1775. It displays no less sure an insight into the true conditions and requirements of such a warfare on the

seas as was open to the Continental forces than its predecessor did into the essential requirements of the *personnel*. For political, strategic, mechanical, and financial reasons, Paul Jones strongly and wisely deprecated the construction of ships of the line :

Such vessels are too large and costly both in building and keeping in commission, and require too many men for our present resources. Their use is mainly strategical, for which purpose they must operate in fleets and squadrons, calculated to fight ranged battles, or to make extensive demonstrations, or to protect military expeditions over sea, or to overawe inferior powers. The posture of our affairs does not present such requirements. We cannot hope to contend with Britain for mastery of the sea on a grand scale. We cannot now for a long time hope for conditions admitting of such an attitude. As it is, only four powers are able to maintain fleets of the line capable of standing up in ranged battle. They are England, France, Spain, and the Netherlands, and their fleets are the growth of centuries.

Moreover, America had no dockyards, no accumulation of seasoned timber of scantling suitable for capital ships, no money to build such ships, no guns wherewithal to arm them, and no means of obtaining such guns. On the other hand, Paul Jones would not "go to the other extreme and counsel the fitting out of small vessels able only to harass the enemy's commerce. That character of sea warfare may, I think, be left in the main to the enterprise or cupidity, or both, of private individuals or associations who will take out letters-of-marque or equip privateers." He knew well the vital importance of offensive warfare, even of such offensive warfare as alone can be conducted by a belligerent who does not seek "to contend for mastery of the sea on a grand scale." He will not peddle with coast defence, nor with any such restricted form of offence as is conducted in home waters by vessels having only a limited radius of action. He wants, at all hazards, to harry the enemy's coasts and

attack his commerce in his own waters. For this purpose he desires frigates at least as large and as heavily armed as those then being employed by England and France, and as many as he can get—"at least six" carrying thirty-six twelve-pounders. "I would not counsel smaller ones, such as twenty-eights or even thirty-twos; because the drift of progress is to make frigates heavier all the time, and anything inferior to the twelve-pounder thirty-six gun frigate is now behind the times. On the other hand I would take a step further than the English and French have yet gone in frigate design. I would create a class of eighteen-pounder frigates to rate thirty-eight or forty guns. . . . By this means we shall have a ship of frigate build and rate, but one-half again stronger than any other frigate now afloat. In addition to the six already proposed to carry twelve-pounders, it would be wise to provide for at least four of the new class of eighteen-pounder frigates I propose, and if possible six." There is a modern ring about these remarks which may well suggest to the reflective reader that the conditions of naval warfare, and their expression in terms of *matériel*, vary rather in degree than in kind from age to age, and that the solution of the problems presented by them is essentially identical in all ages. Not less modern nor, I will add, less happily inspired, are the views of Paul Jones on the use to be made in warfare of the *matériel* he recommends :

We should, at the earliest moment, have a squadron of four, five, or six frigates like the above—either or both classes—constantly in British waters, harbouring and refitting in the ports of France, which nation must, from self-interest alone, lean toward us from the start, and must sooner or later openly espouse our cause.

Keeping such a squadron in British waters, alarming their coasts, intercepting their trade, and descending now and then upon their least protected ports, is the only way that we, with our slender resources, can sensibly affect our enemy by sea-warfare.

Rates of insurance will rise ; necessary supplies from abroad, particularly naval stores for the British dock-yards, will be cut off ; transports carrying troops and supply-ships bringing military stores for land operations against us will be captured ; and last, but not least, a considerable force of their ships and seamen will be kept watching or searching for our frigates.

In planning and building our new frigates I would keep fast sailing, on all points, in view as a prime quality. But no officer of true spirit would conceive it his duty to use the speed of his ship in escape from an enemy of like or nearly like force. If I had an eighteen-pounder frigate of the class above described, I should not consider myself justified in showing her heels to a forty-four of the present time, or even to a fifty-gun ship built ten years ago.

A sharp battle now and then, or the capture and carrying as prize into a French port of one or two of their crack frigates, would raise us more in the estimation of Europe, where we now most of all need countenance, than could the defeat or even capture of one of their armies on the land here in America. And at the same time it would fill all England with dismay. If we show to the world that we can beat them afloat with an equal force, ship to ship, it will be more than any one else has been able to do in modern times, and it will create a great and most desirable sentiment of respect and favour towards us on the Continent of Europe, where really, I think, the question of our fate must ultimately be determined.

Beyond this, if by exceedingly desperate fighting, one of our ships shall conquer one of theirs of markedly superior force, we shall be hailed as the pioneers of a new power on the sea, with untold prospects of development, and the prestige, if not the substance of English dominion over the ocean, will be forever broken. Happy, indeed, will be the lot of the American captain upon whom fortune shall confer the honor of fighting that battle !

Thus, alike in *personnel* and in *matériel*, Paul Jones became the first author and only begetter of the American Navy—its father in every sense of the word. Nor was it long before he found employment in the great service he

had thus created. In December 1775 the Committee above mentioned recommended the appointment of five captains, five first lieutenants, and eleven second lieutenants, Paul Jones being placed not, as he might have expected, among the captains, but at the head of the list of lieutenants. He accepted the situation with dignity, but not without disappointment, and was nominated first lieutenant of the *Alfred*, one of the ships he had surveyed and recommended for purchase, under the command of Captain Dudley Saltonstall. He received his commission forthwith, and going on board the *Alfred*, with several members of the Committee, he, in the absence of Saltonstall, who had not yet reached Philadelphia, was directed by John Hancock, one of the Committee, to take command of the ship and break her pendant. This was the "Pine Tree and Rattlesnake" emblem, with the motto "Don't tread on me," which was worn for a few months only by Continental ships in commission. It was afterwards replaced by the historic "Stars and Stripes," and this flag, too, Paul Jones had the honour of first hoisting when he took command of the *Ranger*.

IV

The first exploit of the new navy was no very glorious one. In February 1776 a squadron of four vessels, of which the *Alfred* was one, set forth under the command of Commodore Ezekiel Hopkins on an expedition against the Bahamas and British commerce in those waters. It returned early in April, having captured Fort Nassau in New Providence, and failed to capture a British sloop, the *Glasgow*, which made good its escape although assailed and chased by the whole squadron. The result was a series of courts-martial, official censures, and dismissals from the service, the Commodore being cashiered, and Saltonstall placed in retirement, which unhappily for his own fame, proved to be only temporary. That Jones

himself incurred no blame is shown by the fact that barely a month after his return in the *Alfred* he was appointed to the command of the *Providence* sloop-of-war, and sailed in her, in June, on a general cruise ranging from Bermuda to the Banks of Newfoundland. I need not record the incidents of this cruise, though they showed Paul Jones at his best as a seaman of consummate daring and infinite resource. On his return to port in the autumn he was promoted to the rank of captain, receiving his commission from the hands of Thomas Jefferson, and heard for the first time of the utter ravaging of his plantation in Virginia, at the close of the previous year, by Lord Dunmore, the British Governor of the Colony. Lord Dunmore had been driven from his residence in Virginia and taken refuge on board a British man-of-war. "There were," says Lecky, "no English soldiers in the province, but with the assistance of some British frigates, of some hundreds of loyalists who followed his fortunes, and of a few runaway negroes, he equipped a marine force which spread terror along the Virginian coast and kept up a harassing though almost useless predatory war. Two incidents in the struggle excited deep resentment throughout America. The first was a proclamation by which freedom was promised to all slaves who took arms against the rebels. The second was the burning of the important town of Norfolk, which had been occupied by the provincials, had fired on the King's ships, and had refused to supply them with provisions. It was impossible by such means to subdue the province."

Jones was one of the principal sufferers by this ill-starred enterprise of Lord Dunmore's. His plantation was ruined, all his buildings burned to the ground, his wharf demolished, his live stock killed, and every one of his able-bodied slaves of both sexes carried off to Jamaica to be sold. But he did not repine or complain. "This is, of course, a part of the fortune of war," he wrote to his friend Hewes. "I accept the extreme animosity displayed by Lord Dunmore as a compliment to the sin-

cerity of my attachment to the cause of liberty. His lordship is entitled to his own conception of civilized warfare. He and his know where I am and what I am doing. They can affect me only by ravage behind my back. I do not complain of that." But he did deplore the fate of his negroes, and he acknowledged that all his worldly resources were destroyed. "I have," as he said in the same letter, "no fortune left but my sword, and no prospect except of getting alongside the enemy." A few weeks later he was again at sea, this time in command of the *Alfred*, with the *Providence* in company and under his command. The cruise lasted about a month. Jones returned to port with seven prizes, two of which were transports fully laden with clothing and other supplies for the King's troops. The loss of these supplies to the British forces was serious enough; to the Continental forces, ill-equipped and impoverished as they were, the gain was incalculable.

This cruise was the last of the services rendered by Paul Jones to the American cause in American waters. Henceforth he plays his part on the larger stage of European warfare and diplomacy. I have dealt in some detail with his early years and his early services to the cause of his choice, because it is this portion of his life, too often ignored or misunderstood by his English biographers, which has operated most to his discredit. For example, Sir John Laughton, writing in 1878, reads the story I have told in outline above in a widely different sense :

I have been thus particular in tracing the early life of John Paul, because its detail, uninteresting in itself, appears to offer some explanation of both his character and his choice of a career. A peasant lad, who had been knocking about the world in small trading ships from the time he was twelve years old; who had served during five or six years, as he was growing from boyhood into manhood, on board a slaver; a Manx smuggler, a ruined merchant, possibly a fraudulent bankrupt, or too clever executor, is not the man whose path we should expect to

find hampered by needless or even customary scruples. The world was his oyster, with his sword he would open it. He felt himself capable of achieving distinction, if only he had a field for his talents ; and he had seen enough to make him believe that in the war then breaking out, the revolutionary side would give him the greatest opportunities. To him country was an idle word, patriotism an unknown idea. Through life the one object of his worship and admiration was himself.

My readers must choose for themselves between this picture and that which I have drawn. I will, moreover, cite an independent witness to character in the writer whom I have already mentioned as having written a *Life of Paul Jones*, as early as 1825. This writer, I am assured by my friend Mr. John Murray, is no other than the illustrious Benjamin Disraeli, afterwards Earl of Beaconsfield, and Prime Minister of England.¹ He at any rate, whether from sympathy of temperament or from greater generosity of appreciation, saw Paul Jones and his career in a much kindlier light than has been common among his countrymen ; and since the volume is now rare and little known, I need offer no apology for citing his final appreciation :

That by law he was a pirate and a rebel, I shall not deny ; since by the same law Washington would have

¹ The work is entitled *The Life of Paul Jones, from Original Documents in the Possession of John Henry Sherburne, Esq., Register of the Navy of the United States*. London, John Murray, Albemarle Street, MDCCCXXV. The present Mr. John Murray has very kindly allowed me to inspect and consult a copy of this work which has never passed out of the possession of his firm. He assures me that there is no doubt that it is substantially the work of Disraeli, who was at this period in the literary employ of his grandfather. Disraeli's name does not appear on the title-page any more than it does on another work published by John Murray in 1832, and entitled *England and France ; or a Cure for the Ministerial Gallomania*. But the records and traditions of the firm attest that both were Disraeli's handiwork, and that if he was not the actual writer of every line and every word, he was at any rate the superintending and largely contributory editor. This attribution is confirmed by abundant internal evidence of style and treatment. In a private letter to Mr. Murray the late Sir Spencer Walpole pronounced parts of the *England and France* volume to be "very dizzy-ish." My readers will judge for themselves of the extract here given.

been drawn and quartered, and Franklin had already been denounced as "a hoary-headed traitor." But we have seen that nothing can be more erroneous than the prevalent history of his character and fortunes. As to his moral conduct it would seem that few characters have been more subject to scrutiny and less to condemnation. His very faults were the consequences of feelings which possess our admiration, and his weaknesses were allied to a kindly nature. He was courageous, generous, and humane; and he appears to have been the only one in this age of revolutions whose profession of philanthropy was not disgraced by his practice. As to his mental capacity, it cannot be denied that his was a most ardent and extraordinary genius. Born in the lowest rank of life, and deprived by his mode of existence from even the common education which every Scotchman inherits, Paul Jones was an enthusiastic student, and succeeded in forming a style which cannot be sufficiently admired for its pure and strenuous eloquence. His plans also were not the crude conceptions of a vigorous but untutored intellect, but the matured systems which could only have been generated by calm observation and patient study. His plan for attacking the coast of England was most successful in execution, though conceived on the banks of the Delaware; and we cannot but perceive a schooled and philosophic intellect in his hints for the formation of the navy of a new nation. Accident had made him a republican, but the cold spirit of his republicanism had not tainted his chivalric soul, and his political principles were not the offspring of the specious theories of a dangerous age. There was nothing in the nature of his mind which would have prevented him from being the commander instead of the conqueror of the *Serapis*. He delighted in the pomp and circumstance of royalty, and we scarcely know when to deem him happiest—when the venerable Franklin congratulated him for having freed all his suffering countrymen from the dungeons of Great Britain, or when he received a golden-hilted sword from the "protector of the rights of human nature." Although he died in his forty-fifth year, his public life was not a short one, and by his exertions at the different Courts of Europe he mainly contributed to the success of the American cause. Now that the fever of party prejudice

has subsided, England wishes not to withhold from him the tribute of her admiration. America, "the country of his fond election," must ever rank him not only among the firmest, but among the ablest of her patriots.

V

In June 1777 Jones was appointed by Congress to command the *Ranger*, a new vessel of 308 tons, designed to carry an armament of twenty long six-pounder guns, which had just been launched from the navy yard at Portsmouth in New Hampshire. Jones fitted her out and reported her as ready for sea on October 15. But as her destination was to carry the war into the enemy's waters in accordance with the views which Jones had, as we have seen, already advanced, he was directed to wait for despatches of importance which Congress expected to be in a position to transmit to France in a few days. In other words, the surrender of Burgoyne at Saratoga was known to be imminent—it took place on October 17—and Congress desired to employ the *Ranger* to carry the news to Europe and especially to France, whose friendship for the United States was shortly to ripen into an alliance. Jones received his despatches about midnight on October 31, and set sail at once, declaring that he would spread the news in France in thirty days. He did not quite fulfil his promise, but he landed at Nantes on December 2, and, posting forthwith to Paris, he placed the despatches in Franklin's hands on the morning of December 5. "On February 6, 1778," says Mr. A. C. Buell, Paul Jones's latest biographer, "the Treaty of Alliance that assured American Independence was signed and sealed at Versailles—just two months after the arrival of the news."

It had been intended that on his arrival in France Jones should hand over the *Ranger* to Simpson, his second-in-command, and himself take command of a new frigate building at Amsterdam for the United States Govern-

ment. But the British Government got wind of the transaction, an embargo was laid on the ship, and before Jones landed at Nantes, she had been sold by Franklin to the French Government. Jones therefore remained for a time in command of the *Ranger*, and, after refitting her at L'Orient, he put in at Brest, where the French Grand Fleet was lying under the command of D'Orvilliers. Here, on February 14, 1771, after some politic negotiation on Jones's part, the United States flag, which he had been the first to hoist on board the *Ranger*, received the first salute ever offered to it by a foreign naval power. Jones was detained at Brest for nearly two months, owing to differences of opinion among the American Commissioners in Paris as to his ulterior destination. In the end the views of Franklin, who desired to keep Jones in European waters, prevailed, and at last, on April 10, the *Ranger* sailed to try her fortunes in British waters. Baffled by the weather Jones entered the Irish Channel from the southward, having originally intended to pass to the west of Ireland and enter it from the northward. It was well for him that he did so, for, before he left Brest, the British Government had got wind of his intentions and had promptly despatched from Plymouth a frigate and two sloops to look after him on the west coast of Ireland. They were detained at Falmouth by the same gale which kept him out of the Atlantic, and they never got on his tracks. Jones made straight for his native haunts; and, learning that Whitehaven, the cradle of his maritime career, was then full of shipping, he resolved to make a descent on it, relying on his intimate knowledge of the harbour and its approaches, and hoping to be able to destroy all the shipping assembled there. Delayed for some days by contrary winds, he at length got near to the port on the night of April 22, and made his attack. It was not successful in its attempt on the shipping, the attack having been made too late in the night, owing to the wind having dropped before he had got as near in as he desired, and at daybreak he was com-

pelled to withdraw his small landing party after a sharp skirmish with the local militia. His own comment on this adventure is as follows :

Its actual results were of little moment, for the intended destruction of shipping was limited to a single vessel. But the moral effect of it was very great, as it taught the English that the fancied security of their coasts was a myth, and thereby compelled their Government to take expensive measures for the defence of numerous ports hitherto relying for protection wholly on the vigilance and supposed omnipotence of their navy. It also doubled or more the rates of insurance, which in the long run proved the most grievous damage of all.

This is amply corroborated by Disraeli, who says :

The descent at Whitehaven produced consternation all over the kingdom. Expresses were immediately despatched to all the capital seaports ; all strangers in Whitehaven were immediately ordered to be arrested ; similar directions were forwarded throughout the country. Look-out vessels were appointed at every port ; continual meetings were held all down the coast ; companies were raised by subscription ; and all forts and guns were immediately put into condition.

A nation which relies on sea power is peculiarly sensitive to alarms of this kind. Jones had discovered the secret of getting on its nerves. His next adventure was of a more equivocal character, though his own motives were generous and his subsequent action was even chivalrous after a certain florid fashion of his own. Paul Jones shared to the full the sentiments of all Americans and of not a few Englishmen concerning the harsh treatment by the English authorities of American prisoners of war. By way of remedy for the evils complained of, he conceived the idea of seizing some Englishman of rank and repute and holding him as a hostage until the condition of the prisoners was ameliorated. The time and the place seemed favourable to his design. Baffled at White-

haven, and yet having spread terror and consternation far and wide, he struck across to the Bay of Kirkcudbright, and there anchored off St. Mary's Isle, the seat of the Earl of Selkirk. He desired by this prompt change of scene to spread the impression abroad that there was more than one American warship on the coast, but he had also another purpose in view. This, together with the proceedings which ensued, are perhaps best described in a very characteristic letter—bombastic or chivalrous according as we view it, and certainly highflown in any view of it—which he wrote to Lady Selkirk on the day of his return to Brest :

MADAM,—It cannot be too much lamented, that, in the profession of arms, the officer of fine feelings and real sensibility should be under the necessity of winking at any action of persons under his command, which his heart cannot approve, but the reflection is doubly severe, when he finds himself obliged in appearance to countenance such acts by his authority.

This hard case was mine, when on the 23rd of April last, I landed on St. Mary's Isle. Knowing Lord Selkirk's influence with the King, and esteeming as I do his private character, I wished to make him the happy instrument of alleviating the horrors of hopeless captivity, when the brave are overpowered and made prisoners of war. It was perhaps fortunate for you, madam, that he was from home ; for it was my intention to have taken him on board the *Ranger* and to have detained him until, through his means, a general and fair exchange of prisoners, as well in Europe as in America, had been effected. When I was informed by some men whom I met at landing, that his lordship was absent, I walked back to my boat, determined to leave the island. By the way, however, some officers, who were with me, could not forbear expressing their discontent, observing that, in America, no delicacy was shown by the English, who took away all sorts of moveable property ; setting fire, not only to towns, but to the houses of the rich, without distinction, and not even sparing the wretched hamlets and milch-cows of the poor and helpless at the approach of an inclement winter.

That party had been with me, the same morning, at Whitehaven ; some complaisance, therefore, was their due. I had but a moment to think how I might gratify them, and at the same time do your ladyship the least injury. I charged the two officers to permit none of the seamen to enter the house, or to hurt anything about it ; to treat you, madam, with the utmost respect ; to accept of the plate which was offered, and to come away without making a search, or demanding anything else. I am induced to believe that I was punctually obeyed. . . . I have gratified my men ; and when the plate is sold, I shall become the purchaser, and will gratify my own feelings by restoring it to you, by such conveyance as you shall please to direct.

The rest of the letter need not be quoted at length ; one or two sentences of it have been cited already. It contains a bombastic description of the action, shortly to be mentioned, between the *Ranger* and the *Drake*, and concludes with a rhetorical appeal to Lady Selkirk, " to use your persuasive arts, with your husband's, to endeavour to stop this cruel and destructive war in which Britain can never succeed." As to the plate, Jones redeemed his pledge, and it ultimately found its way, after many vicissitudes, back to St. Mary's Isle. It is said that Jones expended some £140 out of his own pocket over the transaction.

Before his descent on Whitehaven, Jones had attempted to surprise and capture the *Drake*, an ill-manned and ill-equipped sloop of war which was serving as guard-ship off Carrickfergus in Belfast Lough. He intended to anchor alongside and carry the *Drake* by boarding ; but owing to some miscarriage with the anchor, the attempt failed and the *Ranger* stood out to sea. The morning after the raid on St. Mary's Isle, the *Ranger* was again cruising off Belfast Lough and, this time, the *Drake* was not slow to accept the challenge. Working out of the Lough against a contrary wind, she came within hail of the *Ranger* late in the afternoon, and the action immediately began. In a little more than an hour the *Drake*

was reduced to a wreck by the *Ranger's* fire at close range, her commanding officer was dead, her second-in-command was dying, and she hauled down her flag. It was not a very glorious victory in itself, for though the two ships were about equal in armament,¹ the *Drake* was ill prepared for the fight; and though she was very gallantly fought, she was overpowered by the superior gunnery of the *Ranger*. In the biography of Jones, contributed by Sir John Laughton to the *Dictionary of National Biography*, it is stated that "in reality the *Drake* was no match for the *Ranger*; and at this time her crew was mainly composed of newly raised men without any officers except her captain and the registering lieutenant of the district, who came on board at the last moment as a volunteer. She had no gunner, no cartridges filled, and no preparation for handing the powder." Nevertheless, since she left her anchorage for the purpose of challenging and fighting the *Ranger*, it must be presumed that she was stationed there for fighting purposes. If she was too ill equipped to fight a ship of her own size and armament, she had no business to be there at all. It is remarked by Captain Mahan that the capital fault of the strategic policy of England during the War of American Independence was that she "tried to protect all parts of her scattered empire by dividing the fleet among them." On a small scale we have a significant illustration of this faulty distribution in the stationing of the *Drake* off Carrickfergus. The illustration is not without warning when the policy of "showing the flag" by scattering war-ships of little or no fighting value all

¹ It was stated at the court-martial on the *Drake's* survivors that her twenty guns were only four-pounders. But the archives of the French Admiralty contain evidence that when she was sold as a prize at Brest, her battery was described as "seize pièces de neuf livres de balle et quatre pièces de quatre." This is corroborated by Jones's own account of the engagement. The *Ranger's* armament, as altered by Jones while fitting her out, was fourteen long nine-pounders and four six-pounders. Her complement was 126 officers and men; that of the *Drake* was, according to Jones, 157. But several of these were hastily drafted from the shore.

over the world is still advocated by naval authorities of no mean repute. If—*quod absit*—we were ever to be at war with the United States again, of what use would it be to have stationed in the Western Atlantic a squadron so weak that it must abandon its station as soon as hostilities were imminent? To “show the flag” in any quarter, by means of weak and practically non-combatant war-ships, is just as futile, and just as likely to lead to humiliation in the event of serious hostilities.

For the capture of the *Drake* was a humiliation to British naval arms even if it was a foregone conclusion in the circumstances. It was the first blow—shortly to be followed by a still more mortifying one—struck by the American Navy on this side of the Atlantic, and in what might well have been regarded as the least accessible of British waters. It was a proof that the views of Paul Jones concerning the best mode of conducting the war at sea were as sound as they were original. It showed that the British Navy was not invulnerable to skill and daring even in its own waters. It consolidated the alliance between France and the United States. Its direct effects, moreover, were not disproportionate to these its larger consequences. To quote Disraeli again, it produced

a consternation in the minds of the inhabitants of the surrounding coasts quite unparalleled. The descent upon Whitehaven—the expedition to St. Mary's, and the boldness of its avowed object—the capture of the *Drake* followed with such rapidity, that the public mind was perfectly thunderstruck. Rumour increased the terror for which there was but good reason. The daily journals teemed hourly with circumstantial accounts of strange seventy-fours seen in the Channel—of expeditions which were never planned—and destruction which never occurred! In one night Paul Jones was in all parts of England, and his dreadful name was sufficient reason for surveys of fortifications, and subscriptions to build them. At Whitehaven they subscribed upwards of a thousand pounds, and engineers were immediately ordered down to take a survey of the harbour, in order to erect some

works on the north side of it. Four companies were immediately ordered to Whitehaven, and a company of Gentleman Volunteers was also formed there.

Jones forthwith repaired his own damages and patched up those of his prize, and as the alarm had now been thoroughly given and it was certain that a superior British force would very soon be on his tracks, he made the best of his way round the west coast of Ireland, making for Brest. He reached that port on May 8, and was received with every mark of honour by the naval authorities of the port. Shortly afterwards Jones turned over the *Ranger* to his second-in-command, and she was ordered back to the United States. Jones then spent several months in France, and mainly in Paris, endeavouring to obtain a more important command, either directly under the French Government, now allied with the United States, or, through its agency, under the flag of the United States. In these endeavours he experienced frequent disappointments. He was not generally popular in the French Navy, though he had many warm friends among its superior officers, and the French Ministry constantly deluded him with promises which it had very little intention of fulfilling. But Jones was not to be baffled by official indifference. He had many friends at Court, among whom the most devoted were the Duc and Duchesse de Chartres, especially the latter. Whatever may have been Jones's defects, moral and personal, in society he was irresistible—even in the fastidious and exclusive society of the *ancien régime* in France. This we have on the testimony of Franklin himself, who, in 1780, introduced Jones to the Comtesse d'Houdetot in the following terms: "No matter what the faults of Commodore Jones may be . . . I must confess to your ladyship that when face to face with him no man, nor, so far as I can learn, woman, can for a moment resist the strange magnetism of his presence, the indescribable charm of his manner; a commingling of the most compliant deference with the

most perfect self-esteem I have ever seen in a man ; and above all, the sweetness of his voice and the purity of his language." A man so gifted could afford to smile at official indifference and knew how to counteract it. On the suggestion of the Duc de Chartres he drafted a letter to the King of France, bespeaking his countenance and assistance. This draft he submitted to Franklin, who returned it without comment or sanction, and, in fact, disclaimed all official responsibility, though he did not forbid Jones to present the letter nor in any way seek to persuade him not to present it. The letter was presented to the King by the Duchesse de Chartres early in December, and on December 17, Jones was received in audience. The result was that de Sartine, the French Minister of Marine, who had hitherto baffled all Jones's attempts to obtain employment afloat, wrote to Jones on February 4, 1779, to tell him that " His Majesty has thought proper to place under your command the ship *Le Duras*, of forty guns, now lying at L'Orient." The ship was to be armed and fitted out at the cost of the French Government, and Jones was authorized to enlist French volunteers for her crew should he find it impossible to obtain American subjects in sufficient numbers to complete her complement. The Duchesse de Chartres, whose private fortune was immense, now again showed her friendship for Jones by insisting on placing a sum of 10,000 louis—not far short of equivalent to the same number of pounds sterling—to his credit. Jones accepted it reluctantly, and resolved to regard it as a loan. But when, some years later, his circumstances would have enabled him to repay the loan, he asked the Duc d'Orléans, as the Duc de Chartres had then become, if the Duchesse would allow him to do so, the Duc replied, " Not unless you wish her to dismiss you from her esteem and banish you from her salon. She did not lend it to you ; she gave it to the cause."

The *Duras* was a worn-out East Indiaman which the French Government had purchased and partially refitted

as an armed transport. It took Jones several months to get her into fighting trim as a man-of-war. He renamed her the *Bon Homme Richard*, out of compliment to Franklin, his revered friend and patron, who had employed the pseudonym of "Poor Richard" for several of his publications. Her burden was about 1,000 tons, and when Jones put to sea in her she carried an armament of forty-two guns, namely six eighteen-pounders on a lower gun-deck, twenty-eight long twelve-pounders on the gun-deck proper, and eight long nine-pounders on the quarter-deck. This, said Jones, "made her, with the eighteen-pounders, a fair equivalent of a thirty-six gun frigate; or without them, the equal of a thirty-two as usually rated in the regular rate-lists of the English and French Navies." Her crew was a very miscellaneous one, for Jones had to man her as best he could. "Not more than fifty," he records, "including officers, were Americans. A hundred and ninety odd were aliens, partly recruited from British prisoners of war, partly Portuguese, and a few French sailors and fishermen. In addition to these 240 seamen, I shipped 122 French soldiers who were allowed to volunteer from the garrison, few or none of whom had before served aboard ship, and the commandant of the dockyard loaned me twelve regular marines, whom I made non-commissioned officers. . . . My reason for shipping such a large number was that I meditated descents on the enemy's coasts, and also that I wished to be sure of force enough to keep my mixed and motley crew of seamen in order."¹ The *Bon Homme Richard*

¹ It is not pleasant to note that English subjects should have shipped under an enemy's flag, even though they obtained release from captivity by so doing. But otherwise the miscellaneous character of the crew of the *Bon Homme Richard* will cause little surprise to students of naval history. Thirty years later, in 1808, Captain, afterwards Admiral, Sir Byam Martin, who commanded the *Implacable* in the Baltic, gave the following description of the crew of that ship. "I have just now been amusing myself in ascertaining the diversity of human beings which compose the crew of a British man-of-war, and, as I think you will be entertained with a statement of the ridiculous medley, it shall follow precisely as their place of nativity is inserted in the

was to be the flag-ship of a small squadron, of which Jones, flying the American flag, was commodore, the other ships being the *Alliance*, commanded by Pierre Landais, also bearing an American commission, a new American frigate carrying a gun-deck battery of twenty-six long twelve-pounders and ten long nine-pounders above; the *Pallas*, a smaller frigate, commanded by a French officer named Cottineau, and armed with twenty-two long nine-pounders, and ten long six-pounders; and the *Vengeance*, a twelve-gun brig carrying six-pounders, commanded by a Frenchman named Ricot. Landais was a reckless and unscrupulous adventurer who had been cashiered from the French Navy, and having made his way to America had foisted himself on the United States naval authorities as an officer of high distinction. Accepted at his own valuation, he was given the command of the *Alliance* which brought Lafayette back to France. Disloyal, insubordinate, quarrelsome, self-willed, and self-seeking, Landais proved a traitor to his adopted flag during the cruise of the squadron, and on its arrival at the Texel, after the famous fight with the *Serapis* in which he bore a very equivocal part, he was deprived of his command by Jones and ordered by Franklin to report himself in Paris. Later, through the machinations of Arthur Lee, one of the American Commissioners in Europe, he was restored to the command of the *Alliance*, in which Arthur Lee, having ceased to be a member of the European Commission, was to take passage to the United States. Franklin stoutly contested this arrangement, and peremptorily forbade Landais, who had been ordered

ship's books: English 285, Irish 130, Welsh 25, Isle of Man 6, Scots 29, Shetland 3, Orkneys 2, Guernsey 2, Canada 1, Jamaica 1, Trinidad 1, St. Domingo 2, St. Kitts 1, Martinique 1, Santa Cruz 1, Bermuda 1, Swedes 8, Danes 7, Prussians 8, Dutch 1, Germans 3, Corsica 1, Portuguese 5, Sicily 1, Minorca 1, Ragusa 1, Brazils 1, Spanish 2, Madeira 1, Americans 28, West Indies 2, Bengal 2. This statement does not include officers of any description, and may be considered applicable to every British ship with the exception that very few of them have so many native subjects."—*Letters of Sir T. Byam Martin*, vol. ii., Navy Records Society, 1898.

for trial by court-martial on his arrival in the United States, to "usurp command of the *Alliance*." The French Government gave orders that if the ship attempted to leave L'Orient under the command of Landais the commandant of the port was to stop her at all hazards, even if it was necessary to sink her by a cannonade from the forts. Jones, who was in Paris at the time, was informed of this order, and forthwith proceeded with all haste to L'Orient, where he succeeded in persuading the commandant to suspend the orders to fire. "M. de Thevenard," he reported to Franklin, "had made every necessary preparation to stop the *Alliance*. . . . He had the evening before sent orders to the forts to fire on the *Alliance*, and, if necessary, to sink her to the bottom if they attempted to pass or even approach the barrier across the entrance of the port. Had I remained silent an hour longer the dreadful work would have been done. Your humanity will, I know, justify the part I acted in preventing a scene that would have rendered me miserable for the rest of my life. At my request, and on my agreeing to take the whole responsibility, the Chevalier de Thevenard suspended the orders to fire, and the *Alliance* was permitted to be warped and towed through the rocks, and is now at anchor in the outer roads." The *Alliance* sailed the next day, with Lee on board and Landais in command. But the latter soon showed his cross-grained and even crazy disposition by shaping a course for the Azores, and declaring his intention of cruising in the West Indies. Lee, thereupon, resuming his resigned authority as a Commissioner of the United States, took upon himself to declare Landais insane—he had graduated M.D. at Edinburgh—and ordered the second-in-command to take charge of the ship. On the arrival of the *Alliance* in Boston, a court of inquiry was held and Landais was declared unfit to command. He never served in the American Navy again. Jones has often been represented as quarrelsome, headstrong, vindictive, and relentless. He knew that Landais was a knave and a traitor; he

knew also that Lee was bitterly hostile to himself, and he believed him to be a traitor to his country. He had only to remain passive, and the French guns of L'Orient would have rid the world of both. But he entertained no thought of private vengeance when the public interests were at stake. He knew that the destruction of the *Alliance* would not only sacrifice the lives of more than two hundred valiant and loyal seamen, but might gravely prejudice that alliance between France and the United States on which so much was to depend, and of which the very name of the ship was the commemorative symbol. When all this is considered, it must, I think, be conceded that Jones was, at any rate, no mere swashbuckler.

The little squadron first put to sea on June 19, but returned to port within a few days, the *Bon Homme Richard* and the *Alliance* having fouled each other in a violent storm off Cape Finisterre. Landais was afterwards charged with having wilfully caused this misadventure, but his guilt was never judicially established. Six weeks were occupied in repairing the damaged ships, but the delay was not disadvantageous in the end. An exchange had just been arranged between certain American prisoners confined in England and the English prisoners whom Jones had brought to France after the capture of the *Drake*. Nearly all the American prisoners liberated were enlisted by Jones for service in his squadron, and a corresponding number of the aliens originally shipped were discharged. Jones thus acquired the services of many officers and petty officers who afterwards fought so gallantly and even desperately in the fight with the *Serapis*. Prisoners of war received no very gentle treatment in England in those days, and American prisoners in particular, being regarded as rebels rather than prisoners, were probably treated more harshly than the rest. Jones, in one of his letters, speaks of a certain Captain Cunningham, an American naval officer who was "confined at Plymouth, in a dungeon and in fetters." It was, as we have seen, in order to secure a hostage for

the better treatment of American prisoners in England that Jones had planned to carry off the Earl of Selkirk from St. Mary's Isle. Anyhow, the liberated Americans were animated by a bitter spirit of resentment; and when one of them, John Mayrant, led the boarders of the *Bon Homme Richard* over the side of the *Serapis*, he did so to the cry of "Remember Portsea jail!" Naturally enough they fought with desperation when the time came. At the court-martial which was held on the surrender of the *Serapis*, her captain was asked to what he attributed the "extraordinary and unheard-of desperate stubbornness" of his adversaries. "I do not know, sir," was his reply, "unless it was because our Government, in its inscrutable wisdom, had allowed, if it did not cause, the impression to be spread abroad that Captain Jones and his crew would be held pirates or, at least, not entitled to the usages of civilized war." There is, indeed, little doubt that, had Jones been worsted in that memorable encounter, he and his followers might have ended their days on a British gallows. On his arrival at the Texel after the battle he was denounced to the States-General by the British Ambassador at the Hague as "a certain Paul Jones, a subject of the King, who, according to treaties and the laws of war, can only be considered as a rebel and a pirate."

Early in August the squadron was again ready for sea. Just before it set sail on August 14 Jones was compelled—apparently at the instance of Le Ray de Chaumont, the French naval commissary of the squadron—to sign a so-called "Concordat," which placed the control of the squadron under a sort of council of war composed of all the captains. In a letter to his friend Hewes, Jones denounced this Concordat—which out of politic regard for the exigencies of the French alliance Franklin had sanctioned and induced Jones to accept—as "the most amazing document that the putative commander of a naval force in time of war was ever forced to sign on the eve of weighing anchor;" and declared that, by signing it, he

was unable to see that he had done less than "surrender all military right of seniority, or that he had any real right to consider his flag-ship anything more than a convenient rendezvous where the captains of the other ships may assemble, whenever it pleases them to do so, for the purpose of talking over and agreeing—if they can agree—upon a course of sailing or a plan of operations from time to time." Nevertheless he signed it. It added greatly to his difficulties, but it did not prevent his triumphing over them in the end. Indeed, by lending some cloak to the disloyalty of Landais, it may have averted an open rupture between the choleric commodore and his intractable lieutenant, though it certainly put little or no restraint upon the insubordination and independence of the latter. Be this as it may, it is, as Mr. Buell truly says, by no means the least merit of Jones's famous achievement off Flamborough Head, "that his genius, sorely tried as it had been by other obstacles, finally rose superior to even Le Ray de Chaumont's 'Concordat.'"

VI

The moment was not ill-chosen for a raid in British waters. Jones had clearly before his mind the advantages of a diversion effected at this particular juncture. England was already fighting at sea in two hemispheres, and was hard put to it to hold her own. Spain had concluded an alliance with France, and had declared war against England on June 16, 1779. D'Orvilliers, with a fleet of twenty-eight sail of the line—the fleet with which he had baffled Keppel the year before—had put out from Brest unopposed, and before the end of July he had effected his junction with the Spanish fleet off the Peninsula and made at once for the Channel with a combined fleet of no fewer than sixty-six sail of the line. By August 16 he was off Plymouth, Admiral Sir Charles Hardy, who was on the look-out for him with the Channel Fleet of only thirty-eight ships, having missed him by taking

station too far to the westward and southward of Scilly. I have examined this situation at some length in the preceding essay on Duncan.¹ For many days D'Orvilliers remained unchallenged in the Channel, and it was not until September 1 that the two fleets came in sight of each other near the Eddystone. But Hardy declined to risk an action, and D'Orvilliers did not attempt to force one. Divided counsels, distracted and vacillating plans of campaign, the indifferent equipment of both the allied fleets and a raging sickness among their crews compelled, or at any rate induced, him to retreat, and Hardy, not less ingloriously, anchored his fleet at Spithead on September 3. It was just at this very time that Jones entered the North Sea with his squadron, having passed to the westward outside Ireland and the Hebrides. On the morning of the 17th he was off the Firth of Forth, and this was probably the first intimation of his proceedings and whereabouts that was likely to reach the British Government. It was not merely luck that thus gave him his opportunity. It was, at least in some measure, astute calculation as well. He knew that so long as D'Orvilliers was at sea and aiming at the Channel there would be very few ships to spare to cruise at large in remoter British waters.

The first part of the cruise was comparatively uneventful save for the occasional capture of prizes, which were sent into various ports, French, Danish, and Dutch, their crews being detained as prisoners on board the *Bon Homme Richard*. It thus came about that when Jones engaged the *Serapis* he had more than two hundred British prisoners confined under hatches.² Off the west coast of Ireland the

¹ See pp. 133-8.

² The recovery of the prize-money due for these prizes and others taken in his earlier cruise gave rise to much tedious and intricate negotiation, in which Jones took an active part in later years as a Special Commissioner appointed by the United States for the purpose. I do not propose to deal at any length with this part of Jones's career, and need only remark here that in the conduct of the negotiations Jones displayed remarkable patience, perseverance, and diplomatic address, and handled the many difficult questions of international and maritime law involved with the touch of a master.

squadron encountered a gale, and the *Alliance* became detached. But on September 1 she was sighted off Cape Wrath, having just taken one prize and being then in pursuit of another, which Jones helped her to capture. Jones ordered Landais to send these prizes to Brest or L'Orient, but Landais, after nightfall, directed them to make for Bergen, where they were forthwith seized and restored to the British Government, the Kingdom of Denmark, which at that time included Norway, not having recognised the United States and being wholly under the influence of England. Jones subsequently expended much tedious and fruitless negotiation in an endeavour to obtain compensation from the Danish Government for the seizure of these prizes.

The squadron now cruised along the east coast of Scotland, taking a few small prizes, and on September 16 it was off the Firth of Forth. Jones here attempted to make a descent on Leith, but was baffled by a gale which sprang up just as his boats were being lowered for the attack, and drove him out to sea. In this attempt the *Alliance* took no part, Landais having by this time ceased to attend to the commodore's signals, and begun to maintain an entirely independent attitude. Baffled at Leith by the weather, Jones pursued his course to the southward, giving Spurn Head as his rendezvous. He knew that a British convoy from the Baltic was due about this season of the year, and that it generally made its landfall at Flamborough Head after crossing the North Sea. He intended to intercept it if he could, but his intentions were only partially fulfilled, for the convoy escaped. He got news of the convoy on the evening of September 22, when he was off the Spurn and intending the next morning to attack a fleet of colliers windbound and anchored in the mouth of the Humber. The *Vengeance* brought him word that the Baltic convoy had put into Bridlington Bay and was there awaiting a favourable wind to carry it to the Downs. The *Pallas* was then in company, and the *Alliance* was hull down to the southward. Jones at once

sent the *Vengeance* to give Landais a rendezvous off Flamborough Head, and forthwith made sail thither with the *Pallas* in company. He reached the rendezvous before daylight, and there hove to for a time to enable his consorts to come up with him. The morning was occupied in successive manœuvres for position, which need not be recounted in detail. It suffices to say that the convoy was so handled that it had weathered Flamborough Head so as to fetch Scarborough before Jones could get into position to intercept it, and that its escorting men-of-war, the *Serapis* and the *Countess of Scarborough*, had occupied a covering position between Jones and his intended prey. But Jones was not to be baffled. If he could not reach the convoy itself, he would try conclusions with its escort. The *Serapis*, having seen the convoy safe to leeward, awaited his onslaught, with the *Countess of Scarborough* under her lee. Jones ordered the *Pallas* to attack the latter, and prepared himself to attack the *Serapis*, ordering the *Vengeance* at the same time to keep out of harm's way. "You are not big enough," he said, "to bear a hand in this." The *Countess of Scarborough* was a hired vessel, temporarily commissioned as a man-of-war, carrying twenty-four guns. She was no match for the *Pallas*, and was overpowered by the latter and compelled to surrender, after a gallant action in which both vessels suffered severely. The *Alliance* was in the offing, but her treacherous captain took very little share in the action—enough, indeed, to afford the captain of the *Serapis* some colourable pretext of having surrendered to a superior force, and more than enough to furnish proof of his malignant treachery by firing only when he was much more likely to hurt the *Richard* than to hit the *Serapis*. Soon after 7 p.m. the two chief combatants, the *Serapis* and the *Richard*, were within short range of each other abeam, some seven miles due east of Flamborough Head, the wind being light from the S.S.W. and veering to the westward, the sea smooth, the sky clear, and the moon full, both ships going free on the same tack and heading

approximately N.W., the *Richard* holding the weather-gage. The *Serapis* twice hailed the *Richard*, and the second time was answered with a broadside.

VII

Then ensued a conflict the like of which has seldom been seen on the seas.

"The *Serapis*, forty guns," says Disraeli, "was one of the finest frigates in his Majesty's Navy, and had been off the stocks only a few months. Her crew were picked men, and she was commanded by Captain Richard Pearson, an officer celebrated even in the British Navy for his undaunted courage and exemplary conduct. The *Bon Homme Richard* was an old ship with decayed timbers, and had made four voyages to the East Indies. Many of her guns were useless, and all were ancient. Her crew consisted partly of Americans, partly of French, and partly of Maltese, Portuguese, and even Malays; and this crew was weak also in numbers, for two boats' crews had been lost on the coast of Ireland. . . . The Portuguese and the other foreigners could speak neither French nor English, and chattering in their native tongues, without ceasing, added not a little to the difficulties which presented themselves. The American commander had nothing to trust to but his own undaunted courage and extraordinary skill."

There are some slight inaccuracies, and even some picturesque exaggerations in this contrast, but in the main it is just. Perhaps no man who ever lived except Jones could have handled such a crew as he did. This, indeed, is the generous and unsolicited testimony of Pearson himself, who stated in his evidence before the court-martial which tried and acquitted him for the loss of his ship, that although more than half the crew of the *Bon Homme Richard* "were French—or at any rate not Americans," yet "long before the close of the action it became clearly apparent that the American ship was

dominated by a commanding will of the most unalterable resolution, and there could be no doubt that the intention of her commander was, if he could not conquer, to sink alongside. And this desperate resolve of the American captain was fully shared and fiercely seconded by every one of his ship's company. And, if the Honourable Court may be pleased to entertain an expression of opinion, I will venture to say that if French seamen can ever be induced by their own officers to fight in their own ships as Captain Jones induced them to fight in his American ship, the future burdens of his Majesty's Navy will be heavier than they have heretofore been." ¹

The broadside of the *Richard* was answered almost simultaneously by that of the *Serapis*, and the firing continued with fury on both sides. In a very short time the *Richard's* lower tier of eighteen-pounders was put out of action, some of the guns being dismantled and the rest disabled in various ways, not without grave injury to the structure of the ship. They were old guns, which had been condemned as of no further use in the French Navy,

¹ It is worth while to record on the testimony of one of his own officers. Henry Gardner, how Jones achieved this result. Gardner says :

I sailed, in my time, with many captains ; but with only one Paul Jones. He was the captain of captains. Any other commander I sailed with had some kind of method or fixed rule which he exerted towards all those under him alike. It suited some, and others not ; but it was the same rule all the time and to everybody. Not so Paul Jones. He always knew every officer or man in his crew as one friend knows another. Those big black eyes of his would look right through a new man at first sight, and, maybe, see something behind him ! At any rate, he knew every man, and always dealt with each according to his notion. I have seen him one hour teaching the French language to his midshipmen, and the next hour showing an apprentice how to knot a " Turk's-head " or make a neat coil-down of a painter. He was in everybody's watch, and everybody's mess all the time. In fact, I may say that any ship Paul Jones commanded was full of him, himself, all the time. The men used to get crazy about him when he was with them and talking to them. It was only when his back was turned that any one could wean them away from him. If you heard peals of laughter from the fore-castle, it was likely that he was there spinning funny yarns for Jack off watch. If you heard a roar of merriment at the cabin-table, it was likely that his never-failing wit had overwhelmed the officers' mess.

He was very strict. I have seen him sternly reprove a young sailor, who approached him, for what he called " a lubber's walk " ; say to him, " See here, this is the way to walk." And then, after putting the novice through his paces two or three times, he would say to him : " Ah, that's better !

and they only fired eight shots in all. "Three of them," says Jones, "burst at the first fire, killing almost all the men who were stationed to manage them." The remaining guns on the main and upper decks of the *Richard* were serviceable and were very well served. But they were overmatched by the superior armament of the *Serapis*. After about half an hour of this furious cannonade Pearson tried to get athwart the *Richard's* hawse, so as to rake her and possibly to secure the weather-gage on the opposite tack. But this attempt failed, baffled apparently by the veering of the wind. Pearson accordingly bore up again to leeward, but not soon enough to prevent the *Richard* fouling the *Serapis*, the jib-boom of the former engaging with the mizen-rigging of the latter. Jones at once attempted to grapple, but though his grapnels caught they failed to hold, and the ships fell apart again. The cannonade was then renewed as furiously as ever, and it was very soon plain enough that the *Richard* was getting by far the worst of it. "Dick," said Jones to Richard

You'll be a blue-water sailor before you know it, my boy!" And then he would give the shipmate a guinea out of his own pocket.

Above all things he hated the cat-o'-nine-tails. In two of his ships—the *Providence* and the *Ranger*—he threw it overboard the first day out. There was one in the *Alfred* that he never allowed to be used, and two in the *Richard* that were never used but twice. He consented to flog the lookout forward when the *Richard* fouled the *Alliance* the second day out from L'Orient; and also he allowed old Jack Robinson to persuade him that two foretop-men ought to be whipped for laying from aloft without orders when the squall struck us in the *Richard* off Leith. But when he consented to this he strictly enjoined upon old Jack that the men must be flogged with their shirts on, which, of course, made a farce of the whole proceeding. He said at this time: "I have no use for the cat. Whenever a sailor of mine gets vicious beyond my persuasion or control, the cheapest thing in the long run is to kill him right away. If you do that, the others will understand it. But if you trice him up and flog him, all the other bad fellows in the ship will sympathise with him and hate you."

All the men under his command soon learned this trait in his character. One Sunday when we were off the west coast of Ireland, just after we had lost the barge and Mr. Lunt, he addressed the crew on the subject of discipline. He told them that, many years before, when he was a boy in the merchant-service, he had seen a man "flogged round the fleet" at Port Royal, Jamaica. He said the man died under the lash; and he then made up his mind that Paul Jones and the cat-o'-nine-tails would part company. "I tell you, my men," he said, "once for all, that when I become convinced that a sailor of mine must be killed, I will not leave it to be done by boatswain's mates under slow torture of the lash! But I will do it myself—and so G— d— quick that it will make your heads swim!"

Dale, his first lieutenant in command of the gun-deck, "his metal is too heavy for us at this business. He is hammering us all to pieces. We must close with him; we must get hold of him! Be prepared at any moment to abandon this deck and bring what men you have left on the spar-deck—and give them the small arms for boarding when you come up." Already there were three or four feet of water in the hold, and the ship had sunk to at least two feet below her ordinary trim. But a change was at hand. The wind continued to veer, and to freshen as it veered, the *Richard* getting the advantage of it first so as to weather the *Serapis* and stop her way by taking the wind out of her sails. Meanwhile the cannonade continued, and the gun-deck of the *Richard* was in turn abandoned, so that she could now only fire with a few of her quarter-deck guns. Gradually the *Richard* forged ahead and began to wear across the bows of the *Serapis*. If she could complete this manœuvre before the *Serapis* recovered her way, she would have another opportunity to grapple, and should that manœuvre succeed, the fortune of the day might still be reversed.

It was at this critical juncture that Landais thought proper to take a hand in the game. The *Alliance* came up to windward, and when on the *Richard's* port-quarter, about two cables away, she fired a couple of broadsides which in the relative position of the three ships could hardly have hit the *Serapis* and hardly have missed the *Richard*. She then sheered off out of gunshot, having done all the mischief she could. All this time Jones was pursuing his manœuvre of getting ahead of the *Serapis*, crossing her bows, and rounding to on the opposite tack so as to lay his ship close alongside, and, since his guns were now mostly silenced, to bring his musketry into play. In this he succeeded, aided by a fortunate puff and favourable slant of the wind, which from the position of the two ships could not reach the sails of his adversary. Pearson thus describes the situation in his despatch to the Admiralty: "I backed our topsails in order to get square

with him again, which as soon as he observed, he then filled, put his helm a-weather and laid us athwart hawse ; his mizen shrouds took our jib-boom, which hung him for some time, till it at last gave way, and we dropt alongside of each other, head and stern, when the fluke of our spare anchor, hooking his quarter, we became so close, fore and aft, that the muzzles of our guns touched each other's sides. In this position we engaged from half-past eight to half-past ten ; during which time, from the great quantity and variety of combustible matters which they threw in upon our decks, chains, and in short into every part of the ship, we were on fire no less than ten or twelve times in different parts of the ship, and it was with the greatest difficulty and exertion imaginable at times that we were able to get it extinguished. At the same time the largest of the two frigates kept sailing round us the whole action, and raking us fore and aft, by which means she killed or wounded almost every man on the quarter- and main-decks." It is only right to quote this testimony in regard to the action of Landais in the *Alliance*, though it may be observed that it was manifestly Pearson's interest to make out that he was defeated by two ships and not by one. There is, on the other hand, abundant American testimony to show that Landais' action was not continuous, and that on the two successive occasions when he opened fire he did so with little or no regard to the immunity of the *Richard*, and with no chance at all of doing the *Serapis* more harm than he actually did to the *Richard*.

No sooner had the anchor of the *Serapis* caught in the mizen-chains of the *Richard* than Jones had it securely lashed there, passing, it is said, some of the lashings with his own hand. The main-deck of the *Richard* had now been abandoned, for Jones had determined, as soon as he could grapple, to fight the battle out with musketry and hand-grenades. Only two or three guns on his quarter-deck were still servicable, and these were trained on the mainmast of the *Serapis*. It was otherwise with

the *Serapis*. Her starboard broadside was now brought into action; the gun's crews were shifted over, and as the starboard port-sills had been lowered and could not be triced up because the ships were so close together, they were blown out by the first discharge of the broadside. Thus the material destruction of the *Richard* went on apace. Nevertheless, Jones was now beginning to get the upper hand on deck. He kept up such a murderous fire from his small arms that scarcely a man could live on the deck of the *Serapis*, and in particular he directed his personal efforts to frustrating every attempt made by the crew of the *Serapis* to cast loose the fastenings of the anchor which held her to the *Richard*. Nevertheless, the *Richard* was fast getting lower in the water, and was frequently set on fire. "I had," says Jones, "two enemies to contend with besides the English—fire and water." It was probably at this stage of the action, though Pearson puts it later, that some one on board the *Richard* called for quarter. Thereupon, as Pearson said at the court-martial, "Hearing, or thinking that I heard, a call for quarter from the enemy, I hailed to ask if he had struck his colours. I did not myself hear the reply; but one of my midshipmen, Mr. Hood, did hear it, and soon reported it to me. It was to the effect that he was just beginning to fight. This I at first thought to be mere bravado on his part. But I soon perceived that it was the defiance of a man desperate enough, if he could not conquer, to sink with his ship alongside." But Jones was not going to sink until he had conquered the *Serapis*. The guns of the *Serapis* continued to pound the timbers of the *Richard*, but the musketry of the *Richard* continued to clear the decks of the *Serapis*. The ships were now drifting and swinging, and by this time, about half-past nine, the *Serapis* was nearly head to wind,—the wind being now at W.N.W.,—and still paying off to leeward. It was in this situation that the master-at-arms of the *Richard*, believing that the ship was about to sink, opened the hatch below which the prisoners were confined and

bade them come on deck. Jones, who was at hand—he seems to have been ubiquitous during the fight—knocked the master-at-arms down and ordered the hatch to be again secured. Those who had escaped were ordered to man the pumps. One who refused was shot dead by Pierre Gérard, the commodore's French orderly, subsequently a captain in the French Navy, who was second-in-command of the *Neptune* at Trafalgar.¹

All this time the struggle for the mastery of the deck of the *Serapis* was proceeding with unabated fury, and Jones now sent up a supply of hand grenades into the main-top. These he directed the officers and men in the top to drop, if they could, from the yard-arm through the enemy's main-hatch. The expedient was successful, and practically decided the conflict. At the third attempt a midshipman named Fanning, who was outermost on the yard-arm, managed to drop his grenade through the hatch on to the main-deck of the *Serapis*, where it ignited and exploded a row of cartridges ranged all along the deck. "About half-past nine," says Pearson in his despatch, "either from a hand grenade being thrown in at one of our lower-deck ports, or from some other accident, a cartridge of powder was set on fire, the flames of which, running from cartridge to cartridge all the way aft, blew up the whole of the people and officers that were quartered abaft the mainmast; from which unfortunate circumstance all those guns were rendered useless for the remainder of the action, and I fear the greatest part of the people will lose their lives." Throughout this period of the action the two ships still continued

¹ Jones was afterwards accused of murdering his prisoners. At a court of inquiry held by order of the French Minister of Marine at Jones's request, Gérard explicitly stated that he killed the man on his own responsibility and without any orders from the commodore, who was standing by at the time. Asked further why he did this in the immediate presence of his commanding officer and without his orders, he replied: "Pour éviter les désagréments, monsieur; aussi pour encourager les autres prisonniers; ainsi pour subvenir au Commodore les besoins d'un devoir assez pénible." Evidently Gérard had not been his commodore's orderly for nothing. Also he had apparently read his Voltaire.

swinging until, about ten o'clock, the *Serapis* was heading nearly due south. Here the *Alliance* again put in an appearance. She returned from the northward, running down again to leeward, and, as Jones stated in the formal charges he subsequently preferred against Landais, "in crossing the *Richard's* bows Captain Landais raked her with a third broadside, after being constantly called to from the *Richard* not to fire but to lay the enemy alongside." Pearson stated in his despatch that the *Serapis* also suffered heavily from this broadside of the *Alliance*, "without our being able to bring a gun to bear on her." This testimony is unimpeachable, but so also is the testimony which avers that the *Richard* received a full share of the same broadside. Anyhow, the *Alliance*, without attempting "to lay the enemy alongside," ran off to leeward and took no further part in the action, nor did she attempt to destroy or capture any of the ships of the convoy.

Before this, Pearson, according to his despatch, had attempted to board the *Richard*, but his boarders had been repulsed by a superior number of the enemy "laying under cover with pikes in their hands ready to receive them." He now anchored his ship, hoping that the enemy might drift clear as soon as the strain came on the cable. It was his last chance, but the lashings still held. It was now Jones's turn to board. He had collected a numerous boarding party of his best American seamen—men fresh from imprisonment in England—under the break of the quarter-deck, and bidden John Mayrant to lead them over the side as soon as he gave the signal. There was now very little fight left in the *Serapis*. Henry Gardner records that "after the battle the prisoners said, without exception, they had no more stomach for fighting after the explosion, and were induced to return to their guns and resume firing only by their strict discipline and the example of their first lieutenant, who told them that if they would hold out a few minutes longer, the *Richard* would surely sink." Jones, perceiving that their fire

was slackening, and their spirit waning, shouted to Mayrant, "Now is your time, John. Go in!" Instantly, with a cry of "Remember Portsea jail," Mayrant sprang over the netting, followed by his men, and began fighting his way aft. There was little resistance, though Mayrant himself, at the moment of onslaught, was wounded in the thigh by a pike. He shot his opponent down, and this was the last casualty of the action. Pearson, seeing that the boarders were steadily making their way aft and that further resistance was useless, now struck his flag. Some accounts say that he hauled it down with his own hands. Anyhow, he says himself, "I found it in vain, and in short impracticable, from the situation we were in, to stand out any longer with the least prospect of success; I therefore struck (our mainmast at the same time went by the board)." It is true that he attributes his surrender mainly to the fire of the *Alliance*, and does not mention the onslaught of Mayrant and his men. But, however the result may have been brought about, he frankly acknowledged himself beaten. He had fought manfully and skilfully to the finish, and with all the tenacity and endurance of British seamen at their best. But Jones had fought, as Pearson acknowledged at the court-martial, "with extraordinary and unheard-of desperate stubbornness"; and this, he added, "had so depressed the spirits of my people that when more than two hundred had been slain or disabled out of three hundred and seventeen all told, I could not urge the remnant to further resistance." Of course it may be urged that Jones and all his men fought with halters round their necks, and that this was the secret of their "extraordinary and unheard-of desperate stubbornness." But it were more generous to acknowledge that Jones fought as he did because, being the man that he was, a man of Nelson's mould, he knew no other way of fighting.

The cost of victory was appalling. I have quoted Pearson's account of the condition of his own ship when he hauled down his flag. Here is his account of the

Richard: "On my going on board the *Bon Homme Richard*, I found her in great distress; her quarters and counter on the lower deck entirely drove in, and the whole of her lower-deck guns dismounted; she was also on fire in two places, and six or seven feet of water in her hold, which kept increasing upon them all night and next day, till they were obliged to quit her, and she sunk, with a great number of her wounded people on board of her. She had three hundred and six men killed and wounded in the action; our loss in the *Serapis* was also very great." Jones himself, in a letter to Franklin, describes the condition of his ship at a moment when after the final broadside of the *Alliance* he was advised to surrender by some of his comrades "of whose courage and good sense he entertained the highest opinion." He rejected their advice, but he acknowledges that the situation was well-nigh desperate. "Our rudder was entirely off; the stern-frame and transoms were almost entirely cut away; the timbers by the lower deck, especially from the mainmast to the stern, being greatly decayed by age, were mangled beyond every power of description; and a person must have been an eye-witness to have formed a just idea of the tremendous scene of carnage, wreck, and ruin that everywhere appeared." Nevertheless, he was the victor, the victor in spite of Landais, and perhaps, after all, mainly because the *Alliance* was still "in being" and still intact. Pearson seems to have held that even if the *Richard* surrendered or sank, the *Serapis*, in her battered and dispirited condition, must have fallen an immediate prey to the *Alliance*, which had only fired three broadsides at times when the *Serapis* could not possibly reply. There is evidence to show that this was also the calculation of Landais himself.¹ He would cer-

¹ The best account of Landais's conduct as it appeared to the officers of Jones's squadron is given by Disraeli. It is as follows: "His gross disrespect to the commodore, his disobedience of signals, his refusal to answer them, his unauthorized and mischievous separation from the squadron, his impudent and arrant cowardice, formed the subject of ten distinct accusations, which were proved by all the officers who could bear witness to the facts. His

tainly not have been sorry to see the *Richard* sink with Jones on board, knowing full well that should that happen the laurels of the victory, albeit wholly unearned, would be his alone. But fate and the fortitude of Jones decreed that this reward of his treachery, at any rate, he should not reap. Balked of his prey, he stood aloof as soon as he saw that the *Serapis* had surrendered, and gave no help whatever in the overpowering task which now confronted Jones of saving what he could from the wreck. The *Richard* was slowly but inevitably sinking. She remained afloat for some thirty hours after the end of the battle. In the short interval Jones had to provide first for the safety and sea-worthiness of the *Serapis*, which had lost her mainmast and otherwise suffered severely in the action; next to transfer to her over two hundred prisoners held in the *Richard* and over one hundred wounded of his own men; to take care of these latter as well as of about the same number of men wounded in the *Serapis*; and to guard the unwounded remainder of the crew of the latter, numbering one hundred and eleven. To carry out all this he had only about one hundred and fifty of his own men left fit for service, and many of these had been injured slightly in action. The ships had been cut adrift as soon as the action ceased, so that the transfer of wounded and prisoners to the *Serapis* had to be effected by boats, of which there were only three available. Fortunately the wind had died away during the night and the

conduct during the engagement with the *Serapis*, and his ruinous neglect in not destroying and capturing the Baltic fleet, were the subject of fifteen other accusations, and were proved in the same manner. The chief officers of the *Alliance* bore witness to the ill-conduct of their commander. Among other facts De Cottineau averred that when the *Bon Homme* (? *Serapis*) appeared off Flamborough Head, Landais distinctly stated to him that if, as it appeared to be, it were a ship of fifty guns, 'he should decidedly run away,' although he knew the *Pallas*, from her heavy sailing, must have fallen a sacrifice. It was also distinctly proved that Landais had stated that he should not have cared had the *Bon Homme* struck, as then, from the shattered state of the *Serapis*, he should have had both ships for prizes." A man of this character and in this mood would assuredly not be very careful to spare his consort when he opened fire on her adversary.

sea fell dead calm, or the *Richard* must have sunk with many of the wounded and prisoners still on board. The *Pallas* rendered some assistance, and about one hundred of the unwounded prisoners—including Pearson himself—were ultimately berthed on board her, but not before the *Richard* had foundered. It is not recorded what became of the *Vengeance*, but as much fog prevailed for a day or two after the action she may have lost touch with the commodore, as the *Alliance* certainly did with much less excuse. The *Alliance*, at any rate, had not been ordered as the *Vengeance* was to keep out of the way. On the contrary, she had been ordered, as we have seen, to “lay the enemy alongside.” Anyhow, she was not seen after the battle, and with the *Vengeance* she reached the Texel before the *Serapis* and *Pallas* did with the *Countess of Scarborough* in company. This was natural enough, for neither had any serious damages to repair.

Pearson, as we have seen, reported that the *Richard* sank “with a great number of her wounded people on board of her.” This is at variance with the American accounts, which declare that all the wounded were transferred to the *Serapis*, though some died in the boats. Jones’s own narrative is quite explicit on this point. It was, however, written some years afterwards, and it is also so characteristic that it may well serve as an epilogue to this heroic conflict :

No one was now left aboard the *Richard* but our dead. To them I gave the good old ship for their coffin, and in her they found a sublime sepulchre. She rolled heavily in the long swell, her gun-deck awash to the port-sills, settled slowly by the head, and sank peacefully in about forty fathoms.

The ensign-gaff, shot away in the action, had been fished and put in place soon after the firing ceased, and our torn and tattered flag was left flying when we abandoned her. As she plunged down by the head at the last, her taffrail momentarily rose in the air ; so the very last vestige mortal eyes ever saw of the *Bon Homme*

Richard was the defiant waving of her unconquered and unstricken flag as she went down. And as I had given them the good old ship for their sepulchre, I now bequeathed to my immortal dead the flag they had so desperately defended for their winding-sheet !¹

VIII

The calm lasted until the forenoon of September 25, when the *Serapis*, with the *Pallas* and *Countess of Scarborough* in company, was about seventy miles east of Flamborough Head. Fogs and fortune had screened them from several British men-of-war which by this time were on the look-out for them. Jones had hoped to take his ships into Dunkirk ; but a stiff south-westerly wind now sprang up and freshened into a gale by the 27th. The battered *Serapis* could make no head against it, and Jones let her drive before it. The *Pallas* and her prize were more weatherly, but Cottineau and his officers would

¹ This flag had its own romantic history. On June 14, 1777, Congress passed two resolutions. The first was, " That the flag of the thirteen United States of America be thirteen stripes alternate red and white ; that the union be thirteen stars in a blue field, representing a new constellation " ; the second, " That Captain Paul Jones be appointed to command the ship *Ranger*." While Jones was fitting out the *Ranger* at Portsmouth, some girls of his acquaintance offered to hold a " quilting party," and to make him a flag for his new command from slices of their best silk gowns. Jones accepted the offer, and supplied the specification for the flag in accordance with the recent resolution of Congress. It is said that the thirteen white stars of the " new constellation " were cut out of the wedding dress of one of the girls, named Helen Seavey, who had just been married. The flag was first hoisted on board the *Ranger* on July 4, 1777. If it was not the first specimen of the " Stars and Stripes " ever hoisted, it was certainly the first ever seen in Europe and the first ever saluted by a foreign power. When Jones quitted the *Ranger*, he took the flag with him, regarding it as his personal property, and he commissioned the *Richard* with it. When he returned to America, he apologised to one of the makers of the flag for not having brought it back to them with all its glories. " I could not," he said, " deny to my dead on her decks, who had given their lives to keep it flying, the glory of taking it with them." " You did exactly right, commodore," the lady replied. " That flag is just where we all wish it to be—flying at the bottom of the sea over the only ship that ever sunk in victory. If you had taken it from her and brought it back to us, we would hate you ! "

not desert their commodore, although Jones more than once signalled to them to bear up for port and leave him to take care of himself. On the 29th the wind shifted to N.W., and Jones again attempted to shape a course for Dunkirk. The remainder of the voyage may best be described in the words of Nathaniel Fanning, one of the surviving officers of the *Richard* :

During this time the scenes on board begged description. There were but few cots, and not even hammocks enough for the wounded, so that many of them had to lie on the hard decks, where they died in numbers day by day. The British officers, with watches of their men, took almost the whole charge of the wounded, and so left us free to work the ship. Our surgeon, Dr. Brooke, and Drs. Bannatyne and Edgerley, the English surgeons, performed prodigious work, and by their skill and ceaseless care saved many lives. In the common danger enmity was forgotten, and every one who could walk worked with a will to save the ship and their own lives. Finally, on the fifth day, the wind abated and hauled to the north-west, when we ran down to the coast of Holland, and made the entrance of the Helder, through which we made our way into the Texel, where we anchored about 3 p.m., October 3, finding there the *Alliance* and *Vengeance*, which came in the day before. During these few days, including those not wounded who died from sheer exhaustion, we buried not less than forty of the two crews. Neither the commodore nor the brave British officers ever slept more than two or three hours at a time, and were sometimes up for two days at a time.

On his arrival at the Texel Jones was at once surrounded with a fresh crop of difficulties. First he had to deal with what he regarded as the treachery and mutiny of Landais. He forthwith sent to Franklin a formal indictment of Landais' conduct and suspended him from his command. But Landais at first paid no attention to the order. Jones then sent Cottineau to warn him that Jones himself would enforce the order within twenty-four

hours, and Landais thereupon challenged Cottineau to a duel and went on shore. The duel took place, and Cottineau was wounded. Landais then withdrew to Amsterdam and challenged Jones himself; but before the preliminaries could be settled Landais thought proper to go to the Hague and seek to enlist the sympathy of the French Ambassador at that place. The latter declined to see him. Landais then sent him a written memorial, which the ambassador again declined to receive, taking care to inform him at the same time that he had received a despatch from the French Government to the effect that Franklin had notified Landais of the charges preferred against him, and had ordered him "to render himself forthwith into Dr. Franklin's presence to answer them." Landais then thought proper to obey Franklin's order and left the Hague for Paris. With this he passes out of my story, as I have already related all that needs to be related concerning his subsequent career.

Next, Jones had to make the best provision he could for the wounded prisoners on board the *Serapis*. Of these there were one hundred and fifty in all still surviving, some of them having been wounded in the *Countess of Scarborough*. As the *Serapis* had also over one hundred wounded of the *Richard's* crew, and the *Pallas* had a dozen or more wounded of her own, it was clearly to the interest of all parties to land at least the British wounded as soon as possible. At first the Dutch authorities refused to allow any one to be landed. But Jones's request to be allowed to land his wounded prisoners was warmly seconded by Sir Joseph Yorke, the British Ambassador at the Hague, and this powerful influence induced the Dutch authorities to relent. All the wounded prisoners were landed and housed in barracks at the Texel, where Jones continued to furnish them with such hospital supplies and medical attendance as he could obtain. Jones was also allowed to take command of the fort in which they were housed, and to place a guard there. All the prisoners, wounded and unwounded, were, after much

tedious and intricate negotiation, ultimately handed over to the French Government. The French Government claimed also not only the *Pallas* and the *Vengeance*—which were commanded by French officers—and the *Countess of Scarborough*, the prize of the former, but even the *Serapis* herself. The claim was enforced, greatly to the chagrin of Jones, and for diplomatic reasons Franklin himself had supported it. “This deprivation of the *Serapis*,” writes Jones, “was the sorest of all my wounds. . . . The *Serapis* had been taken by an American ship under the American flag, and commanded by virtue of an American commission. I could not conceive by what shadow of right M. de Sartine could claim her as a French prize, and he made no attempt to set up any.” But the action of the French Government was probably the best way out of a serious diplomatic difficulty, and in any case, neither Franklin nor Jones could resist it, lest by so doing they should prejudice the French alliance, which was all-important to the United States. The *Alliance*, being an American ship, was not claimed by the French Government. She was left to Jones, as he bitterly said, “to do what I pleased or what I could with” her. We shall shortly see what he could do with her.

The diplomatic difficulty above mentioned was only a part of a much greater difficulty with which Jones was confronted and perplexed during his harassed stay at the Texel. We have seen that the British Ambassador at the Hague had supported Jones’s request to the Dutch Government to be allowed to land his wounded prisoners; but at the same time, or immediately afterwards, Sir Joseph Yorke represented to the Dutch Government that “a certain Paul Jones,” being a subject of the King, “could only be considered as a rebel and a pirate,” and that, in consequence, he and all his men should be given up. In a subsequent despatch, written some three weeks later, he repeated the same demand. Jones was now to show that his diplomatic address was no unworthy a complement to his fighting capacity. Under date Novem-

ber 4, 1779, he addressed the following letter to the States General :

HIGH AND MIGHTY LORDS :

Begging your gracious and condescending consideration, I, Paul Jones, Captain of the United States Navy, represent and humbly relate that before me has been laid copy of a letter addressed to your High Mightinesses, under date of the 9th of the month of October, by His Excellency Sir Joseph Yorke, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of His Majesty the King of Great Britain. That in the said letter the said Sir Joseph Yorke states that "two of His Majesty's ships, the *Serapis* and the *Countess of Scarborough*, arrived some days ago in the Texel, having been attacked and taken by force, by a certain Paul Jones, a subject of the King, who, according to treaties and the laws of war, can only be considered as a rebel and a pirate."

And on this ground His Excellency Sir Joseph Yorke demands that the ships and crews be given up.

Also has been laid before me copy of memorial of the said Sir Joseph Yorke, under date of the 29th of October, just past, renewing the said demand "most strong and urgent for the seizure and restitution of the said vessels as well as for the enlargement of their crews, who have been seized by the pirate Paul Jones, a Scotchman, a rebellious subject, and a state criminal." Also conjuring your High Mightinesses to "treat as pirates those whose letters (commissions) are found to be illegal for not being issued by a sovereign power."

May it please Your High Mightinesses, I conceive from the foregoing that the only question in dispute between His Excellency Sir Joseph Yorke and myself is the question whether my commission has been "issued by a sovereign power." If my commission has been issued by a sovereign power, then Sir Joseph Yorke's contention that I am a "pirate," etc., must fall.

The commission I hold, of which I transmit herewith a true copy and hold the original subject to examination by Your High Mightinesses or your authorized envoy for that purpose, and which original I have already exhibited to His Excellency Commodore Riemersma, commanding the fleet of Your High Mightinesses, now at anchor in

these Roads, is issued by the Congress of the United States of America in due form, signed by the President thereof and attested with the seal.

Such being true, the only question left to decide is the question whether the United States of America is a sovereign power.

On this question, I take it for granted that Your High Mightinesses will agree with me that neither Sir Joseph Yorke nor his master, the King of Great Britain, can be considered competent sole judge of last resort. If they could be so considered, then all questions of every description would be subject to *ex parte* decision by the arbitrary will of one party, in any contest—a doctrine which must, in the estimation of every judicial mind, be too preposterous to contemplate without levity.

Your High Mightinesses cannot fail to be aware that the question of the sovereignty of the United States of America has been passed upon by qualified and competent judges. That sovereignty has been recognized by His Most Christian Majesty the King of France and Navarre, in the form of a solemn treaty of amity and alliance done at Versailles nearly a year ago and now a *casus belli* in the estimation of His Majesty the King of Great Britain. The independence of the United States, and with it their rightful sovereignty, has been recognized by His Most Catholic Majesty the King of Spain and the Indies. The belligerent rights of the United States have been acknowledged by His Majesty Frederick II., King of Prussia, and by Her Imperial Majesty Catharine II., Empress of all the Russias.

It does not become me, who am only a naval officer of command rank, to enter upon discussion of the motives of statecraft which may have induced such attitudes or such action on the part of the august potentates mentioned; but Your High Mightinesses will, I do not doubt, agree that it is within my province, humble as it may be, to invite attention to existing facts of common notoriety and concealed from no one. In the face of so much evidence, there is before us, by way of rebuttal, nothing but the *ex parte* declaration of His Excellency Sir Joseph Yorke, in behalf of his master the King of Great Britain, a party principal in the case to be adjudicated.

And now, if I may for one moment further beg the

patient indulgence of Your High Mightinesses, I recur to the language of His Excellency Sir Joseph Yorke, wherein, to fortify, apparently, his contention that I am "a rebellious subject and state criminal," he declares that I am not only "the pirate Paul Jones," but also that I am "a Scotchman."

Candor compels me, may it please Your High Mightinesses, to admit that this last, alone of all Sir Joseph's allegations, is true and indisputable. But while admitting the truth of Sir Joseph's assertion of my Scottish birth, I deny the validity of his inference made plain by his context. That, under the circumstances now being considered, the fact of Scottish birth should be held to constitute the character of a "rebellious subject and state criminal," more than birth elsewhere within the dominions of the King of Great Britain, I do not conceive to be a tenable theory. It cannot have escaped the attention of Your High Mightinesses that every man now giving fealty to the cause of American Independence was born a British subject. I do not comprehend, nor can I conceive, a difference in this respect between birth as a British subject in Scotland and birth as a British subject in Virginia, Pennsylvania, New York, New England, or elsewhere on British soil, there being in the eyes of British law no difference between the soil of the parent realm and the soil of colonies in respect to the relations or the rights of the subject.

If the reasoning of Sir Joseph Yorke be sound, then General Washington, Dr. Franklin, and all other patriots of birth on the soil of America when a British colony, must be, equally with me, "state criminals." No formal proclamation has been made to that effect, within my knowledge, by due authority of the King and his Ministers. Whatever may be the impression of exigency, it is clear that the Government of His Britannic Majesty has not yet undertaken to proclaim wholesale outlawry against nearly three millions of people in America now in arms for the cause of Independence. Such proclamation seems to have been reserved for my especial honour, in a port of a neutral state, and on the *ipse dixit* of an ambassador without express authority from Crown, Ministers, or Commons. It is inconceivable that so unauthorized a proceeding can have weight or that so unexampled an

exception can prevail with the reason of so judicial a body as the Assembly of Your High Mightinesses.

With these humble representations I confidently repose trust in the traditional candor and in the infallible justice of the High and Mighty Lords of the States General of the Netherlands.

(Signed) PAUL JONES,
Captain U. S. Navy.

On Board the U. S. Ship *Serapis*,
 November 4, 1779.

This must have been the letter of which Horace Walpole wrote to the Countess of Ossory on October 1, 1782: "Have you seen in the papers the excellent letter of Paul Jones to Sir Joseph Yorke? *Elle nous dit bien des vérités.* I doubt Sir Joseph can answer them. Dr. Franklin himself, I should think, was the author. It was certainly written by a first-rate pen. . . ." It is true that the letter was not written to Sir Joseph Yorke, but was addressed to the States General. But it was a direct reply to two letters which Sir Joseph Yorke had, as Jones knew, addressed to the States General concerning the legality of Jones's commission and the international *status* of his flag, and it might very well have been loosely designated by Walpole as "the letter of Paul Jones to Sir Joseph Yorke." Jones left the Texel before the end of 1779, and by that time his indirect controversy with Sir Joseph Yorke was at an end. He is not likely to have addressed that diplomatist on any public matter at any subsequent date, and indeed there does not seem to be extant any letter of any kind addressed by Paul Jones to Sir Joseph Yorke at any date. On the other hand, the letter to the States General was published in an English Blue Book in 1782, shortly before the date of Walpole's letter to Lady Ossory, together with other official correspondence relating to the rupture between England and Holland, which took place at the end of 1780. If this was the letter in question, however, Walpole is clearly wrong in attributing its composition to Franklin.

It is dated November 4, and it refers to a memorial addressed by Sir Joseph Yorke to the States General on October 29. Between these dates there was no time for a copy of this memorial to have reached Franklin in Paris and for Franklin to have drafted a reply to it and sent it to Jones at the Texel. Besides, Franklin did not entirely approve of the line taken by Jones in this matter.

It is thus certain that Franklin had no hand in the letter to the States General; and even if this is not the letter so highly commended by Horace Walpole, it is at any rate a document which no one can read without acknowledging that "it is certainly written by a first-rate pen." Jones was in a very difficult, not to say a very equivocal, diplomatic position. He had no diplomatic authority, he could not afford to offend France, nor would Franklin have sanctioned any action of his that was likely to do so. There were influences at work in France which were by no means friendly to him, and were in fact so potent that they ultimately succeeded in enforcing the claim of the French Government to the *Serapis*. He had therefore to be very circumspect in that direction. On the other hand, so far as he had any voice in the matter, it was manifestly quite impossible for him to acquiesce for a single moment in the demand of Sir Joseph Yorke that he should be treated by the States General "as a rebel and a pirate." He could not expect to persuade the States General to recognize the United States as an independent sovereign power. They had so far declined to do so, and were not at all disposed to incur the enmity of England by doing it at this juncture. But he did hope to induce them to show equal discretion towards France by declining to treat as a rebel and a pirate a man who had sailed from a French port with the sanction of the French Government and with French officers under his command; and he knew that if he did so induce them, the relations between Holland and England, already none too friendly, would be, as he wished them to be, still further embittered. This hope was not

disappointed. After a long debate on the question raised by Sir Joseph Yorke, the States General, on November 19, passed a resolution declaring: 1. That they "decline to consider any question affecting the legality of Paul Jones's commission or his *status* as a person." 2. That it is "not their intention to do anything from which it might lawfully be inferred that they recognize the independence of the American Colonies." 3. "That . . . it shall be signified to Paul Jones, that, having put in to place his injured vessels in shelter from the dangers of the sea . . . he shall make sail as soon as possible when the wind and weather shall be favourable, and withdraw from this country."

Thus, by the first clause of this resolution, the only question to which Jones had addressed himself in his letter to the States General was decided practically in his favour and to the complete discomfiture of Sir Joseph Yorke, who in one of his communications to the States General had pompously declared that "the eyes of all Europe are on your resolution." The second clause merely left the situation *in statu quo*, and astute as his diplomacy was, Jones could hardly have expected that unaided he could do that which the combined diplomacy of France and the United States had failed to do, namely, induce Holland to "recognize the independence of the American Colonies." But though the *status quo* was unchanged in appearance, the refusal of the States General to treat Jones as a rebel and a pirate did so far alter the situation that within little more than a year England declared war against Holland on December 20, 1780, alleging as the chief among the causes of the war "that in violation of treaty the States General suffered an American Pirate (one Paul Jones, a Rebel and State Criminal) to remain several weeks in one of their ports; and even permitted a part of his crew to mount guard (with arms and munitions, under his authority) in one of their Forts in the Texel." As to embroil Holland and England was, rightly or wrongly, one of the main objects which Jones avowedly

aimed at, this result too must be set down to the credit of his diplomatic address. He also succeeded in attaining this object without putting any additional strain on the relations of Holland with the United States. As to the third clause of the resolution of the States General, though it was stringent and even peremptory in terms, it was not very stringently enforced. Jones remained at the Texel, undisturbed, for more than a month after the States General had formally decreed his expulsion. There must have been considerable complaisance on the part of the Dutch executive authorities to enable him to do this. An English squadron was cruising outside the Texel, intent on his capture whenever the Dutch should thrust him out. They allowed him to wait until an easterly gale had driven this squadron off the coast, and when he did leave he got away unharmed.

In truth he had still much to do before he could leave the Texel. The question of what to do with the prisoners was still unsettled, as was also that of the *status* of his flag. The action of the French Government, which Franklin did not and Jones could not resist, ultimately settled both, though as regards the flag in a manner very mortifying to Jones, and, as he contended, without a shadow of right. An attempt was first made to evade the difficulty by giving Jones a commission in the French Navy, and authorizing him to hoist the French flag in the *Serapis* in token of his right, thus acquired, to command the squadron without further question. But Jones flatly declined to be a party to this transaction. It would, he contended, completely stultify the argument he had addressed to the States General in reply to Sir Joseph Yorke, and he pointed out that "on his arrival in the Texel he had publicly declared himself an officer of the United States of America; that he was not authorized by his Government to receive the proffered commission; and that he conceived, moreover, that, under existing circumstances, it would be dishonourable to himself and disadvantageous to America to change his flag." He was

prepared to allow Cottineau to hoist the French flag in the *Pallas*, the *Vengeance*, and the *Countess of Scarborough*, which was the prize of the former. But the *Serapis*, which was his own prize, and the *Alliance*, which was an American ship built and commissioned in America, he insisted on retaining under his own command and under the American flag. But de Sartine, the French Minister of Marine, was inexorable as regards the *Serapis*, prompted, as Jones believed, by Le Ray de Chaumont, the French Commissary of the squadron, who desired to have the fingering of the prize-money. Franklin, perhaps *nolens volens*, was fain to support de Sartine, and Jones had to give way. He was left, as he said, to do what he pleased or what he could with the *Alliance*.

On the other hand, the solution of the difficulty as regards the prisoners was far more satisfactory. The French Government, when it took over the ships, also took over the custody of the prisoners. They were formally handed over to the French Ambassador at the Hague, and placed on board the ships which by the same authority now hoisted the French flag, namely, the *Serapis*, the *Pallas*, the *Vengeance*, and the *Countess of Scarborough*. These ships then left the Texel under convoy of the Dutch fleet. At an earlier date Franklin had written to Jones : " I am uneasy about your prisoners, and wish they were safe in France ; you will then have completed the glorious work of giving liberty to all the Americans that have so long languished for it in the British prisons, for there are not so many there as you have now taken." When their safety was assured, Jones wrote to Le Ray de Chaumont : " It is the greatest triumph which a good man can boast—a thousand times more flattering to me than victory." Let those scoff at this who will as turgid and insincere. For my part I prefer the more generous appreciation of Disraeli, who writes as follows concerning the general attitude of Jones on this question :

These prisoners were Jones's great pride. Early in

life his feelings had been excited by the description of the sufferings of his countrymen who were imprisoned in the mother country. His objects in removing the war to Europe were mainly to retaliate on the English for the scenes of havoc he had witnessed in "the country of his fond election" and to deliver the imprisoned Americans from their dungeons. On his arrival in France, intent upon this grand purpose, Jones met with a congenial spirit in the most illustrious of the American Commissioners. Franklin, that mighty master of the human mind, soon dived into the innermost recesses of Jones's soul. He was struck with his daring courage, his manly frankness, and his enthusiastic sentiments. He perceived him bold in purpose, systematic in conception, and firm in execution. The wily politician smiled at the chivalric and romantic sentiments of his youthful friend; but the practical philosopher felt that, to perform extraordinary actions, a man must often entertain extraordinary sentiments, and that in the busiest scenes of human life enthusiasm is not always vain, nor romance always a fable.

Jones was now left alone at the Texel with the *Alliance*, still flying the American flag, to do what he pleased or what he could with. Sir Joseph Yorke was baffled, though if he was no match for Jones in diplomacy, he was, to do him justice, equally anxious for the well-being of the wounded prisoners, and even co-operated with Jones in securing for them suitable housing together with proper medical care and comforts. Jones met him once at the house of Van Berckel, the Grand Pensionary. They maintained a ceremonious courtesy towards each other, but soon came to a friendly understanding concerning supplies for the prisoners. Sir Joseph offered to obtain these supplies and consign them to Jones himself; but Jones warily declined this proposal, "for fear," as he frankly told Sir Joseph, "that malicious enemies might accuse me of appropriating them," and he requested that they might be consigned to Dr. Edgerly, the late surgeon of the *Countess of Scarborough*. "Two days later," says Jones, "Sir Joseph sent by a hoy from Amsterdam a

goodly supply of medicines, blankets, food, tobacco, with considerable wine and some liquors. And with the consignment of these articles to Dr. Edgerly, as I had requested, he sent also a private letter to that gentleman, requesting him to inform me that if, as he (Sir Joseph) suspected, the wounded Americans might also be in need of such supplies as he had sent, they should have an impartial share; 'because,' said Sir Joseph in his letter to Dr. Edgerly, 'we all know that old England can never tell the difference between friends and foes among brave men wounded in battle, even if some of them may, peradventure, be rebels.'" It is pleasant to record these courtesies between two such antagonists. Even Sir Joseph Yorke, it would seem, could not resist the charm of Jones's personal fascination.

The Dutch authorities at the Texel do not seem to have been in any hurry to enforce the order of the States General for Jones's expulsion from that anchorage. That order was, as we have seen, sanctioned by the States General on November 19. But it was not until December 26 that the *Alliance* finally took her departure. No attempt seems to have been made to thrust her out at a time when she could hardly avoid falling into the clutches of the British squadron cruising outside. On the contrary, she was allowed to wait until an easterly gale which arose on Christmas Day had driven the squadron quite off the coast, leaving only one or two frigates behind. The wind abated the next day, and Jones, seizing the opportunity while the coast was clear, put to sea about 10 p.m. and, eluding the vigilance of the British frigates still on the watch for him, shaped a course for the Straits of Dover. "He now," says Nathaniel Fanning, "ran through the Straits of Dover and down the English Channel, passing close enough in to fire a shot at the Channel Fleet anchored off Spithead, and then cruised as far south as Corunna, where he remained two weeks, watering and victualling his ship. Spain being at that time at war with England, the *Alliance* was most cordially

received, and the civilities of the town were exhausted in entertaining Commodore Jones and his officers. . . . On January 28, 1780, having refitted, watered, and victualled the *Alliance*, Jones sailed from Corunna for L'Orient." Here he anchored on February 14. Except when he returned to America in the *Ariel*—which he did in December 1780—he never hoisted the United States flag at sea again, though he lived until 1792, dying in Paris on July 18 in that year, at the age of forty-five.

IX

Here, then, ends the active career of Paul Jones as a fighting seaman, and here ends my story. The rest is merely epilogue. It is true that Jones subsequently took service in the Russian Navy at the invitation of the Empress Catherine, who gave him the rank of Rear-Admiral, and afterwards promoted him to that of Vice-Admiral. But this episode in his life affords little additional material for the appreciation of his quality as a great sea-officer. He commanded a Russian squadron in the Liman at the time of the siege of Oezakoff in 1788, and in the engagement known as the Battle of the Liman on June 17 in that year he inflicted a severe defeat on the Turkish fleet. But he was very treacherously served by Nassau-Siegen, who commanded a flotilla of gunboats nominally under his orders, and the laurels of his victory were filched away from him by Potemkin, who presented to the Empress a fabricated report of the engagement, in which Jones's services were ignored. Alike in the Liman and at St. Petersburg he was made the object of incessant and unscrupulous intrigues, which finally drove him out of the Russian service. Suwaroff alone appreciated him and stood his constant friend. If it be held that he demeaned himself by taking mercenary service under the Russian flag, the argument can only be sustained by condemning at the same time the large number

of British naval officers at that time serving in the Russian Navy, many of whom did not disdain to take part in the intrigues against him, while others more honourably, but not less ungenerously, resigned their commissions sooner than accept him as a comrade. He withdrew from Russia broken in health and, for a time, blasted in reputation. But his fair fame was subsequently vindicated by the efforts of his friend the Comte de Ségur, the French Ambassador at St. Petersburg. I extract from the pages of Disraeli the following letter from Ségur to the French Ministers at Berlin and Hamburg :

ST. PETERSBURG, *26th August, 1789.*

SIR,

The Vice-Admiral Paul Jones, who will have the honour to deliver this letter, commanded during the last campaign a Russian squadron stationed on the Liman. The Empress has decorated him on this occasion, with the order of St. Anne. He had a right, by his actions, to a promotion and to a recompense, but this celebrated sailor, knowing better how to conduct himself in battles than in courts, has offended, by his frankness, some of the most powerful people, and amongst others Prince Potemkin. His enemies and his rivals have profited by his momentary disgrace to hasten his destruction. Calumny has served their purposes ; they have given credit to reports absolutely false. They have accused him of violating a girl. The Empress, being deceived, has forbid him the court, and wished to bring him to trial. Every person has abandoned him ; I alone have upheld and defended him. The country to which he belongs, the order of military merit which he bears, and which he has so nobly acquired, his brilliant reputation, and, above all, our long acquaintance, have made it a law to me. My cares have not been in vain. I have caused his innocence to be acknowledged. He has repaired to court, and has kissed the hand of the sovereign, but he will not remain in a country where he believes himself to have been treated with injustice. . . . I beg you, Sir, to render to this brave man, as interesting by the reverses of fortune which he has met with as by his past success, every service which

may be in your power. It will lay me under a true obligation, and I shall share, in a lively manner, his gratitude.

It is no part of my purpose to portray what I may call the civil career of Paul Jones, except so far as it has incidentally served to illustrate his character and the estimation in which he was held by some of the most distinguished of his contemporaries in two hemispheres. My sole object has been to draw a faithful portrait of his career as a fighting seaman, and that purpose has now been fulfilled. I have shown him rising from the village school and the hard apprenticeship of the merchant service to the command of ships and the inherited ownership of a plantation in Virginia. I have shown him equipping himself, during that hard apprenticeship and its subsequent arduous voyagings, with manners and education which afterwards enabled him to shine in the most fastidious society in Europe. I have shown him taking his side in a quarrel which divided brother from brother in both hemispheres, and I have no apology to offer for his choice. I should as soon think of apologizing for Washington or for Franklin. I have shown him founding an infant navy and laying down imperishable principles for the governance and guidance of its officers. I have shown him teaching his comrades how to fight in their own waters, and how to carry the war, even with their diminutive resources, into the enemy's waters with tremendous and unexampled effect. I have shown him waging one of the most desperate battles that ever were fought on the seas, and snatching victory out of the very jaws of defeat by his own unquenchable stubbornness of fight and in spite of the treachery, fully attested and almost openly avowed, of his principal lieutenant. I have shown him waging and winning, not less brilliantly, a diplomatic battle, if not single-handed, at any rate with little countenance and no assistance at all from the accredited representatives of the two Governments he

served. If these achievements and accomplishments are not the notes of a personality cast in truly heroic mould, I know not where to look for them, nor can I refuse to recognize them because Paul Jones had to the full some of the most characteristic defects of his qualities—an inordinate self-esteem, a propensity for grandiloquence, and a very manifest reluctance to hide his candle under a bushel. Let us remember that Nelson himself was not without like defects, and that the impression made on the cold and dispassionate Wellington by the only talk he ever had with him was that, until Nelson found out who Wellington was, "the conversation was almost all on his side and all about himself, and in, really, a style so vain and so silly as to surprise and almost disgust me." There are many Englishmen who have never carried their acquaintance with Paul Jones and his character any further than this initial stage of Wellington's memorable interview with Nelson. If I have enabled even a few of them to reconsider their original impression, as Wellington did his, I shall not have written in vain.

I need hardly say that the foregoing comparison implies no sort of pretence to place Paul Jones on a level with Nelson as a sea-commander. To do so would be preposterous. "There is but one Nelson," and Jones's lack of opportunity would forbid the comparison, if nothing else did. Except in the Liman Jones never commanded a fleet in action, and no man knew better than he did that the highest sea-capacity is neither displayed nor called for in the conflict of single ships. I find in Disraeli some very significant extracts from a memorandum on this subject which he addressed to the United States Government in 1782, while he was superintending the fitting out of the *America*, the first line-of-battle ship ever built by the United States.¹ I subjoin these extracts here :

The beginning of our navy, as navies now rank, was

¹ Jones was to have commanded this vessel; but during the autumn of 1782 a French man-of-war was lost in the harbour of Boston, and Congress

so singularly small, that, I am of opinion, it has no precedent in history. Was it a proof of madness in the first corps of sea-officers to have, at so critical a period, launched out on the ocean with only two armed merchant ships, two armed brigantines, and one armed sloop, to make war against such a power as Great Britain? To be diffident is not always a proof of ignorance. I had sailed before this revolution in armed ships and frigates, yet, when I came to try my skill, I am not ashamed to own I did not find myself perfect in the duties of a first lieutenant. If midnight study and the instruction of the greatest and most learned sea-officers, can have given me advantages, I am not without them. I confess, however, I have yet to learn; it is the work of many years' study and experience to acquire the high degree of science necessary for a great sea-officer. Cruising after merchant ships, the service in which our frigates have generally been employed, affords, I may say, no part of the knowledge necessary for conducting fleets and their operations. There is now, perhaps, as much difference between a battle between two ships, and an engagement between two fleets, as there is between a duel and a ranged battle between two armies. The English, who boast so much of their navy, never fought a ranged battle on the ocean before the war that is now ended. The battle off Ushant was, on their part, like their former ones, irregular; and Admiral Keppel could only justify himself by the example of Hawke in our remembrance, and of Russel in the last century. From that moment the English were forced to study, and to imitate, the French in their evolutions. They never gained any advantage when they had to do with equal force, and the unfortunate defeat of Count de Grasse was owing more to the unfavourable circumstances of the wind coming a-head four points at the beginning of the battle, which put his fleet into the order of echiquier when it was too late to tack, and of calm and currents afterwards, which brought on an entire disorder, than to the admiralship or even the vast superiority of Rodney, who had forty sail of the line against thirty, and five three-deckers against one. By the account

passed a resolution presenting the *America* to the King of France in place of the *Magnifique* which was lost, and she passed into the French Navy under the name of the *Franklin*.

of some of the French officers, Rodney might as well have been asleep, not having made a second signal during the battle, so that every captain did as he pleased.

The English are very deficient in signals, as well as in naval tactics. This I know, having in my possession their present fighting and sailing instructions, which comprehend all their signals and evolutions. Lord Howe has, indeed, made some improvements by borrowing from the French. But, Kempenfelt, who seems to have been a more promising officer, had made a still greater improvement by the same means. It was said of Kempenfelt, when he was drowned in the *Royal George*, England had lost her du Pavillion. That great man, the Chevalier du Pavillion, commanded the *Triumphant*, and was killed in the last battle of Count de Grasse. France lost in him one of her greatest naval tacticians, and a man who had, besides, the honour (in 1773) to invent the new system of naval signals, by which sixteen hundred orders, questions, answers, and informations can, without confusion or misconstruction, and with the greatest celerity, be communicated through a great fleet. It was his fixed opinion that a smaller number of signals would be insufficient. A captain of the line at this day must be a tactician. A captain of a cruising frigate may make shift without ever having heard of naval tactics. Until I arrived in France, and became acquainted with that great tactician Count D'Orvilliers, and his judicious assistant the Chevalier du Pavillion, who, each of them, honoured me with instructions respecting the science of governing the operations, etc., of a fleet, I confess I was not sensible how ignorant I had been, before that time, of naval tactics.

There are several points of extreme interest in this remarkable memorandum. When Jones says that "the English . . . never fought a ranged battle on the ocean before the war that is now ended," he is moving by anticipation in the same order of ideas as that which inspired Clerk of Eldin in his famous *Essay on Naval Tactics*, which was printed in the same year but not published until later. Clerk's exordium, which was written in 1781, is as follows :

Upon inquiring into the transactions of the British Navy, during the last two wars, as well as the present, it is remarkable that, when single ships have encountered one another, or when two, or even three have been engaged of a side, British seamen, if not victorious on every occasion, have never failed to exhibit instances of skilful seamanship, intrepidity, and perseverance; yet when ten, twenty, or thirty great ships have been assembled, and formed in line of battle, it is equally remarkable that, in no one instance, has ever a proper exertion been made, anything memorable achieved, or even a ship lost or won on either side.¹

Again, Jones's reference to Howe and Kempenfelt exhibits an acquaintance with the contemporary history of the British Navy and with the special attainments of two of its leading personalities—one of whom is now almost forgotten except for his tragic and untimely death—which is little short of amazing in a man with his limited opportunities of study and observation. In truth he might well say, "If midnight study and the instruction of the greatest and most learned sea-officers can have given me advantages, I am not without them." I will cite further testimony to the profundity and acumen of his studies of naval warfare from the pages of Mr. Buell. It relates to the time when Jones, in command of the *Ranger*, first put into Brest just before his raid upon Whitehaven:

The Duchess of Chartres instantly took a fancy to the dark, slender, distingué "Chevalier, sans titre, de la mer,"—"the untitled knight of the sea," as she used to call him: and Paul Jones at once became a welcome visitor at her cottage-palace at Brest. The afternoon before the *Ranger* sailed, the Duchess gave a luncheon to

¹ Clerk, in a note, explains that "neither the gallant manœuvres off St. Christopher's, nor the memorable 12th of April, took place till the spring following." These two actions are of course Hood's brilliant encounter with De Grasse in January 1782, and Rodney's famous victory over the same French Admiral off Dominica on April 12, 1782.

Captain Jones, at which the Count D'Orvilliers was present. The Duchess was granddaughter of the Count de Toulouse, son of Louis XIV., by Madame de Montespan ; and her grandfather had commanded the French fleet in the great battle with the allied English and Dutch fleets off Malaga, August 24 and 25, 1704.

That battle was, up to that time, the most creditable, or, perhaps, least discreditable, to the French Navy of all its encounters with the fleets of England ; and the Duchess took infinite pride in the exploit of her ancestor. In some way the subject of the battle off Malaga was brought up at this luncheon. Jones, whose studies of naval history fully equipped him for the discussion, made bold to traverse a criticism offered by D'Orvilliers on the failure of de Toulouse to follow the Anglo-Dutch fleets under Sir George Rooke when they retreated towards Gibraltar after two days' fighting. In this debate, Jones, who took the side of de Toulouse, displayed knowledge of the strategy and tactics of that great combat which challenged the admiration of D'Orvilliers himself, as well as that of all the other French officers present. In the course of his review of the event, he showed that he knew to a ship, to a gun, and almost to a man, the strength of the respective fleets. He also exhibited comprehensive knowledge of the grand strategy of the campaign as a whole, and an accurate understanding of the political bearing of the operations upon the dynastic questions involved in the war of the Spanish succession. This amazed D'Orvilliers, who had previously regarded him with a sort of patronizing interest as a Yankee skipper of something more than usual dash and cleverness.

But my final and most convincing testimony is still to be cited. It is contained in a letter addressed by Paul Jones in 1791, the year before his death, to his friend Vice-Admiral the Comte de Kersaint, one of the most distinguished French naval officers of his time. I quote it as it is given by Mr. Buell. If I call this letter an epitome of the teaching of Clerk of Eldin at the end of the eighteenth century and of that of Captain Mahan at the end of the nineteenth, I hardly think I shall over-

estimate its extraordinary penetration, sagacity, and breadth of view. It runs as follows :

It has not been my habit to indulge in comment upon French naval tactics as I have read of them in history or observed them in the last war. But my long and happy personal acquaintance with your Excellency, dating from our first accidental meeting in the Chesapeake in 1775, emboldens me to offer a few observations of a character that I have hitherto withheld.

I have noticed—and no reader of the naval history of France can have failed to notice it—that the underlying principle of operation and rule of action in the French Navy have always been calculated to subordinate immediate or instant opportunities to ulterior if not distant objects. In general I may say that it has been the policy of French admirals in the past to neutralize the power of their adversaries, if possible, by grand manœuvres rather than to destroy it by grand attacks.

A case in point of this kind is the campaign of the Count de Grasse in his conjoint operation with the land forces of General Washington and the Count de Rochambeau, which so happily resulted in the capitulation of Cornwallis at Yorktown. It is well-known to you, as an officer of important command in the French fleet on that occasion, that for at least three days—that is to say, from the moment when Admiral Graves appeared off the Capes (of the Chesapeake) until he beat his final retreat to New York—it was in the power of the Count de Grasse to bring him to close and decisive action with a superiority of force that could have left no doubt as to the issue. It is true, as may be said, that the ulterior object of the grand strategy in that operation, viewed by land as well as by sea, was accomplished by the skilful manœuvring, the imposing demonstration, and the distant cannonade practised by the Count de Grasse, without determined attack or persistent pursuit. It may also be urged—which I have heard from the Marquis de Vaudreuil and the Chevalier de Barras—that de Grasse was hampered in this respect by the nature of his agreement with de Rochambeau, approved by Washington, that it should be the policy to preserve the French fleet from the contingencies of close action, so far as might be done without

sacrificing its efficiency in the adjunctory sense to the operations by land.

Yet, admitting all this in full force, it has always seemed to me that there was a moment when the—perhaps unexpected—development of weakness and incertitude on the part of Admiral Graves afforded de Grasse abundant justification for revision if not momentary discarding of the terms of any prior understanding he may have had with de Rochambeau and Washington. De Grasse had more ships, more men, and more guns than Graves had. His ships were better found and sailed faster, either ship for ship, or measuring the manœuvring power of the fleet by the slowest or dullest of all, than the ships of Graves. In my judgment, there has never been an occasion in all the naval wars between France and England when the opportunity was so distinctly and so overwhelmingly on the side of France as in those few October days in 1781, off the Capes of the Chesapeake—when France actually had, for the moment, command of the sea.

Now, my dear Kersaint, you know me too well to accuse me of self-vaunting. You will not consider me vain, in view of your knowledge of what happened in the past off Carrickfergus, off Old Flamboro' Head, and off the Liman in the Black Sea, if I say that, had I stood—fortunately or unfortunately—in the shoes of de Grasse, there would have been disaster to some one off the Capes of the Chesapeake; disaster of more lasting significance than an orderly retreat of a beaten fleet to a safe port. To put it a little more strongly, there was a moment when the chance to destroy the enemy's fleet would have driven from me all thought of the conjoint strategy of the campaign as a whole.

I could not have helped it.

And I have never since ceased to mourn the failure of the Count de Grasse to be as imprudent as I could not have helped being on that grandest of all occasions.

Howbeit, as I have already said, the object of grand strategy in that operation was accomplished by the manœuvring of the Count de Grasse without general action-in-line. But I confess that, under similar conditions, the temptation to destroy as well as repulse the fleet of the enemy would have been resistless, had I been the commander. It would have cost more men and perhaps a

ship or two ; but, in my opinion, success in naval warfare is measured more perfectly by the extent to which you can capture or sink the ships and kill the seamen of the enemy than by the promptness with which you can force him, by skilful manœuvre or distant cannonade, to sheer off and thereby, with your consent, avoid a conflict that could hardly result otherwise than in conquest for you and destruction to him.

It is recorded that, in battle some years ago, when the English Guards and the French Guards came in contact, one said to the other, " Gentlemen, fire first, if you please." Chivalrous as that may appear in history, I frankly confess that it represents an imagination of the amenities of warfare which I not only do not entertain but which I cannot conceive of.

The year after the operations of the Count de Grasse off the Capes, I was cruising in the West Indies, having the honour to be the guest of the Marquis de Vaudreuil on board his flag-ship, the *Triomphante*, and I offered for his consideration some reflections similar to the above. I am happy to say, that the noble Marquis did not disagree with me. And I am sure that, had the noble Marquis on that occasion enjoyed opportunity to bring to action the fleet of Admiral Pigott before it was reinforced by the other division just at the moment peace was proclaimed, other tactics would have been pursued. . . .

You will by no means infer from these cursory observations that I fail to appreciate, within my limited capacity, the grandeur of the tactical combinations, the skill of the intricate manœuvres, and the far-sighted, long thought-out demonstrations by which the Count de Toulouse drove Rooke out of the Mediterranean in August 1704, with no more ado than the comparatively bloodless battle off Malaga ; or the address with which La Galissonière repulsed Byng from Minorca in 1756 by a long-range battle of which the only notable casualty was the subsequent execution of Byng by his own Government for the alleged crime of failing to destroy the fleet opposed to him ! or the brilliant campaign of my noble friend, the Count D'Orvilliers, off Ushant in July 1778, when he forced Keppel to retreat ignominiously to England ; not by stress of defeat, but by the cunningly planned and adroitly executed expedient of avoiding, on any terms but his

own, the battle which Keppel vainly tried to force upon him. Let me assure you that none of these great events has been lost upon my sense of admiration.

Most impressive to me of all the triumphs of the French Navy is the matchless signal-system of the great Pavillon, with the portentous secrets of which I had the honour of being the first foreign officer to be entrusted when the full code was placed in my hands by D'Orvilliers in person, on the eve of my sailing from Brest in the little *Ranger*, April 1778.

And yet, my dear Kersaint, one reflection persecutes me, to mar all my memories and baffle all my admiration. This is the undeniable fact that the English ships and English sailors whom La Galissonnière manœuvred away from Minorca, under Byng, in 1756, remained intact and lived to ruin Conflans in Quiberon Bay three years later under Sir Edward Hawke; and the ships and seamen of Graves, whom de Grasse permitted to escape from his clutches off the Capes of the Chesapeake in October 1781, were left intact, and lived to discomfit de Grasse himself off Santa Lucia and Dominica in April 1782, under Rodney.

You know, of course, my dear Kersaint, that my own opportunities in naval warfare have been but few and feeble in comparison with such as I have mentioned. But I do not doubt your ready agreement with me if I say that the hostile ships and commanders that I have thus far enjoyed the opportunity of meeting, did not give any one much trouble thereafter. True, this has been on a small scale; but that was no fault of mine. I did my best with the weapons given to me. The rules of conduct, the maxims of action, and the tactical instincts that serve to gain small victories may always be expanded into the winning of great ones with suitable opportunity; because in human affairs the sources of success are ever to be found in the fountains of quick resolve and swift stroke; and it seems to be a law inflexible and inexorable that he who will not risk cannot win.

Thus, from my point of view, it has been the besetting weakness of French naval tactics to consider the evolutions of certain masters of the art of naval warfare as the art itself. Their evolutions, as such, have been magnificent; their combinations have been superb; but as I look at them, they have not been harmful enough; they have

not been calculated to do as much capturing or sinking of ships, and as much crippling or killing of seamen, as true and lasting success in naval warfare seems to me to demand.

This may be a rude—even a cruel—view ; but I cannot help it. The French tactical system partakes of the gentle chivalry of the French people. On the wave as on the field of honour, they wish, as it were, to wound with the delicate and polished rapier, rather than kill with the clumsy—you may say the brutal—pistol. I frankly—or if so be it humbly—confess that my fibre is not fine enough to realize that conception. To me war is the sternest and the gloomiest of all human realities, and battle the cruelest and most forbidding of all human practices. Therefore I think that the true duty of every one concerned in them is to make them most destructive while they last, in order that the cause of real humanity may be gained by making them soonest ended. I have never been able to contemplate with composure the theory of the purely defensive in naval tactics. With all due respect to the sensibilities of Frenchmen, I make bold to say that better models of action are to be found in Hawke at Quiberon Bay, and in Rodney off Santa Lucia and Dominica than in de Grasse, either when successful in the Chesapeake or when beaten in the West Indies. . . .

But, my friend, I fear that I weary you. Let me thank you again for your compliments and kind wishes. I hope that France, in her struggle for liberty, may, as America did, find use for me, no matter in what capacity or what grade of my profession—from a sloop-of-war to a fleet—on the high seas. But, should France thus honour me, it must be with the unqualified understanding that I am not to be restricted by the traditions of her naval tactics ; but with full consent that I may, on suitable occasion, to be decreed by my judgment on the spot, try conclusions with her foes to the bitter end or to death at shorter range and at closer quarters than have hitherto been sanctioned by her tactical authorities.

Nelson's favourite signal in action was, it will be remembered, "Engage the enemy more closely."¹ In like

¹ The device on the cover of this volume shows, in heraldic symbolism, the flags used by Nelson in making this signal at his three great battles of

manner it was Paul Jones's fixed aspiration and resolve that if he was ever called upon to carry the flag of France into a fleet action, it would only be on the unqualified understanding "that I may, on suitable occasion, to be decreed by my judgment on the spot, try conclusions with her foes to the bitter end or to death, at shorter range and at closer quarters than have hitherto been sanctioned by her tactical authorities." That is the very spirit of Nelson. Napoleon, with his unerring insight, saw this and said: "Our admirals are always talking about pelagic conditions and ulterior objects, as if there was any condition or any object in war except to get in contact with the enemy and destroy him. That was Paul Jones's view of the conditions and objects of naval warfare. It was also Nelson's." Is it too much to say, on the strength of these testimonies, that had his opportunities been equal to those of Nelson, Paul Jones might have shown that he was cast in the same mould? At any rate, no one can blame the American people if they think so, and none can gainsay them.

the Nile, Copenhagen, and Trafalgar. The meaning of the signal was the same in each case, but it so happens that the flags denoting it were changed between 1798 and 1801, and again between 1801 and 1805. Full information on the subject will be found in a very interesting official publication, entitled *Nelson's Signals: The Evolution of the Signal Flags*, written by the Admiralty Librarian, and issued by the Naval Intelligence Department under the authority of the Admiralty.

THE DOGGER BANK AND ITS LESSONS¹

IT will best serve the purpose of the following paper—
—which is in no sense to discuss the affair of the
Dogger Bank controversially from an international point
of view, but only to point its moral for future guidance
and warning—to accept the conclusions of the Inter-
national Commission of Inquiry and to state the facts,
as far as possible, in the language of its report. The French
text of the report will be quoted where necessary.

While anchored at the Skaw, and indeed previously
since the departure of the fleet under his command from
Reval, Admiral Rozhdestvensky had received “ nom-
breuses informations des Agents du Gouvernement Im-
périal au sujet de tentatives hostiles à redouter, et qui,
selon toutes vraisemblances, devaient se produire sous
la forme d’attaques de torpilleurs ; en outre pendant son
séjour à Skagen, l’Amiral Rojdestvensky avait été
averti de la présence de bâtiments suspects sur la côte de
Norwège.” One of his transports coming from the north
also reported having seen four torpedo craft exhibiting
only a single masthead light. This information naturally
induced the Commander-in-Chief to take every possible
precaution for the protection of the ships under his com-
mand against torpedo attack. He left the Skaw twenty-
four hours earlier than he originally intended, sending
off his fleet in six separate “ échelons,” his own échelon,
consisting of the battleships *Suvaroff*, *Alexander III*, *Boro-
dino* and *Orel*, and the transport *Anadyr*, leaving last at

¹ *Naval Annual*, 1905.

10 p.m. on October 20. The two leading échelons were ordered to steam at twelve knots, and the remainder at ten. The course prescribed appears to have led close to the Dogger Bank, well known to all pilots and mariners as a place where fishing vessels of many nations are likely to be met with in large numbers. This is not the direct course from the Skaw to the English Channel, but an Admiral having any reason to expect a torpedo attack would naturally avoid the course on which his assailants would be most likely to look for him. On the other hand, a navigator who sets his course so as to pass near the Dogger Bank must be assumed to know that he will find there a large assemblage of fishing craft.

One of the échelons, preceding that under the Admiral's immediate command, consisted of the transport *Kamchatka*, escorted by the cruisers *Dmitri Donskoi* and *Aurora*. Owing to "une avarie de machine," the *Kamchatka* fell astern, while her escorting cruisers went on at the prescribed speed, with the result that by 8 p.m. on October 21 she was some fifty miles astern of the rear échelon of the fleet. In this position she met the Swedish vessel *Aldebaran* and several other craft, and, mistaking them for torpedo craft, she opened fire upon them, sending a wireless message to the Commander-in-Chief at 8.45 to the effect that she was "attaqué de tous côtés par des torpilleurs." This message was duly received by Admiral Rozhdestvensky, and naturally put him still more on the alert, inducing him "à signaler à ses bâtiments vers 10 heures du soir de redoubler de vigilance et de s'attendre à une attaque de torpilleurs." The significance of this warning would be emphasized by the fact that the Commander-in-Chief had previously issued a standing order whereby each "officier chef de quart" had been authorized "à ouvrir le feu dans le cas d'une attaque évidente et imminente de torpilleurs. Si l'attaque venait de l'avant il devait le faire de sa propre initiative, et, dans le cas contraire, beaucoup moins pressant, il devait en référer à son Commandant." A majority of the Commissioners

considered that, having regard to all the circumstances, there was nothing excessive in these orders.

The *Kamchatka* having reported herself as some fifty miles astern, when she believed herself to be attacked between 8 and 9 p.m., Admiral Rozhdestvensky might very well calculate that the torpedo craft reported by her would overtake his own squadron about 1 a.m. on the following morning, October 21. His course was south-westerly, and this brought him towards that hour into close proximity to the Dogger Bank and its fishing craft. There were some thirty vessels there, spread over a space of several miles, and the Commissioners state without reserve, that all the vessels "portaient leurs feux réglementaires et chalutaient conformément à leurs règles usuelles, sous la conduite de leur maître de pêche, suivant les indications de fusées conventionnelles." Of the preceding échelons which had passed near them, none had reported by wireless telegraphy anything suspicious or unusual in their proceedings, and in particular Admiral Fölkersahm, who had passed with his échelon to the northward of them, had examined them closely with his searchlights, "et, les ayant reconnus ainsi pour des bâtiments inoffensifs, continua tranquillement sa route." Shortly after Admiral Fölkersahm had passed, the last échelon arrived in the neighbourhood of the fishing fleet. "La route de cet échelon le conduisait à peu près sur le gros de la flottille des chalutiers, qu'il allait donc être obligé de contourner, mais dans le sud." This would seem to imply that instead of passing round the fishing fleet on the north, as Admiral Fölkersahm had done, Admiral Rozhdestvensky found that his course would take him "sur le gros de la flottille," and would have altered course accordingly to the southward, so as to leave the flotilla on his starboard hand, but for a series of occurrences which at the moment began to arrest his attention, and apparently induced him to keep his course and pass through the flotilla, though more to the southward than the northward. He would therefore have

fishing-boats both to port and to starboard of him throughout the subsequent proceedings. By the first of these occurrences—the firing of a green rocket, to wit—the already tense apprehension of the officers on the bridge of the flagship was still further quickened. Such an occurrence in such circumstances might well seem to wear an aspect of menace to officers who were at the moment on the look-out for an immediate attack by torpedo craft ; but in reality this fatal rocket was merely the regular signal by which the admiral of the fishing fleet indicated to his consorts that they were to shoot their trawls to starboard.

Very shortly after the display of this alarming but wholly innocent signal the officers of the *Suvaroff*, eagerly scanning the horizon through their night glasses, discerned “ sur la crête des lames dans la direction du bossoir à tribord ”—that is, over the starboard cathead—“ et à une distance de 18 à 20 encablures un bâtiment qui leur parut suspect parce qu’ils ne lui voyaient aucun feu et que ce bâtiment leur semblaient se diriger vers eux à contrebord.” This is their own deposition. Twenty cables are 4,000 yards, or two nautical miles. The extreme beam of the largest torpedo craft is less than 24 feet or 8 yards, and the vessel now entering on the scene is reported to have been advancing end on “ à contrebord.” The Commissioners report that at the time “ la nuit était à demi obscure, un peu voilée par une brume légère et basse.” To have discovered so small an object at so great a distance on such a night reflects infinite credit on the vigilance of the discoverers and their keenness of vision, but it also shows that they could not well have overlooked such of the fishing boats as were nearer to them, and were all carrying their regulation lights. Anyhow, “ lorsque le navire suspect fut éclairé par un projecteur les observateurs crurent reconnaître un torpilleur à grande allure.” The speed of the *Suvaroff* was ten knots. “ Grande allure ” for a torpedo craft advancing to the attack can hardly be put at less than

twenty knots. The two craft were thus approaching each other at the rate of thirty knots—that is, a nautical mile in every two minutes. As they were only two nautical miles apart when the “navire suspect” was first sighted, they would be abreast of each other in four minutes. All who have any practical experience of the use of the searchlight in such circumstances must acknowledge that it was handled with consummate skill by the officers of the *Suvaroff* on this occasion, but at the same time they will draw the irresistible inference that the speed of the advancing vessel must have served to differentiate it absolutely from any of the fishing craft in its neighbourhood. Be this as it may, the Commissioners go on to say, “C’est d’après ces apparences que l’Amiral Rojdestvensky fit ouvrir le feu sur ce navire inconnu”; and to this they append the following comment: “La majorité des Commissaires exprime à ce sujet l’opinion que la responsabilité de cet acte et les résultats de la cannonade essuyée par la flottille de pêche incombent à l’Amiral Rojdestvensky.”

Almost immediately fire was opened a small vessel was observed right ahead of the *Suvaroff*, and so close that course had to be altered to port to avoid her. Illuminated by a searchlight this vessel was seen to be a trawler. Accordingly, “pour empêcher que le tir des vaisseaux fut dirigé sur ce bâtiment inoffensif, l’axe du projecteur fut aussitôt relevé à 45° vers le ciel”—this being apparently a signal preconcerted for the purpose. “Ensuite l’Amiral fit adresser par signal a l’escadre l’ordre de ne pas tirer sur les chalutiers.”

It may not here be amiss to recapitulate the succession of events, all of which must have taken place within four minutes, if the suspicious vessel which caused the *Suvaroff* to open fire was steaming at twenty knots, while two minutes more at the same speed would have taken her astern of the whole squadron. These are,—(1) discovery of a suspicious vessel on the starboard bow at a distance of eighteen or twenty cables; (2) her recognition by means

of the searchlight as a torpedo craft steaming at high speed ; (3) order given to open fire on her ; (4) discovery of a small vessel right ahead of the *Suvaroff* ; (5) course altered to port in order to avoid her ; (6) her recognition as a trawler by means of the searchlight ; (7) signal made not to fire on the trawlers. The outside allowance of time within which all these things must have happened is from seven to eight minutes, even if the speed of the suspicious vessel was not more than fifteen knots, and at the end of that period the vessel in question must have been well astern of the rear ship of the Russian line, having towards the close of it passed the latter on its starboard side, and therefore between it and such vessels of the fishing fleet as were situated to the northward. It would have been little short of a miracle in the circumstances for all the vessels of the fishing fleet so situated to have escaped injury, however unintentionally inflicted ; and as the fire of the Russian squadron lasted, according to the Commissioners, from ten to twelve minutes, it would seem that the conclusion at which a majority of them arrived can hardly be seriously disputed : “ *La durée du tir à tribord, même en se plaçant au point de vue Russe, a semblé à la majorité des Commissaires avoir été plus longue qu'elle ne paraissait nécessaire.*” There is nothing to show that any order was given by the Admiral to fire on any vessel other than that which originally aroused his suspicions and caused him to open fire. It does not appear that any other suspicious vessel was observed on the starboard hand. The suspicious vessel in question must, as we have seen—“ *d'après les dépositions des témoins,*” to borrow a convenient phrase of the Commissioners—have passed well astern of the Russian line in less than eight minutes. Yet the fire was continued for ten or twelve minutes in all. Unless, therefore, the Russian ships were firing entirely at random—as they easily might have been, for the thing has been done over and over again in manœuvres—they must have been firing, however unwittingly and unintentionally, at

the unoffending trawlers on their starboard hand and at nothing else.

What the suspicious vessel was the Commissioners do not attempt to determine. The *Aurora* was certainly hit several times in the course of the firing. But beyond suggesting that the *Aurora*, steaming in the same direction as the fleet and showing no lights astern, may have been the vessel which originally aroused suspicion on board the *Suvaroff* and induced Admiral Rozhdestvensky to open fire, the Commissioners were apparently unable to ascertain where she was or how she came there. The *Dmitri Donskoi* was also present, since her identification by the Commander-in-Chief, after she had made her number, induced the latter to make a general signal to cease fire. But the precise position of the *Dmitri Donskoi*, whether to port or starboard of the Russian line, is not determined by the Commissioners. It only remains to add at this stage of the narrative that if the conjecture of the Commissioners that the *Aurora* was the suspicious vessel in question is well founded, and if as they also suggest she was steaming in the same direction as the fleet, her relative bearing and distance could not have changed materially, so that the original belief of the Commander-in-Chief and his staff that the suspicious vessel was a torpedo craft steaming towards the fleet "à contrebord," and "à grande allure," must have been promptly disallowed by the event. In that case the continuance of the starboard firing for ten or twelve minutes becomes more incomprehensible than ever.

So much for the starboard firing. The cause of the firing to port is even more obscure. Just as the trawler above-mentioned was discerned right ahead of the *Suvaroff* and course was altered in order to avoid her, "les observateurs du *Suvaroff* aperçurent à bâbord un autre bâtiment qui leur parut suspect, à cause de ses apparences de même nature de celle de l'objectif du tir par tribord. Le feu fut aussitôt ouvert sur ce deuxième but et se trouva ainsi engagé des deux bords." It is here stated by the

Commissioners that, according to the standing orders previously issued to the squadron, "l'amiral indiquait les buts sur lesquels devait être dirigé le tir des vaisseaux en fixant sur eux ses projecteurs." Every one who has any practical experience of torpedo operations will recognize at once that such a method of indication is exceedingly vague and very apt to be misleading, even when the searchlights are worked from the flagship alone. If other ships in company are working their searchlights more or less at random at the same time confusion and misunderstanding are inevitable ; at least, such is the opinion of the Commissioners, and no naval officer will dispute it. "Mais comme chaque vaisseau balayait l'horizon en tout sens autour de lui avec ses propres projecteurs pour se garer d'une surprise, il était difficile qu'il ne se produisît pas de confusion." In this confusion, either by sheer accident or through a mistake, quite intelligible and far from inexcusable in the circumstances, the majority of the injuries sustained by the trawlers would seem to have been inflicted. It is clear that Admiral Rozhdestvensky personally did all he could from first to last to prevent the fire of his squadron being directed on any of the trawlers distinctly recognized as such, and the Commissioners record their unanimous opinion to this effect. But had he been an angel from heaven his efforts must have been unavailing in the situation as described by the Commissioners.

The majority of the latter declare that the starboard fire was, in their judgment, unduly prolonged. They hesitate to record the same opinion regarding the firing to port, on the ground that their information on the subject was insufficient, and it must be acknowledged that on this and several other points the Russian case was allowed to go by default. None of the logs of any of the ships engaged were produced. The Russian witnesses were few, and their testimony threw little light on the more obscure aspects of the situation. Nevertheless a majority of the Commissioners recorded their conclusion

in no ambiguous terms : " La majorité des Commissaires constate qu'elle manque d'éléments précis pour reconnaître sur quel but ont tiré les vaisseaux, mais les Commissaires reconnaissent unanimement que les bateaux de la flotille n'ont commis aucun acte hostile ; et la majorité des Commissaires étant d'opinion qu'il n'y avait, ni parmi les chalutiers, ni sur les lieux aucun torpilleur, l'ouverture du feu par l'Amiral Rojdestvensky n'était pas justifiable." This opinion, however, was not shared by the Russian Commissioner, who, on the contrary, recorded his opinion " que ce sont précisément les bâtiments suspects s'approchant de l'escadre dans un but hostile qui ont provoqué le feu." The two conclusions are not irreconcilable. The majority of the Commissioners content themselves with recording the fact that no torpedo craft was present. The Russian Commissioner does not appear to dispute this, but contends that the approach of " bâtiments suspects " sufficed to justify the Russian flagship in opening fire. It will be seen in the sequel that his view is not wholly without justification from the history of manœuvres.

The order to cease fire was given as soon as the *Dmitri Donskoi* was identified by Admiral Rozhdestvensky, and the " la file des vaisseaux continua sa route et disparut dans le sud-ouest sans avoir stoppé." The fact that they did not stop to ascertain what damage had been done, and to render such assistance as might be required by the innocent victims of the cannonade, was naturally criticized in many quarters. But the Commissioners exonerate Admiral Rozhdestvensky on this point : " Les Commissaires sont unanimes à reconnaître, qu'après les circonstances qui ont précédé l'incident et celles qui l'ont produit, il y avait à la fin du tir assez d'incertitudes au sujet du danger que courait l'échelon des vaisseaux pour décider l'Amiral à continuer sa route." Notwithstanding this, however, the majority of the Commissioners express their regret that Admiral Rozhdestvensky " n'ait pas eu la préoccupation, en franchissant le Pas de Calais, d'informer les

autorités des Puissances maritimes voisines qu'ayant été amené à ouvrir le feu près d'un groupe de chalutiers, ces bateaux, de nationalité inconnue, avaient besoin de secours." Though this regret was not unanimous at the Commission it will hardly find a dissentient elsewhere. The stern and urgent necessities of war may, as the Commissioners acknowledge, take precedence of the claims of humanity at the moment of conflict. They cannot excuse or even extenuate indifference to those claims after the emergency is past.

Finally, the Commissioners declare " que leurs appréciations . . . ne sont pas dans leur esprit de nature à jeter aucune déconsidération sur la valeur militaire ni sur les sentiments d'humanité de l'Amiral Rozhdestvensky et du personnel de son escadre." If my purpose were controversial this conclusion, apparently so inconsistent with the previous findings, might invite some criticism. But the Commission was neither a judicial tribunal nor a diplomatic conference. It combined some of the characteristics of both. Its abnormal composition is reflected in the several paragraphs of its report. On essential points judgment is given against Admiral Rozhdestvensky. The trawlers are exonerated altogether. Their conduct was unimpeachable throughout. There was nothing in it to arouse a shadow of suspicion. The responsibility for opening fire and for all that ensued is thrown upon Admiral Rozhdestvensky. There were no torpedo craft " ni parmi les chalutiers ni sur les lieux." Admiral Rozhdestvensky was not, therefore, justified in opening fire. Even on his own showing the starboard fire was unduly prolonged. As to the firing to port, the evidence produced—by no means all that might have been produced—is insufficient to sustain a similar conclusion, so that " not proven " is here the verdict rather than " not guilty." Admiral Rozhdestvensky did all he could to prevent injury to fishing-boats, but in the confusion caused by his opening fire without adequate justification his efforts were unavailing. He was not called upon to stop in the midst of what

he regarded as imminent danger, but he was called upon to report the incident to the Powers interested at the earliest possible moment. These are the judicial aspects of the Commission's finding. Then diplomacy steps in and seeks to soothe military and national susceptibilities by declaring that Admiral Rozhdestvensky's "valeur militaire" is unimpaired, and his "sentiments d'humanité" unimpeachable. Those who are best qualified to appreciate the full weight of the judicial censure will probably be the last to demur to the diplomatic gloss.

Now, the problem which still awaits solution is to determine what it was that first provoked the Russian fire. It cannot have been the fishing fleet—that is quite clear. When Admiral Rozhdestvensky set his course so as to pass close to the Dogger Bank, he must have known that at that point he would probably come across a large assemblage of trawlers. The green rocket may well have puzzled him, but it should not have made him see torpedo-craft or other hostile vessels where there were none to be seen. The majority of the Commissioners record their conviction that no torpedo craft were there. The Russian Commissioner, on the other hand, stoutly adhered to his conviction "que ce sont précisément les bâtiments suspects s'approchant de l'escadre qui ont provoqué le feu." The *Dmitri Donskoi* and the *Aurora* do not answer to this description, because the only way in which the Commissioners attempted to explain the *Aurora's* being mistaken "par une illusion d'optique nocturne" for torpedo craft, was by supposing that she was not "s'approchant de l'escadre" but steaming in the same direction.

Yet the presence of any torpedo craft other than Russian is absolutely excluded by the evidence laid before the Commissioners. The absence of Russian torpedo craft on the other hand seems rather to have been taken for granted than established by positive evidence. Their presence is highly improbable, no doubt, but not perhaps more improbable *a priori* than the presence of the *Dmitri Donskoi* and the *Aurora*, which must have been wholly

unexpected by Admiral Rozhdestvensky, or he would not have fired on them. If, then, the possible, albeit unavowed, presence of Russian torpedo craft is not excluded by any of the positive evidence presented, it would furnish an hypothesis which explains more of the facts than any other yet suggested, and goes far to reconcile the view taken by the Russian Commissioner with that taken by his colleagues. It is difficult to say why, if Russian torpedo craft were present, their presence should not have been acknowledged; but it is not more easy to explain the persistent economy of evidence in the presentation of the Russian case—an economy which baffled the majority of the Commissioners and provoked comments scarcely to be distinguished from remonstrances.

If this hypothesis could be entertained the whole incident would be explained. Admiral Rozhdestvensky, having discovered two torpedo boats, opened fire on them before they were seen to be his own, and in the confusion that ensued the other ships fired on anything they could see, and continued their fire for several minutes after they ought to have realized that they were firing on unoffending fishing craft. No other hypothesis so completely vindicates the "valeur militaire" of the *personnel* of the Russian squadron, nor can any other be suggested which does not bring the judicial findings of the Commission into somewhat sharp conflict with its diplomatic conclusion.

Passing now from the judicial, diplomatic, and naval aspects of the case, we have next to consider its psychological aspects. How was it that the Russian Admiral and his officers were brought into a state of mind which predisposed them to make a mistake so deplorable in its nature, and so terrible in its consequences? That they did make a mistake is beyond all question. It was a mistake if they fired on the *Aurora* and *Dmitri Donskoi*. It was a mistake if they fired on their own torpedo craft. It was a mistake if they fired on nothing at all. It was the worst mistake of all if they fired on the fishing boats

believing them to be torpedo craft. Whatever its nature, then, this mistake requires explanation. In the first place there were the "nombreuses informations des Agents du Gouvernement Impérial." The weight attached to this information reflects little credit on the Russian Naval Intelligence Department. Admiral Rozhdestvensky was bound of course to give due heed to information received from official or other well-authenticated sources. But the Russian Naval Intelligence Department must have known, as every other Naval Intelligence Department knew, or might have known, that there were no Japanese torpedo craft in European waters. The information received by Admiral Rozhdestvensky is not stated to have come from the Russian Admiralty. It came from "agents of the Imperial Government." It would appear that the Russian Admiralty had no such information, for if it is hardly conceivable that such information would not have been laid before the Commission. If it had none, the inference is that there was none to be had, and in that case, unless the Russian Naval Intelligence Department is to be regarded as wholly incompetent, it might surely have been expected to instruct Admiral Rozhdestvensky that the unsifted warnings of local agents were not to be taken for more than they were worth—which must have been very little indeed.

However, Admiral Rozhdestvensky did believe these warnings and made his dispositions accordingly. This was the first stage in the formation of the "psychological atmosphere," which alone accounts for the tragedy of the Dogger Bank. An attitude of expectancy had been created even before the squadron left the Skaw. It was accentuated by the adventures of the *Kamchatka*, herself manifestly enveloped in the same psychological atmosphere. It was brought to a state of extreme tension by the green rocket of the fishing fleet. It passed into action premature, disastrous, and unjustifiable when the appearance of the suspicious vessels liberated all that pent-up expectancy and fired a train which had been laid

many hours and perhaps several days before. The Russian officers saw what they expected to see and took action accordingly.

What they saw is from this point of view immaterial. It may have been nothing at all. It may have been a torpedo craft, as they undoubtedly believed at the time, and as apparently they still believed when their evidence was tendered to the Commission. In that case it can only have been a Russian torpedo craft. It may have been the *Aurora*, as the Commissioners seem to suggest. It may have been a fishing boat. The point is that whatever it was, whether it was anything or nothing, it was taken for a torpedo craft because that was what it was expected to be. There is nothing at all surprising in this, and there would not be much fault to find with it if the fire had not been unjustifiably opened, unjustifiably prolonged, and very inadequately controlled, with the deplorable result now known to all the world, a result which cost at least three lives—one Russian and two British—and very nearly plunged two great nations into war. There are so many officers in the British Navy who have made the same mistake that there is probably no officer of any experience in the service who does not know how easy it is to make it, and how much more difficult it is to avoid it. In other words, the experience of British naval officers would lead them to assume, almost as a matter of course, that such a mistake was actually made by the officers of the Baltic Fleet, and at the same time to make every reasonable allowance for its being made. But to make a mistake is one thing. All men are liable to it. It is quite another thing to persist in it beyond all reason or precedent, and to make no such efforts to repair it as humanity must needs dictate, so far as they are consistent with the legitimate accomplishment of the military duties of a commander in time of war. The more ready British officers may be to make allowance for the original mistake the more fully will they concur in the censure passed by a majority of the Commission on the conduct

of the Russian Admiral at subsequent stages of the proceedings.

It will surprise many perhaps to learn that naval opinion in this country is quite ready to make all reasonable allowance for the original mistake. Yet it can be shown from authentic records that if, with the Commissioners, we set aside the hypothesis that hostile torpedo craft were actually present at the Dogger Bank on the night of October 21, there is no possible explanation of what occurred on that occasion which cannot be paralleled by what has happened over and over again in the course of the naval manœuvres and other sea exercises of the British Fleet. In his evidence before the Commission Commander Keyes, an officer of large experience in the operations of torpedo craft, mentioned several recorded cases at manœuvres, including, as reported in *The Times*, "one in which a flagship leading the Mediterranean Fleet mistook a battleship for a destroyer. . . . Another case occurred at the manœuvres in 1902. The *Doris* observed through glasses what she thought to be a four-funnelled destroyer. The searchlight was directed on her, but failed to reveal anything. Yet in reality the boat thus taken for a destroyer was the four-funnelled cruiser *Andromeda*." A very close parallel to these cases is to be found in the *Naval Annual* for 1901, where it is stated that "on one occasion a destroyer was said to have passed, at night, six friendly battleships steaming without lights, and to have mistaken them for torpedo boats." The opposite mistake, that of taking torpedo craft for battleships or other large craft, has also been made. In the *Naval Annual* for 1900 it is recorded that "Admiral Domville had received circumstantial reports from the commanding officer of his destroyers that the A Fleet or a considerable portion of it had been observed during the night steering southward in the neighbourhood of Holyhead. It would seem that a flotilla of A's torpedo boats was mistaken by the officer in question for the main body of the A fleet, and reported as such to head-

quarters." If then the Russian officers mistook the *Aurora* for a torpedo craft they are not without justification in the records of British manœuvres. Even if they mistook nothing at all for a torpedo craft the same justification may be pleaded. In the *Naval Annual* for 1892 the official report on the manœuvres of 1891 is cited for a remark of Captain, now Admiral, Durnford on "the extraordinary way people think they see torpedo boats when none are there." Even if they mistook fishing vessels for torpedo craft there is an approximate parallel to be cited. In the *Naval Annual* for 1901 I myself recorded the incident as follows :

The *Minerva*, scouting off the west coast of Ireland, got amongst a fleet of fishing boats off the Skelligs, on the night of July 27. Mistaking them for torpedo-boats and remaining among them for some hours, she persuaded herself that she must have been torpedoed, and loyally hoisting the "Blue Peter"—the signal for being out of action—she proceeded quietly to Milford, there to await the decision of the umpires. As no torpedo boats were, nor, under Admiral Rawson's orders, could have been engaged, the decision was naturally given in her favour. . . . Such an incident could not, of course, happen in war, but, even in war, cruisers which mistake fishing boats for torpedo-boats are likely to meet with strange adventures.

Lastly, if, as has been suggested above, the Russians fired on their own torpedo craft, this is an incident of no infrequent occurrence in manœuvres, British and foreign. A French incident may be cited. In the *Naval Annual* for 1894 it is related that "the *Isly* came in sight and the *Turco*"—a "torpilleur de haute mer"—"was sent ahead to communicate with her ; but not being recognized by the *Furieux* and the *Épervier*, the *Turco* was fired on by these vessels. About the same time a friendly torpedo-boat was fired on by the *Buffle*, in spite of the private signals displayed by the former." The latter

instance is an extreme case, perhaps ; but it shows, at any rate, how easy it is to make the mistake in question, even in circumstances which might be expected to render such a mistake almost impossible. Manœuvres are not war, of course, nor should the analogy be pressed unduly. In manœuvres there is a definite field of operations prescribed, and within that field, and more especially, at certain positions, designated beforehand by the strategic and tactical characteristics of the area, every ship on both sides knows that it must be on the look out for torpedo attack. Here the psychological atmosphere which generates a state of acute mental expectancy must needs exist, and may easily lead to mistakes which, if not excusable, are at least intelligible. But if in manœuvres an admiral were to go outside the manœuvre area to a position where the probable presence of fishing vessels in large numbers was a matter of maritime notoriety, he would hardly be entitled to plead the psychological atmosphere and its concomitant state of expectancy as a valid and sufficient excuse for any mistake that he made in consequence. Now the analogy of the Dogger Bank incident is in large measure of this latter character. The actual theatre of war was thousands of miles away. The presence of hostile torpedo craft was so improbable in the circumstances, that the suspicion of it should never have been allowed to take so firm a hold as it did on the minds of Admiral Rozhdestvensky and his officers. On the other hand, the presence of innocent fishing boats was almost a certainty. It is the duty of a naval officer who knows his business to weigh these alternative probabilities, and to draw a sound conclusion from them. It would seem that Admiral Fölkersahm did this, while Admiral Rozhdestvensky did exactly the reverse.

Nevertheless, the significance of the whole story and the lessons it has to teach belong rather to the future than to the past. Whatever may be the value of the torpedo in war—a question not relevant to the present discussion—there can be no doubt that the torpedo

craft is a weapon of such tremendous and peculiar menace that it creates a psychological atmosphere of its own. In the case of Admiral Rozhdestvensky and his officers, it was able to create that atmosphere at the distance of nearly half the globe. Such a remarkable case of action at a distance is not perhaps likely to be repeated. But when the two belligerents are separated by no greater distance than, to avoid indiscreet analogies, let us say that which in ancient warfare separated the Romans from the Carthaginians, the experience of the Dogger Bank is not at all unlikely to be repeated, unless its lessons are taken seriously and learnt betimes. Two things are almost certain. Innocent vessels will often be mistaken for torpedo craft, and torpedo craft will always be fired on at sight. About the latter proposition there seems to be no sort of doubt. In the *Naval Annual* for 1896 Captain Bacon—one of the highest authorities on torpedo warfare in the Navy—wrote as follows :

The danger to the country is so great, if boats are allowed to rove about without definite orders, that too much stress cannot be laid on the following points. The boat . . . is of no value compared with the ship, and therefore the onus of sinking a friendly ship should lie entirely on the boat. A boat at night is a pariah to every ship afloat. . . . A ship should always fire on any boat—whether suspected of being a friend or an enemy—that approaches her at night, since it is far better to sink a friendly boat than risk losing a ship by mistaking the identity of an enemy's boat. Since, therefore, every ship should fire on every approaching boat, no boat should take the fact of a ship firing on her as evidence that she is an enemy. The only safe way yet known of conducting an attack on a doubtful ship is for the boat to challenge the ship by a signalling method, and to allow a reasonably safe time for reply. The time occupied in approaching will ordinarily be sufficient, so that no real delay is caused to the boat. . . . A procedure such as the above cannot be too strongly insisted on if boats are to be used with safety in waters where both enemy's and

friendly ships may be met with. Moreover, a torpedo attack should be a deliberate attack.

This, then, is the *rationale* of torpedo attack and defence, as formulated by one of the highest authorities on the subject in our own naval service. Captain Bacon, however, is only an individual, it may be objected, and the official theory may be different. The official theory is identical. In the *Naval Annual* for 1903 it is related how, during manœuvres in the Mediterranean, the *Implacable* was attacked by a destroyer of her own side, and the official narrative of the operations is cited as remarking, "it is most unlikely that this would have happened in war, for the destroyer, which was in sight long before she attacked, would have been fired on without waiting to ascertain whether she was friend or foe." It is clear, then, that Captain Bacon's views cannot be denied the authority of official sanction. It may thus be taken for granted that in war all torpedo craft will be fired on at sight unless they have previously disclosed their identity. It follows that if a friendly torpedo craft is not to be spared, except on terms with which a neutral cannot comply, a neutral torpedo craft will fare still worse. A neutral torpedo craft, however, has clearly no business to be there at all. If she sights a belligerent fleet, the best thing she can do is to show it a clean pair of heels at once. Nothing on earth can save her if she once allows herself to be caught within the range of belligerent fire. In the abstract, of course, she has just as much right to use the sea as any other vessel that floats. In like manner a husbandman has every right to till his fields, if he chooses, under the fire of two contending armies. But if he is killed it is his own fault.

So far, then, there is no great difficulty. The neutral torpedo craft must take her chance. She has no business to be there intentionally, and if she is there by accident, she must do her best not to be there as soon as possible. But the neutral trading vessel, whether fishing boat or

larger craft, stands on quite a different footing. In the clash of war she is innocent, defenceless, and helpless, and yet experience shows that she runs a very appreciable risk of being mistaken for a torpedo craft, and, as such, of being fired on at sight. How is this to be prevented? If Dogger Bank incidents were likely to become common, the situation would be rendered intolerable to a neutral Power possessing a large mercantile marine and a navy adequate to its protection. It must be made clear to the belligerent that he cannot make with impunity such disastrous mistakes as Admiral Rozhdestvensky made at the Dogger Bank, that it is safer for him to run the risk of a not very probable torpedo attack than by making a mistake to incur the much more probable and much more serious risk of having the fleets of a powerful neutral added to the fleets of an adversary with whom he is already at war. In other words, the commander of a belligerent fleet or ship must show the real quality of his "valeur militaire." He must not allow his military judgment to be sophisticated by a psychological atmosphere mainly of his own creation. The right of firing on a torpedo craft at sight carries with it the correlative duty of not mistaking an innocent vessel for a torpedo craft. Such a mistake may occasionally be made in circumstances which go far to excuse it; but such circumstances must needs be very rare, and were not to be found, in the judgment of the Commission, in the situation at the Dogger Bank. "A torpedo attack," says Captain Bacon, "should be a deliberate attack." The defence against such an attack must be equally circumspect. The psychological atmosphere must be distrusted, the state of expectancy must be controlled. The sea is the common highway of peaceful commerce and industry. The belligerent commander must never forget this, nor allow himself to open fire on whatever looks like a torpedo craft on a dark night without waiting to ascertain whether what he is attacking is a furtive and insidious assailant or only a flock of defenceless and unoffending sheep, such as Quixote

mistook for the troops of "the infidel, Alifanfaron of Taprobana." If he acts in this heedless fashion, he discredits his own "valeur militaire," and runs the risk of turning neutrals, wholly against their will, into his country's enemies. These are lessons which it behoves all maritime Powers to learn. It was because Admiral Rozhdestvensky had not learnt them that innocent lives were sacrificed on the Dogger Bank, and the world was brought within a hair's breadth of almost universal war.

THE STRATEGY OF POSITION

“WAR,” said Napoleon, “is an affair of positions.” This is especially true of naval war. It is the principle which governs the conflict of fleets, and it determines their distribution. The essence of all naval warfare will be found to consist in the effort of each belligerent to interrupt the maritime communications of the other and to secure his own. When either belligerent has succeeded in establishing a complete and unassailable control over the maritime communications of his adversary, and has thereby obtained complete security for his own, the object of naval warfare is attained. There is nothing more for the victorious fleet to do except to hold what it has won ; and that is comparatively easy, because the situation supposed implies that the enemy no longer possesses any naval force which is capable of challenging its hold. The history of naval warfare is an almost unbroken succession of illustrations of this broad principle, and there is no illustration of it more impressive, more instructive, nor more conclusive than the great naval campaign which ended at Trafalgar. Trafalgar was the closing scene of the long maritime struggle between England and Napoleon. It put an end once for all to Napoleon’s plans for the invasion of England, and it opened the way for the great counter-stroke against him in the Peninsula which ended at last in his overthrow.

It is only another way of stating the same broad principle, to say that naval warfare is essentially a struggle for the command of the sea. Command of the sea means

¹ *The United Service Magazine*, October 1905.

the control, absolute and unassailable, of the enemy's maritime communications, and it means nothing else. Meaning that, it means everything that naval warfare, as such, can attain. In the case of an island, it means that such an island cannot be invaded, starved out, or otherwise injured from the sea so long as its sea defence is unimpaired. In the case of two Powers not possessing a common frontier, it means that neither can assail the other without first making its communications across the sea secure. The Crimea, for example, could never have been invaded if the Russian fleet had been able to "impeach" the fleets of England and France upon the seas. Had the naval resources of Russia been sufficient to enable her to try conclusions with England and France upon the seas, the armies of England and France could not have been landed in the Crimea until the naval issue had been decided, nor could they even have been transported to Varna.

Now England, being an island, can only be assailed from the sea. The British Empire, being an assemblage of far-flung possessions, acknowledging a common sovereignty and separated from the seat of that sovereignty and from each other by vast stretches of ocean distance, can only be held together by secure maritime communications. The United Kingdom, being an industrial and mercantile community, sending the products of its industry across the seas to all parts of the world, and receiving payment for them in food and other imported commodities, is the centre of a vascular system which is essential to its wholesome nourishment and even to its very existence. It has been calculated, I think, that the interchange of commodities between these islands and the parts across the seas is carried on without ceasing, day and night, from year-end to year-end, at the rate of some two tons per minute. The loss of the command of the sea by England, or, to speak more accurately, the failure to secure it in the event of war, would mean the suspension of this interchange with all its incal-

culable consequences. It means more. It means that an enemy who by depriving this country of the command of the sea—which we must hold if we are to exist—had established the security of his own maritime communications, could invade this country with just as many troops as he could equip, transport, land, and maintain, choosing his own point of descent, and taking care so to choose it as to take our defensive forces on land at the greatest possible disadvantage. It means more again. It means that the Empire would be destroyed by the total severance of the only material ties which bind it together, the ties of communication and intercourse, as well as by leaving every part of it at the mercy of the master of its communications.

Now, war being an affair of positions, it follows that he begins war best who holds the best positions at the outset, and that the British Empire being what it is, essentially a maritime empire, this country can never allow itself to dispense with the full advantage of occupying the best positions for its defence upon the seas. It is on this principle that the naval forces of Great Britain have always been distributed. In early times, when ships were small and their capacity for keeping the sea was limited, and when this country had few possessions and no naval stations abroad, naval operations of any magnitude or duration were of necessity confined to home waters. The great dockyards and naval arsenals grew up on the southern shores of the kingdom, partly because the ports in which they were established were specially convenient for the purpose, but still more because they were nearest to the shores of the enemies with whom we were likely to contend. Portsmouth, in mid-channel, not only stands over against France, but gives equal facility of exit through either outlet of the Channel. Chatham looks towards the North Sea and the coasts of Holland. Plymouth stands over against Brest, and looks across the Bay of Biscay to the coasts of Spain. Gradually, as the Empire expanded and ships became more self-supporting and more capable

of keeping the sea during the winter, the several stations of the British Fleet abroad were successively established, each representing a more or less well-marked phase either of the naval history of the country or of the development of its maritime trade and other transmarine interests. If we think of the great battles at sea, from the battle of Sluys in 1340 to the battle of Trafalgar in 1805, and consider them in relation to their geographical position, we shall recognize at once the significance of Napoleon's saying that war is an affair of positions, and perceive, as on a chart, the historical origin and co-ordination of British naval stations at home and abroad.

These stations were determined, then, by the experience of great wars. But practically a century and more has passed since our experience of great wars on the sea came to an end—for the Crimean War had no new experience of the kind to yield, because the sea power of England and France was so overwhelming in that conflict that all its battles were fought on land. Many things have happened during the hundred and more years which have elapsed since England was last called upon to defend her position on the seas. Immense changes have taken place. Ships are no longer propelled by sails, nor dependent on the wind for the direction in which they can move. They can now move at great speed in any direction, and to any point at which their presence is required. On the other hand, their mobility being dependent on a continuous supply of fuel, they are no longer so self-supporting as they formerly were. They can move faster from place to place, but they cannot go so far without replenishing their fuel, nor can they keep the sea for so long. The telegraph now links all parts of the earth together, reducing the time required for communication to a negligible quantity practically independent of distance, and this, combined with rapidity and certainty of movement, makes it easier to summon a ship or a squadron from the Channel or the Mediterranean to any part of the Caribbean Sea, for example, than it was a hundred years

ago to summon them from Barbados or Bermuda to Jamaica. The development of wireless telegraphy greatly enlarges facilities of this kind. Above all, the balance and distribution of naval power throughout the world has undergone unprecedented changes. For all these reasons, and others which might be adduced, the traditional distribution of the naval forces of England—a survival of the great war modified from time to time in detail rather than in principle by the growth of new interests and conditions—has gradually become more and more antiquated, and was recognized by the Admiralty a few years ago as in large measure obsolete.

There are now six great naval Powers strong enough, actually or prospectively, to challenge the position of England on the seas, either singly or in some combination of two or more of them. These are France, Germany, Italy, Russia, the United States, and Japan. In the abstract these must all be regarded as possible enemies, since no one can forecast the vicissitudes of international relations, nor the issues which may from time to time bring into antagonism or conflict nations which at this moment are full of friendship for each other. The friendships of nations are, unhappily, more precarious than those of individuals, and we see constantly among individuals and families how the closest friendship and even affection may be turned to the bitterest hatred by misunderstanding, divergence of interest, real or supposed, alleged misconduct on one side or the other, quarrels, litigations, and conflicts. If, on the other hand, we consider in the concrete the existing relations between England and the several Powers enumerated, we may, and do, find differences of attitude and of sentiment in different cases, but we shall find no certain or even immediately probable causes of war with any one of them. Hence the disposition of the naval forces of this country must be adjusted, not to this or that contingency of war, whether regarded as imminent or as proximate, not to this exacerbation nor to that *rapprochement*—both pos-

sibly ephemeral—of international sentiment, but to the large and permanent conditions of the situation, and in this sense to all the reasonably probable contingencies of international conflict. By so regarding the problem we get rid, once for all, of the idea, as mischievous as it is ill-founded, that the general disposition of the naval forces of England is based on suspicion of or antagonism to this Power or that. We regard all the Powers enumerated as, in the abstract, possible competitors, either singly or in conjunction, for that mastery of the seas which is essential to the security of the British Empire, and we make our dispositions accordingly, without prejudice to our concrete relations with any one of them. Every Power which means to hold its own does this, both on sea and on land; and every Power must do it. Any Power which refrained from doing it might as well dispense with a Navy and an Army altogether. The possibility of war implies the necessity of preparation for war; and as war is an affair of positions, it also implies the occupation, within the limits of international right, of the positions which are most conducive to the successful conduct of such wars as are possible, however unlikely or remote.

One broad distinction may, however, be made. Of the six Powers enumerated, four are essentially, though not exclusively, European Powers, while the other two, the United States and Japan, are extra-European altogether. With Japan England is in alliance, and so long as that alliance endures the disposition of England's naval forces will be in some measure affected by the consideration that so far from England and Japan being likely to meet in arms, the Japanese fleet may be regarded as a factor of no small moment in England's distribution of her forces. The United States will be considered separately hereafter. Of the four European Powers, one, Italy, is essentially, though not quite exclusively, a Mediterranean Power. Another, Germany, is in like manner essentially a Northern Power. The other two, France and Russia,

are both Northern and Mediterranean Powers. It is true that recent events have practically erased Russia for a time from the list of great naval Powers. But we are here dealing not so much with the situation of the moment as with the permanent geographical grouping of the European Powers, and we have to consider not merely the present but the future.

Now, the characteristic of the four European Powers under consideration is that the bulk of their naval forces is concentrated in European waters. It follows that if ever we have to fight any or all of them, we shall have to fight them, in the first instance, in European waters. We shall find their fleets there, and we must fight them there. Where we shall find them, or whether we shall find them at all outside their own ports, depends upon the amount of force they can, either singly or in concert, put into the field. But if ever we are at war with one or more of this group of Powers, it will be from some European port or ports that their fleets will put to sea. It follows that the bulk of the naval forces of this country must be concentrated in European waters. We must always be ready to wage war on two fronts, the Northern front and the Mediterranean front. This is a condition inherent in the situation, since the naval forces of our possible enemies in Europe are some in the Mediterranean and the Black Sea, some in the Atlantic, the Channel, the North Sea, and the Baltic, while those of two of them, France and Russia, are by geographical necessity distributed between the two regions. We have only to think of the sites of the great sea-fights of modern times in relation to the situation thus defined to see how completely history illustrates the thesis here propounded—Solebay, Copenhagen, Camperdown, Gravelines, the Downs, Beachy Head, Cape La Hogue, Ushant, Quiberon Bay, the offing of Cape Finisterre, Cape St. Vincent, Lagos Bay, Trafalgar, Gibraltar, Malaga, Toulon, Minorca, the Nile. These names are an epitome of the naval history of England since the defeat of the Armada,

and they show how regularly the stress of conflict ranges from the North Sea to the Mediterranean, according to the strategic and political distribution of naval force from time to time. The political connection between Spain and the Netherlands determined the place of the battle of Gravelines. The Dutch wars attracted the centre of strategic moment to the North Sea and the Channel; the French and Spanish wars drew it back again to the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. It is idle to conjecture what political combinations the future may have in store. But it is certain that the growth of a powerful German Navy, with its bases on the North Sea, must have the effect of once more withdrawing the centre of strategic moment farther away from the Mediterranean, and placing it nearer to the waters which surround the British Isles.

Nevertheless, the strategic importance of the Mediterranean, although diminished in some measure by recent changes in the balance and distribution of naval power, is very far indeed from being extinguished. The Mediterranean station has long been regarded as the premier station of the British Navy. It is so no longer, though its importance is still immense. The premier station is now that which comprises the North Sea and the Channel. This was illustrated in a very significant manner towards the close of 1904. For a short period during the autumn, England and Russia were brought within measurable distance of war by the Dogger Bank incident. France being the ally of Russia, it was not impossible that, had a *casus belli* arisen, it might have involved France in the quarrel. Naval dispositions suitable to the occasion were made by the British Admiralty, but these did not involve any reinforcement of the British Fleet in the Mediterranean. The following account of what was done appeared in *The Times* of December 31, 1904 :

Lord Charles Beresford, with the Channel (now called Atlantic) Fleet was ready at Gibraltar, and Sir Compton

Domvile's ships made their way from Venice and Fiume to Malta. These two fleets were more than enough to deal with the Russians, had occasion arisen. But an important detail, kept very secret at the time, has since become known. Four battleships were detached from Lord Charles Beresford's fleet and sent north, the report being that they had gone to "shadow" the Russians at Vigo. They did not do so, but steamed at full speed to Portland. At the same time, all available submarines were sent to Dover, and other measures were taken not common in time of peace.

It appears from this that the Home (since called the Channel) Fleet was concentrated at Portland, and heavily reinforced from Gibraltar. Its advanced guard of torpedo craft was placed still farther to the eastward. The whole of the immediately available naval forces of France and Russia were well to the westward of these positions. Yet it is evident that the available British naval forces in Home waters were looking quite as much to the eastward as to the westward. This does not mean, of course, that war with Germany was regarded as imminent. It is not conceivable that Germany should have attacked this country because this country had protested against the action of the Russian Fleet at the Dogger Bank, and failing to obtain reparation had enforced its protest at the point of the sword. But it does mean that the existence of a strong naval Power in the North Sea—whether well-affected to this country or not is immaterial—is a factor in the general situation which this country can never, at any time, overlook, and must take seriously into account whenever war with any other naval Power seems to be so imminent as to involve the strategic movement and disposition of fleets, squadrons, and flotillas. This principle is fully recognized in the military dispositions of the Continental Powers. Germany is compelled by her geographical position always to stand on guard, alike on her eastern and on her western frontier. It is well known that in 1870 a friendly understanding with

Russia relieved Prussia of all serious anxiety for the security of her eastern frontier, and thus enabled her to exert her full strength against France. Thus does war operate in many unexpected ways and often in regions far removed from the actual theatre of hostilities. To these, its indirect effects, improbable it may be at the outset, but always to be reckoned in the category of future contingencies, no prudent nation can allow itself to be blind. The dispositions made in the autumn of 1904 were no menace to any neutral Power, and implied no undue suspicion of any such Power. But they were signs of England's resolve to be ready at all points, if war should unhappily overtake her.

They were also an object-lesson in the strategy of position. They illustrated in the most impressive manner the true meaning of that permanent redistribution of the naval forces of this country, which has since been carried into effect with the object of securing in full measure the initial advantage of well-selected positions in the event of war. War with Russia was the immediate contingency of the moment. The obligations imposed on France by her alliance with Russia were such as must, in any case, impose an immense strain on her neutrality, and might compel her, however reluctantly, to make common cause with her ally. The neutrality of Germany was not to be taken for granted. Hence this country was brought face to face with contingencies of international conflict as serious as almost any with which she is ever likely to be confronted. The dispositions then adopted, under the stress of exceedingly strained relations, were precisely those which have since been made permanent by the subsequent redistribution of the Fleet. The main fleets were écheloned, as it were, between the North Sea and the Mediterranean in accordance with the paramount condition which requires this country to be ready on two fronts and to deny the passage of "the Straits" to any hostile force. The Channel Fleet was at Gibraltar, and there it is now permanently based, its designation being changed

to that of the Atlantic Fleet to indicate its true position and function. In the circumstances of the moment it was compelled to detach half its battleship force for the purpose of reinforcing what was then called the Home Fleet, and has now once more reverted to that title. This movement of concentration was strictly in accordance with the principle enunciated above, that, owing to changes in the balance of naval power in Europe, and a consequential transfer of the centre of strategic moment to the northward, the premier Fleet of this country is now the Fleet in home waters, and no longer the Mediterranean Fleet. But in future it will not be necessary, as it was at the moment under consideration, to weaken the Atlantic Fleet for the purpose of reinforcing the Home Fleet. The former is still partially based on Gibraltar, and this disposition indicates that, when it is not required to act independently, it is to be regarded as a potential reinforcement of the Mediterranean Fleet not less than of the Home Fleet. In any case, it is the connecting link between the two, the centre of a broad front, one flank of which covers the North Sea and the other the Mediterranean. For immediate reinforcement, whenever occasion may require, the Fleets in home waters will, henceforth, look to that portion of the Home Fleet proper, which under the title of "Fleet in Commission in Reserve," was brought into existence simultaneously with the new scheme of distribution, and was then so organized, as it still is in part, as to be ready to take the sea at any moment with reduced but sufficient and fully trained crews, as soon as steam can be raised in the boilers—and to take the sea with full complements as soon as the necessary ratings can be drafted on board. Even as early as July, 1905, a most imposing demonstration was given of the vast potentialities for immediate reinforcement then enjoyed by the Channel Fleet, by the assembling in Torbay and in the offing of nearly two hundred pendants, representing exclusively the Channel Fleet and the Fleet in Commission in Reserve, as it was then called,

with their affiliated squadrons and flotillas ; and before reaching Torbay their fighting efficiency had been tested by a succession of tactical and strategic exercises. The recent development of the Home Fleet, which now contains the newest and most powerful ships in the Navy, and is kept at all times fully manned and constantly exercised at sea, is a still more impressive manifestation of the principles which determined the redistribution of 1904.

Enough has now been said, perhaps, concerning the strategy of position as it affects the distribution of the main fleets, which are still, as they always have been, the controlling factor in naval war. The "capital ships" are henceforth to be concentrated exclusively in European waters—the former concentration of battleships in Far Eastern waters having been due to exceptional and transient circumstances—and are to be so distributed as to be ready for instant action, with every advantage of position in all probable contingencies of European warfare. Nothing could more fully justify the new scheme of distribution than what happened at the time of the Dogger Bank incident, which immediately preceded its promulgation. That incident was wholly unexpected, and no foresight could have anticipated it. The Mediterranean Fleet was scattered over the Adriatic and the Levant, the Channel Fleet (then known as the Home Fleet) was cruising round the British Isles. Yet instantly, and to all appearance automatically, the naval forces of this country fell into the positions assigned to them under the new scheme of distribution, these positions being thus shown to be those best adapted to the strategic requirements of a very grave international complication. It remains to consider the proper distribution, as determined by the strategy of position, of the "cruiser" element of naval force. Naval warfare has two main purposes—to destroy the main fleets of the enemy, and to protect, or to assail, maritime commerce. Broadly speaking, the former purpose is the function of "capital

ships," the latter is the function of the "cruiser" properly so called. I purposely refrain from employing the term "battleships" for the former class, because the distinction between the battleship and the cruiser would seem to be rapidly disappearing. But the distinction between "capital ships" and cruisers is primordial and fundamental. "Capital ships" are ships which are "fit to lie in a line," as our forefathers used to say. If a cruiser is fit to lie in a line—and Togo showed that in his judgment some armoured cruisers are, or were—it becomes a "capital ship" whenever it is employed as a tactical unit in the line of battle. But "cruisers" proper are those ships which, whether fit to lie in a line or not, are not so employed, but are separately employed, either singly or in squadrons, not in the contest with the main fleets of the enemy, but in the protection or the destruction of commerce, or more generally, in the control of sea communications. The distinction is thus one rather of employment than of constructive type. The cruiser is no longer to be defined positively by its structure and armament; it is rather to be defined negatively by its not being employed as a "capital ship," even though it may be in every way "fit to lie in a line." There is also another and most important function of cruisers proper, which is that of collecting and transmitting intelligence, of acting as the eyes and ears of a fighting fleet. But this function is rather tactical than strategic. It is not materially affected by the strategy of position, with which alone I am here concerned. I assume, as a matter of course, that the main fleets, when placed in position, are provided with a contingent of cruisers sufficient for the effective discharge of this indispensable function.

Now, it might at first sight appear that whereas the main principle in the disposition of fighting fleets is concentration, the main principle in the disposition of cruisers proper is dispersion. In a certain sense and up to a certain point this is true, and the maintenance and dis-

position of naval forces by this country in extra-European waters is still largely governed by this consideration. The amount of force required in those waters is determined by the amount of force maintained by other Powers there, and its disposition, in time of war, is determined in like manner by the dispositions of the enemy. Under the new scheme of distribution, outlying squadrons, consisting mainly of ships of little or no fighting value, and employed chiefly for police or diplomatic purposes, have been disestablished, provision being otherwise made for such police and diplomatic services as cannot be dispensed with. "Care has been taken," said the First Lord of the Admiralty in his memorandum of December 6, 1904, "to leave enough ships on every station for the adequate performance of what I may call peace duties of Imperial police, and the four cruiser squadrons will be employed to show the Flag in imposing force wherever it may be deemed to be politically or strategically desirable." For the rest, the cruisers working in extra-European waters are now organized in three groups as follows, to quote again the same memorandum: "The Eastern group will comprise the cruisers of the China, Australia, and East Indies stations. The responsibility will rest on the Commander-in-Chief of the China station for the strategical distribution of those cruisers in time of war, so that they may at the earliest possible moment deal with all ships of the enemy to be found in those waters. The Cape of Good Hope Squadron will be a connecting link between either the Eastern group and the Mediterranean cruisers, or the Eastern group and the Western group. The Western group of cruisers will consist of the cruisers under the command of the Commander-in-Chief of the North American and West Indian station, and the mobilized cruisers with which he will be reinforced in time of war." The constitution and disposition of this latter group will be considered presently. It suffices to remark here that the whole organization is manifestly and avowedly based on a clear perception of the strategy of position.

Its essential principle is embodied in the words, "so that they may at the earliest possible moment deal with all ships of the enemy to be found in those waters." To deal with them effectively is to prevent their preying upon commerce, and thereby to secure the maritime communications of the Empire throughout the waters affected. How far they will be concentrated and how far dispersed depends entirely on the dispositions of the enemy, their sole business being to "deal with" all his ships and give a good account of them.

But how about the cruisers in European waters? Should they be concentrated or dispersed? That, again, depends largely on circumstances. For the present they are concentrated and organized in so many several squadrons, one being affiliated, but not attached, to each of the main fleets, which is also furnished with "a sufficient number of attendant cruisers" for scouting purposes. "These cruiser squadrons will be detachable from the fleets to which they are affiliated for special cruiser exercises or for special cruises." That is their peace disposition. How they will be employed in war depends upon circumstances, and chiefly on the dispositions of the enemy. Will the enemy seek to attack British maritime commerce by means of detached cruisers or by means of organized squadrons? That is a question which only experience can answer. What seems to be certain is that he will use powerful armoured cruisers for the purpose, and probably use such vessels only. In that case we can only employ armoured cruisers to impeach him. Small cruisers, slow in speed, weak in armament, and inadequately protected against gun-fire, will apparently be out of court on both sides, certainly on the enemy's side if we employ armoured cruisers against them, and not less certainly on our side if he does the same. If he concentrates, we must concentrate. If he disperses, we must disperse; but in either case we must take care to be in superior force at the critical point. The question is far too large to be considered fully

here,¹ and it only concerns the strategy of position, in so far as the *guerre de course* is now much more largely an affair of position than it was in the wars of the sailing-ship period. It is an affair of position in two ways. In the first place, ships which seek to prey upon commerce must issue from certain ports, and are therefore best impeached in the neighbourhood of those ports. They must also make frequently for certain ports to replenish their fuel—not necessarily the same ports; but still only certain ports, which again defines their position within ascertainable limits. All this makes for concentration. In the old days, when privateering was permitted, ships could leave almost any port of the enemy, and return to any other port, and this made for dispersion on both sides, especially as the disparity between privateer and frigate in those days was much less than the disparity between small unarmoured cruiser and large armoured cruiser in these days, the advantage of speed being nearly always on the side of the privateer. In the second place, maritime commerce is no longer distributed almost at random over the ocean as it was in the old sailing days. It takes certain definite courses, and it converges on certain definite points—namely, the ports of clearance and delivery. The courses can be changed and varied almost indefinitely within such wide limits as would greatly embarrass the enemy without greatly increasing the duration of the transit, so that, regard being had to the limited coal-supply of modern warships, especially when cruising at high speed, it would seem that only at the points of convergence would a modern commerce-destroyer be likely to destroy enough commerce to liquidate its own coal-bill. But the points of convergence are known and rigidly determined by geographical conditions. Concentration of the defence at these points, necessarily within easy reach of British naval bases, would go far to check-mate the depredations of the assailant. On the other hand, if the enemy disperses, the defence need no longer

¹ It is more fully considered in the next following essay, pp. 293-330.

be concentrated, adequate preponderance of force being presupposed in either case. I do not pretend that the foregoing is an exhaustive or even an adequate discussion of this great subject. Its sole purpose is to point out the relation between the strategy of position and the *guerre de course*, and to suggest that the problems presented by the latter in these days are of quite a different and of a much more complicated order than those presented by it in the days of sailing-ships.

It only remains to consider the relation of the strategy of position to the navy of the United States. It seems at first sight a paradox that the rise of the United States into the position of one of the great naval Powers of the world should coincide in point of time with the disestablishment of the North American and Pacific stations, and the demobilization of the naval bases associated with them. But the reason is not far to seek, being partly strategic and partly political. When the American navy was weak in the Atlantic and still weaker in the Pacific, the squadrons maintained by England in those regions were quite adequate to deal with it in the unhappy event of war. But now that the American navy is strong in both seas, the maintenance of such squadrons as were formerly maintained by this country in those regions would be a violation of the very first principles of the strategy of position, since in the event of war these weak and detached squadrons would be confronted by an overwhelming force of the enemy operating with the great advantage of having its bases and the central sources of national power at hand. There would thus be no alternative for a weak squadron in those waters but to retire precipitately the moment war became imminent. It could take no offensive action whatever, and could not even defend the West Indian possessions of the Crown. Canada, in such a contingency, must be defended mainly on land, though of course the command of the sea is essential to the military defence of Canada.

If ever England and the United States do unhappily

go to war, the issue will be decided, not by such ships as were formerly stationed on either side of the North American Continent, but by the "capital ships" of both Powers. If, therefore, we are to maintain any permanent naval force in the North Atlantic or the Pacific, it must be in the one case such a force as is capable of giving a good account of the main fleet of the supposed enemy, and in the other, such as is capable of dealing "at the earliest possible moment with all ships of the enemy to be found in those waters." The latter condition is, as matters stand at present, potentially satisfied by the general disposition and organization, as described above, of the British naval forces in the Pacific. The former could not be satisfied without gravely weakening and practically paralysing the naval defences of this country in European waters; and even then it would be a very questionable disposition for the particular contingency under consideration. There is no more reason why this country should keep a large moiety of its naval forces in American waters to meet the remote contingency of a war with the United States, than there is why the United States should keep the bulk of its naval forces in European waters to meet the same remote contingency. The elements of time and distance here take precedence of the mere strategy of position, and they operate equally on both sides. For the two Powers to keep their respective naval forces on their own side of the Atlantic is at once a sign of mutual good-will and the best assurance of its permanence.

For this reason, then, the North American and West Indian Squadron has practically disappeared as a factor in the strategy of position. But the British possessions on the other side of the Atlantic are not to be wholly deprived of the countenance and comfort of the British flag afloat. In place of the disestablished squadron, a fourth cruiser squadron—designated above as the western group of cruisers—has been organized, consisting mainly of ships allocated to the training service afloat.

This squadron is henceforth to consist of valuable modern fighting ships, and though its base will be in Home waters, its cruising ground will include the whole of the former North American station—a station which, “extending as it does from the Pole to the Equator, will give the admiral in command opportunities of organizing the training of his crews under better climatic conditions than can be found anywhere else. . . . In time of war it will only be necessary to remove from those ships cadets, or youths, or boys still under training, and to complete the crews with the small additions required for war.” The squadron will also be reinforced in time of war with a contingent of mobilized cruisers. The essence of the change is that this squadron now takes its organic place in a general scheme of distribution, based on the strategy of position, and no longer occupies a station which has been rendered isolated and untenable by the rise of the American navy, and even obsolete by the growing friendship between this country and the United States.

For it is this, after all, which really governs the whole situation as between these two great and kindred naval Powers. “Blood is thicker than water.” The two navies found that out long ago, when Commodore Tatnall first uttered the words in the China seas. It has taken the two nations longer to discover it, but they have found it out at last. At Bermuda, in 1899, I had the privilege of meeting the late Admiral Sampson, who was visiting the island with his squadron still fresh from the honours of the Cuban War. The American fleet was received with the utmost cordiality, and the birthday of Washington, which occurred during the visit, was honoured by a salute from the flagship of the British Commander-in-Chief. I have often thought since that that salute may have been, in its symbolic aspect, as significant an event in the world’s history as even the Boston tea-party. For, whereas the one marked the beginning of national estrangement, the other was, perhaps, the first overt sign of a growing national reconciliation. Admiral Sampson him-

self was deeply impressed by it, as well as by the whole character of his reception in Bermuda. He told me that it had impressed on him the conviction that the friendly feeling towards England then beginning to be entertained by the people of the United States was abundantly reciprocated on the English side. I ventured to assure him that this feeling on the part of England was no new or ephemeral growth, but that in spite of occasional interruptions, not arising in England, and deeply regretted by the mass of the English people, it had existed for many years. He replied, "That may be, but the feeling in the United States has been, I acknowledge, of quite a different character, until a very recent date. We in the United States have been accustomed to regard England as the only European Power with which our relations, being close and sometimes critical, were likely to give rise to serious differences. England is the only European Power with which, up to last year, we have ever fought. The traditions of our revolution and of our war of 1812 have sunk deep into the national mind, and have for a long time stood in the way of any cordial and permanent understanding. In common with the great mass of my countrymen, I shared these feelings myself until quite lately. But for some reason or another, which I cannot assign with confidence, though it is probably connected directly and indirectly with the recent war between the United States and Spain, a vast and marvellous change, to me as welcome as it was unexpected, has now come over the feelings of the people of the United States. Whether it is likely to be permanent or not I cannot say with confidence, but I sincerely hope it is. Instead of regarding England as our only probable enemy in Europe, we now regard her as our best and perhaps our only friend, and at any rate as the friend best worth having. The deeper sentiment of a common origin and faith, a common literature and history, of common laws and kindred institutions, has finally overpowered what still survived of the revolutionary sentiment of

antagonism. We feel that the result of the war has brought us into contact and possible conflict with more than one European Power. We feel also that with England our friend and the British Fleet on our side we have nothing to fear from any other Power, or even from two or three of the Powers of Europe combined. An alliance would perhaps be premature, nor is it needed so long as the feeling on both sides remains what it is at present. Possibly we could not hope in the first instance for more than the moral support of England in any conflict with a Continental Power. But that would suffice, and in times of real difficulty it would ripen sooner or later into a defensive alliance. I say frankly that in my opinion the United States have more to gain from such an alliance than England has, though the moral and even material advantage to England is manifestly not inconsiderable, and is likely to grow with time. For this reason I rejoice unfeignedly at the change of sentiment which has lately come over public opinion on this side of the Atlantic. I am not less gratified by the assurance that no such change is needed on the other, and if any words of mine can cement a friendship which would, I believe, make for the welfare of the whole world, it is at once a pleasure to myself and a duty to my country to utter them."

That was now ten years ago. Admiral Sampson's words were prophetic, for no one on either side of the Atlantic can doubt that the relation between England and the United States is now closer and more friendly than that between any two other Powers in the world. In fact, the difference is one of kind and not merely of degree; and on both sides of the Atlantic it is now fully recognized that the relation between the two nations is really that which Plato thought ought to subsist between Greek state and Greek state as contrasted with that between any Greek state and the world outside Hellas. Plato refused to give the name "war" to any difference between two Greek states. He would only call it "discord," the word used by Greek writers to describe the

internal conflicts—often, unhappily, armed conflicts—of Greek political parties. “There is,” he said, “a difference in the names ‘discord’ and ‘war,’ and I imagine that there is also a difference in their natures; the one is expressive of what is internal and domestic, and the other of what is external and foreign, . . . and any difference that arises among Hellenes will be regarded by them as discord only—a quarrel among friends, which is not to be called a war; . . . they will quarrel as those who intend some day to be reconciled.” If we translate this into modern phraseology, it means simply that two nations so situated will never quarrel at all, in the sense of going to war. Just as political parties nowadays compose their “discords” without resort to arms, so two kindred nations, like England and the United States, will find some way out of their differences without attempting to destroy each other. It is a far cry from the *Republic* of Plato to the *New York Tribune* and its whilom editor, now Ambassador of the United States to the Court of King Edward VII., but the distance is bridged over in a few words uttered by Mr. Whitelaw Reid at a banquet given to welcome him on his arrival in England: “You would be less than kind if, at this date and after all that has gone before, you should expect from me this evening a long speech on the expediency or necessity for friendly relations between our two countries. Now, if ever, is surely a time when one need not weary you by saying at length such an undisputed thing in such a solemn way. Of course we ought to be on good terms. Why not? Let me put it a little differently. Of course we are on good terms. Why not? What conceivable reason is there now why the two great branches of the English-speaking family should not be, as they are, actually enjoying the friendly relations we are told it is our duty night and day to bring about. That is their normal state—that has been increasingly for a good many years their historical state. It is the thing that now comes naturally. The opposite is what would be unnatural, difficult, against

instinct, monstrous." That is the idea of Plato expressed in the language of modern men of the world. It explains why the strategy of position has no practical application to the case of the United States, since both nations are now fast learning to exclude war altogether from the purview of their international relations.

THE ATTACK AND DEFENCE OF COMMERCE¹

“THE harassment and distress caused to a country by serious interference with its commerce will be conceded by all. It is, doubtless, a most important secondary operation of naval war, and is not likely to be abandoned till war itself shall cease ; but, regarded as a primary and fundamental measure, sufficient in itself to crush an enemy, it is probably a delusion, and a most dangerous delusion when presented in the fascinating garb of cheapness to the representatives of a people. Especially is it misleading when the nation against whom it is to be directed possesses, as Great Britain did and does, the two requisites of a strong sea-Power—a widespread healthy commerce and a powerful Navy.” Such is the considered judgment of Captain Mahan on the subject which is to be discussed in this essay. The same great writer has shown that during the war of the French Revolution and Empire the direct loss to this country “by the operation of hostile cruisers did not exceed $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of the commerce of the Empire ; and that this loss was partially made good by the prize-ships and merchandise taken by its own naval vessels and privateers.” During the same period the French mercantile flag disappeared entirely from the seas, while the volume of British maritime commerce was more than doubled. In a former war, when the British supremacy at sea was more seriously challenged, premiums of fifteen guineas per cent. were paid in 1782 on ships trading to the Far

¹ *Naval Annual*, 1906.

East. From the spring of 1793 to the end of the great struggle with Napoleon no premiums exceeding half that rate were paid. From all this it would seem to follow that of two belligerents in a naval war, that one which establishes and maintains an effective command of the seas will be absolute master of the maritime commerce of the other, while his own maritime commerce, though not entirely immune, will suffer no such decisive losses as will determine or even materially affect the course and issue of war, and may, indeed, emerge from the war much stronger and more prosperous than it was at the beginning.

Such is the ascertained and undisputed teaching of history in the past. But history deals only with the past, and the past, to which appeal is made above, differs so widely from the present in respect of the methods, opportunities, implements, and international conventions of naval war, as well as in respect of the conditions, volume, and national importance of maritime commerce in these days, that we must needs be very warily on our guard against taking the history of the past as an unconditional guide in the naval warfare of the present and the future. The teaching of the late war in the Far East, which was waged entirely under modern conditions, has not yet been sufficiently studied, its data have not yet been sufficiently sifted, to justify any detailed and critical examination. But certain broad principles seem to emerge from it. It has been said above that an effective command of the sea is the condition precedent of the comparative immunity of the maritime commerce of a belligerent. The Japanese command of the sea was never fully established until after the battle of Tsu-Shima. For that reason it was impossible for Russian maritime commerce to be seriously assailed by Japan anywhere outside the area of immediate conflict ; it may be added that the volume of Russian maritime commerce is so insignificant that, even had it been possible for Japan to assail it in the open and at a distance, it would have been scarcely worth

her while to do so. But within the area of immediate conflict—the only area that counted for practical purposes—the effective, but not absolute, command of the sea was secured by Japan from the very outset. This is proved by the fact that the transport of the Japanese armies in unprecedented numbers across the sea to Manchuria, their maintenance and continuous reinforcement there with all the supplies that a modern army in the field requires, though not entirely unmolested, was never seriously interrupted. A command of the sea which, though not absolute, is effective enough to secure the transport, supply, and reinforcement of great armies—that is, to maintain the continuous flow of a stream of immense volume—must needs be more than effective enough to furnish a corresponding immunity to the much smaller, though doubtless more widely diffused, stream of private maritime commerce, and even of neutral commerce engaged in the transport of contraband. A certain amount of damage was done, no doubt, from time to time, by Russian cruisers, which possessed, in Vladivostock, a secure and unmolested base. But it was comparatively insignificant, and it had no appreciable effect on the course and issue of the war.

The teaching of the Cuban War between Spain and the United States need not be considered. Maritime commerce, its defence and attack, hardly came into view in connection with it. Spain had too little commerce to be worth the attention of the United States, and no warships at all that could be employed against the commerce of the United States. But the case is somewhat different with the American War of Secession. This was waged in the period of transition from the old warfare to the new. Navies already consisted almost exclusively of steamships, but these steamships still possessed considerable sail-power, and many of them employed steam only as an occasional auxiliary, while the mercantile marine of all countries, and more especially of the United States, still consisted very largely of sailing-ships. Now, an

armed steamship, even if only furnished with auxiliary steam-power, must needs be master of every unarmed sailing-ship it meets, and, being possessed of sail-power, it is endowed with a mobility, a range of action, and a power of keeping the sea which are far greater than those of any warship which, being propelled by steam alone, can go no further afield than its coal endurance allows. These considerations go far to explain the relatively very large amount of damage done by the *Alabama* and other commerce-destroying cruisers fitted out by the Southern States during the American War of Secession. The naval forces of the North were very greatly superior to those of the South ; so much so, that they were able to maintain a fairly effective blockade of the Confederate ports over a very wide extent of sea-board. But, concentrating their attention almost exclusively on the maintenance of that blockade, they were not able, or were adjudged by the naval authorities to be not able, to afford adequate protection to the sea-going mercantile marine of the North. The consequence was that the *Alabama* and her consorts had things nearly all their own way for many months, and that the mercantile flag of the North disappeared almost entirely from the seas. This, however, was due quite as much to faults of strategic disposition as to deficiency of naval force. The career of the *Alabama* very quickly came to an end when effective measures were taken to bring her to book. Had these measures been taken, as they should have been, at the outset, her depredations would have been comparatively insignificant. Her career is a very instructive object-lesson—applicable, however, for the most part, only to her own peculiar and very exceptional period of transition—in the methods of commerce-destruction ; but, rightly regarded, it is a still more instructive object-lesson in the wrong methods of commerce defence. It proves only what really needs no proof, that a single armed steamship can do immense damage to a mercantile marine consisting almost entirely of sailing-ships wholly unarmed if no attempt is made

to bring her to book. The attempt to forecast what would happen in a naval war in these days to the British mercantile marine from the depredations of the *Alabama* during the War of Secession is a very unintelligent one, and quite a foolish one, if the real facts of the case are either entirely ignored or sedulously misinterpreted.

For, after all, apart from the very exceptional circumstances and conditions of the time, these depredations, though very serious and almost ruinous in their indirect effects, were not so extensive as has often been represented. The damages wrought by the *Alabama* and such of her consorts as came within the purview of the Geneva Tribunal were assessed by that Tribunal at some £3,000,000 sterling; and it has often been said that the Government of the United States experienced some difficulty in discovering claimants for the whole of that amount—which was really a very insignificant sum compared with the total cost of the war to the North. In a Memorandum communicated by the Admiralty to the Royal Commission on Supply of Food and Raw Materials in War, it is stated that, “even the *Alabama* herself only averaged three prizes per month during her career, and the *Shenandoah*, which met with no opposition in her attack on the American whalers, only averaged 3·8 per month, and the average number of prizes for the whole thirteen Confederate Government commerce - destroyers only amounted to 2·7 per month, and some of these appear to have been small fishing craft and insignificant coasters.” The Report of the Commission further states, on the authority of information supplied to it—though whether by the Admiralty or not is not stated—that “the Confederate cruisers were eight in number, and that at different times they fitted out captured sailing-ships as tenders to the total number of four. The former captured three steamers and 208 sailing-ships, and the latter captured nineteen sailing-ships. It also appears that of the eight cruisers three were steamers without sail-power, and their career was short, and five were steamers with

good sail-power, of which the three best sailers (*Alabama*, *Florida*, and *Shenandoah*) had the longest careers. The *Alabama* once cruised for five months without coaling, and four times for three months." Thus the steamers without sail-power were ineffective and their careers were short, although the efforts of the North were intermittent, and strategically often ill-conceived. Those which possessed good sail-power were able to keep the sea for a much longer period than any modern vessel, whether warship proper or merchant ship armed for the occasion, could do. It is thus manifest that any inferences drawn from the depredations of the *Alabama* and her consorts must be drawn in accordance with these authentic and very significant facts and figures.

Nor, again, must too great stress be laid on the fact that the depredations of the *Alabama* and her consorts practically drove the Federal mercantile flag from the seas for the time being. This is entirely in accordance with the teaching and experience of naval history. A single cruiser unmolested and unpursued is practically in command of the whole area of sea left undefended against her depredations. The hostile mercantile flag cannot, therefore, exist within that area. It is not so much the certainty of capture, but the appreciable risk of capture, which drives the ships flying that flag home, and they will not quit their shelter again until the assailant is disposed of, any more than birds scared by a hawk will quit their hiding-places until the hawk is out of sight. But this is quite a different thing from the actual captures made by the assailant. Floating commerce disappears and its profits vanish so long as the assailant is unmolested and undisposed of, but in ordinary circumstances it would reappear as soon as that consummation was reached. It did not reappear in anything like the same volume, either during the War of Secession after the *Alabama* was disposed of, nor afterwards when the war was over. But the *Alabama* and her consorts counted for very little in this result. We learn from the Admiralty

Memorandum already quoted above that "a Select Committee of the American Congress in 1869 reported that the decline in American tonnage due to the war amounted to a loss of less than 5 per cent. of the whole from captures, together with a further loss of about 32 per cent. of vessels either sold or transferred temporarily to neutral flags; and they concluded that American shipping did not revive after the war, owing to the burdens of taxation which the war had left imposed on all the industries of the country, but which operated with peculiar hardness on the shipping interest, inasmuch as it was thereby subjected to the unrestricted competition of foreign rivals, not only in home ports, but in all parts of the world." We have seen that the loss to British maritime commerce during the wars of the French Revolution and Empire did not exceed an average of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. annually during the whole of the period of conflict, and that at the end of that period the volume of commerce, in spite of its losses, was at least doubled. The direct loss to the maritime commerce of the Northern States of the Union during the War of Secession was about twice as much under conditions which deprived the Federal Government of that effective command of the sea which is essential to the defence of commerce. In addition, the maritime commerce of the United States suspended during the war did not revive afterwards; but that was due to economic and fiscal causes, with which the *Alabama* and her consorts had little or nothing to do. Surely in the light of these facts and figures it is time that the *Alabama* myth should be taken as finally exploded.

It would thus appear that there is nothing in the history of the recent past to disallow the teaching of the more distant past, to the effect that the command of the sea is essential for the successful attack upon commerce, and that an adverse command of the sea is a sure safeguard against such an attack. Still it is not to be denied that the conditions of modern naval warfare and of modern maritime commerce differ very materially

from those which prevailed in the wars of the past. British maritime commerce, with which we are mainly concerned, is vastly greater now than it was in the wars of the eighteenth century, and it is also immeasurably more important to the welfare and even to the very existence of the country. Then it was mainly a source of wealth; now it is an absolute necessity of bare existence. If we lost it in those days we were the poorer, but we were still able to feed ourselves and to maintain the bulk of our internal industries. War would have been infinitely more burdensome in those conditions, but unless or until the country was successfully invaded it would not have been destructive to the nation. In these days the total destruction of our maritime commerce would, even without invasion, mean national destitution and collapse. There is no need to labour this point. It is accepted on all hands without dispute. A fleet in effective command of the sea is the only thing in these days that stands or can stand between this nation and its destruction.

On the other hand, British maritime commerce, though now so vastly greater in volume and vital importance, is in many respects less assailable than it was in the days of old. Not only has the substitution—now so largely effected—of steam for sails endowed the modern merchant vessel with a much higher average speed, but it has enabled it to take much more direct courses, and, what is much more important, to vary those courses within very wide limits, almost at discretion. In the old days the courses open to a sailing-vessel were rigidly circumscribed within 18 points of the compass out of 32—or 20 points at the outside—according to the direction of the wind. Hence, in order to reach her destination, a sailing-vessel was often compelled to steer a very indirect course, so as, by taking advantage of the prevailing wind, to enable her to get towards her destination by a succession of oblique courses determined by the wind alone, and therefore not calculable beforehand. A steamship can at all times steer towards any prescribed point of the com-

pass. Hence, the maritime commerce of the world is now for the most part confined to certain well-defined "trade routes," so insignificant in width that, even when traced on a globe of considerable dimensions, they are little more than lines. Outside the areas bounded by these lines it is hardly too much to say that a hostile cruiser seeking to prey upon commerce would be hard put to it to find so much commerce to prey upon as would pay her own coal-bill. It follows that hostile cruisers engaged in a *guerre de course* must, to make their warfare effective, lie in wait for their prey on or in the immediate neighbourhood of the trade routes. It is there, then, that the belligerent in command of the sea will send his cruisers to intercept them. He can also in many cases give instructions by telegraph to merchant vessels of his own nationality to take for a time some divergent course, sufficiently removed from the ordinary trade route to throw the assailant off the scent. In these circumstances the havoc wrought by the raiding cruiser, though vexatious and costly for the moment, is not likely to be ruinous in the long-run.

Now as far as British maritime commerce is concerned the only trade routes which need be considered are those which traverse the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. These all converge finally in the area of sea defined by the Land's End, Cape Clear, and Cape Finisterre, and it is manifest that within that area it is most likely that British naval force will at all times be found supreme. The subsidiary route which leads to British ports round the North of Ireland might also be assailed, and would therefore have to be guarded; but here again the point of attack is much nearer to the centres of British naval power than it is to the naval bases of any other nation. The case is different in the Mediterranean, but not so different as to constitute an exception to the general rule, so long as the British command of that sea is unimpaired. In any case the defence of commerce which follows a clearly defined trade route must needs be a simpler matter

than it was when routes were varied indefinitely according to the wind, and when therefore there was not very much more reason for finding the ships to be assailed in one position than in another, except, indeed, at the points of concentration; and at these, of course, the defence was much stronger and more highly organized than anywhere else. "War," said Napoleon, "is an affair of positions." When the positions are known beforehand they can, of course, be much more easily assailed than when they are not. On the other hand they can also be much more easily defended. The best way to defend them is, if possible, to catch the assailant as he leaves his port. If that fails, the next best thing is to keep a sharp look-out for him at each of the comparatively few positions for which he must make. Even if his speed, vigilance, and ingenuity enable him to evade capture there, two results must inevitably follow. He will do little damage so long as he is constantly being hunted off the trade route, and within a very short time his coal will be exhausted and his powers of offence will be paralysed until he can replenish his bunkers. Then the whole proceeding will be repeated *da capo*. The hunter will become the hunted. The last thing that a commerce-destroyer wants to do is to fight engagements with his equals. He may prove victorious in the engagement, but, even so, he is not likely to come off scot-free, or in any condition to pursue his enterprises with effect. In his evidence before the Food Supply Commission, Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, an expert strategist, a former Director of Naval Intelligence, an experienced Commander-in-Chief afloat, and a profound student of naval history, stated "that it would be a liberal estimate to allow fourteen days without replenishing coal bunkers for a commerce-destroyer proceeding at any considerable speed." That represents the extreme tether of such a vessel. If she has a long way to go before reaching her hunting ground, much of her coal will be burnt before she can set to work, since she must go at high speed in order

to minimize the risks of observation and capture by the way. More will have to be reserved to enable her to reach a friendly coaling station or some secure and secluded position at sea for the purpose of replenishing her bunkers. How many days will be left to her for the prosecution of her marauding purpose under conditions which imply that she must be prepared at any moment either to fight an action which must bring her career as a commerce-destroyer to an end, or to run away as fast as she can, well knowing that unless she can give her pursuers the slip she will never be left until she has been hunted down? The Food Supply Commission was officially assured by the Admiralty that if the enemy should merely detach one or two cruisers from his main forces for the purpose of harassing our commerce we could always spare a superior number of vessels to follow them. Such a superior number should make assurance doubly sure; for Admiral Bridge pointed out to the Commission that, "even if only one of our cruisers were in pursuit, it could be made too dangerous for a hostile cruiser to remain on or about a trade route." He added, however, that in his opinion protection could be best assured "by keeping the enemy's commerce-destroyers continually on the lookout for their own safety." The whole strategy of the situation is here succinctly defined. If the enemy's cruisers are concentrated, being confronted, as, *ex hypothesi*, they must be, by a similar concentration in superior numbers on our part, they cannot be destroying commerce, this being essentially an operation which involves dispersion. If, on the other hand, the enemy disperses his cruisers for the purpose of preying upon commerce, there is nothing to prevent our detaching a superior number of cruisers to pursue them; that required superiority of numbers being implied not only in the "two-Power standard," but also in the fundamental proposition that the safety of this country depends absolutely on an assured command of the sea.

The next point to be considered is that, whereas the

volume of maritime commerce to be attacked has increased enormously, the number of its possible assailants has very materially diminished. The number of the sheep is vastly greater, but the wolves are less numerous, and the watch-dogs are more than their match. The tendency of modern naval development has been to increase altogether beyond comparison the power of the individual units of naval force, but to diminish their aggregate numbers. In the year of Trafalgar there were 556 British sea-going warships in commission, of which 106 were ships of the line and the remainder cruisers large and small, including frigates other than ships of the line. Thirty-two more, twelve being ships of the line, were "in ordinary"—that is, available for sea-service. There were also built or building 130 more, of which twenty-six were ships of the line. The total tonnage of all these ships was 634,278 tons; that of the sea-going and fighting ships actually available for sea-service was 430,115 tons, or far less than the tonnage of forty modern battleships. The tonnage of the ships of the line in commission and in ordinary was 208,817 tons, or far less than the tonnage of a dozen modern battleships.¹ The British Navy is now far stronger than it ever was in time of peace or war, and its annual cost has in recent years reached an unprecedented figure. Its effective fighting units are now all in commission either afloat or in reserve, with the exception of a small number of not very modern ships which are kept in readiness for emergency, though not in commission. In the *Navy List* for January, 1909, the total number of ships mostly in commission, and all either available for the pendant or in a more or less advanced stage of preparation, is given as 179, of which 59 are battleships, 39 armoured cruisers, 21 protected first-class cruisers, 35 and 17 protected cruisers of the second and third classes re-

¹ These figures, with the exception of the tonnage for modern battleships, are taken from a paper read at the Institution of Naval Architects on July 19, 1905, by the Chief Constructor of the Navy. Sir Philip Watts explained in a note that the tonnage of 1805 ships is given in "builders' old measurement."

spectively, and 8 scouts. These 179 pendants are of course immeasurably superior in offensive and defensive force to the 700 odd pendants of 1805; but as commerce-destroying is essentially an affair of the dispersion of naval force, and does not—or did not in the old days—require any considerable weight of armament in the individual assailant, it stands to reason that out of an aggregate of 700 pendants many more could be spared for dispersion than can possibly be the case out of an aggregate of 179 pendants in all. Torpedo craft are not reckoned in the foregoing enumeration, because, as will be shown presently, torpedo craft are very inefficient vessels for the prosecution of a *guerre de course*, except in special circumstances and within a very limited range of action. But for the purposes of full comparison it may be mentioned that the number of British destroyers is given in the *Naval Annual* for 1908 as 155, and of first-class torpedo-boats as 115, thus raising the total number of pendants to 449, as against 700 odd in 1805. As the British Navy is more than equal to those of any two other Powers, it follows that the total number of available pendants possessed by any other single Power cannot be more than half of this total.

There is moreover another point of very great importance in this connection. "Privateering is and remains abolished" was a clause in the Declaration of Paris formulated in 1856, but not accepted either then or since by all the maritime Powers. It may be urged, perhaps, that the Declaration of Paris is a mere paper convention which some Powers have not formally accepted, and that it might not be respected by a belligerent who found it his interest to disregard it. If it rested on the comparatively feeble sanction of International Law alone this argument would not be without weight. But privateering is not merely forbidden by International Law; it is also largely disallowed and put out of date by the changes that have taken place in the materials and methods of naval warfare. In the old days a privateer could be

built and armed in almost any port of the enemy ; she could obtain supplies and execute necessary repairs in almost any other port. She required a very moderate armament, her chief defence against the warships of the enemy being her capacity to show a clean pair of heels. In many cases it was not even necessary to build a vessel for the purpose. For longshore warfare against the enemy's ships traversing narrow waters, and often forced by the wind to hug the shore, any handy vessel, a fishing smack or even a row-boat, would sometimes serve ; and this kind of warfare against the slow and unhandy craft of those days was often very destructive. Thus, both in the narrow seas and in the open, the privateer was almost ubiquitous and withal exceedingly elusive. It is recorded of one famous French sea-going privateer that the value of her prizes amounted to something like a million sterling before she was captured. All this kind of warfare is now manifestly obsolete ; no row-boat, fishing smack, or small craft of any kind, such as might easily overpower a ship becalmed or overhaul a slow sailer near the shore, would have much chance even against a modern " tramp," which is never becalmed, need never approach the coast, and can generally steam some ten knots at a pinch. Their occupation is gone without the aid of International Law at all. The sea-going privateer, on the other hand, must needs be a vessel of very high speed, and therefore of considerable size. In these days of rapid communication her construction could hardly escape observation, and her first exit from port would rarely be unmolested or even unobserved by an enemy who knew his business. Even the *Alabama* game is probably played out. Her construction was perfectly well known to the Federal Government, and though she left this country without her armament, she would certainly have been stopped by the British Government but for a concurrence of untoward circumstances—the chief of which was the sudden illness of the law officer to whom the papers were referred—which are very unlikely to occur

in the same combination again. The consequences to this country were such that a weak neutral in any future war is not likely to care to face them. Nor will it be at all a promising speculation to build a fast sea-going privateer even in a belligerent country; her construction is almost certain to be detected, and she is likely to have a very short shrift as soon as she puts to sea. If the country of her origin is one which has adhered to the Declaration of Paris, her crew if captured will assuredly be treated as pirates. Thus privateering is practically a thing of the past; the imperfect sanctions of International Law might not have been strong enough to abolish it if circumstances had not already practically put an end to it, as indeed the Declaration of Paris itself admits. "Privateering *is* and remains abolished."

We may thus conclude with some confidence that the commerce-destroying of the future will be conducted by the regular and recognized warships of a belligerent, with the possible addition of exceptionally fast merchant steamers armed and commissioned for the time being as regular warships. But these latter, being no match, except in speed, for any sea-going warship proper, must needs take to flight whenever a hostile cruiser is sighted, so that on a trade route, properly guarded, their depredations would have to be conducted under very untoward conditions. It is probable, too, that the struggle for existence, of which war is one of the extremest forms, would lead rapidly to the elimination from the ranks of commerce-destroyers of all warships except large, fast, and powerful armoured cruisers, since the employment of even one of this type of vessel would, sooner or later, place at her mercy every unarmoured vessel of speed inferior to her own. Now, as against any single antagonist, this country possesses an ample supply of armoured cruisers for the protection of her trade routes, and even as against any two Powers her position is still one of assured superiority, especially when it is considered that no antagonist, whether single or combined, who was attempting

to dispute the command of the sea with this country, would ever dream of fatally impairing the strategic and tactical efficiency of his fighting fleet by sending off all or any considerable proportion of the comparatively few armoured cruisers he possesses to prey upon British commerce. If he takes the sea at all it must be for the purpose of trying conclusions with the British fleets in the open, in which case he will want all the available units of effective force that he can scrape together for the purpose, or for the purpose of some distant and hazardous combination—how hazardous let the story of the Trafalgar campaign bear witness—in which case all the armoured cruisers he can lay his hands on will not be more than sufficient for the indispensable work of scouting. If, on the other hand, recognizing that he is not strong enough to try conclusions in the open, he remains within the shelter of his fortified bases, then every cruiser which manages to make its escape must and will be shadowed, pursued, and harried to the bitter end by a superior force of British cruisers detached from the main fleets for the purpose. The main fleets will of course be strategically so placed as to have the best chance of bringing the enemy to an action as soon as possible whenever he takes the sea. Their positions will be so chosen as to be just beyond the range of nocturnal torpedo attack, and yet not so far afield but that intelligence of the enemy's movements can be very rapidly transmitted to them. Togo has shown how the thing can be done, and what Togo did no British admiral need fear being unable to do. Close and vigilant as the watch on the enemy's ports may be, however, it is probable that single cruisers may make their escape from time to time, and even get clear away; but if they are bent on commerce-destroying, their destination must needs be known within such narrow limits of approximation as have been indicated above. There they must be looked for, picked up, shadowed and harried until they are finally brought to an action. Before that is done they will very probably have made a

few captures or even many if our naval forces are insufficient or ill-disposed. But no one need suppose that any nation can go to war without incurring losses. The thing is to reduce the losses to a *minimum*, and that is done by a sufficiency of naval force, by strategic wisdom in its disposition, by incessant vigilance and tactical skill in its handling. The Admiralty has declared that if one or two cruisers should escape the surveillance of our squadrons we could always spare a superior number to follow them. There is no reason to fear that any future *Alabama* will be left unpursued for even as much time as her bunkers will allow her to keep the sea.

The conclusions here reached are closely in accord with the view taken by the Admiralty in its communications with the Food Supply Commission. Some of these communications were confidential and have not been made public, but in a memorandum printed by the Commission the Admiralty laid down two broad general principles as deduced from the teaching of naval history: "1. That the command of the sea is essential to the successful attack or defence of commerce, and should therefore be the primary aim. 2. That the attack or defence of commerce is best effected by concentration of force, and that a dispersion of force for either of those objects is the strategy of the weak, and cannot materially influence the ultimate result of the war." With the strategy and dispositions best adapted for securing and maintaining the command of the sea—which must always be not merely the primary but the paramount aim of this country—I am not here concerned. Concentration of force must, according to the Admiralty, be its indefeasible condition. The dispersion of force for the purpose of attacking commerce is, we are told, the strategy of the weak, and, it is added, that it would be not less the strategy of the weak to disperse force, in the first instance, for the defence of commerce. This might seem to imply that the stronger naval Power might safely and even, in certain circumstances, with advantage leave its commerce to take care

of itself until it is attacked. Paradoxical as this conclusion may seem, there is nevertheless no small element of truth in it. If it be true that an attack upon commerce by a Power which does not command the sea cannot materially influence the ultimate result of the war, that belligerent would be a fool who jeopardized his own command of the sea by dispersing his forces for the defence of commerce to such an extent as to give his adversary an advantage in the main conflict. Conversely, the other belligerent would be still more a fool if, when his only hope, and that a slender one, of securing the command of the sea lay in the combination and concentration of all his available forces, he dispersed any of them in pursuit of a strategic object which could not materially affect the ultimate result of the war. From this point of view there is no little wisdom in leaving commerce to take care of itself until it is attacked—first, because it cannot be attacked by the enemy without weakening his chance of obtaining the command of the sea; and, secondly, because if it is attacked the stronger belligerent will always be able to dispose of its assailants before they have done any irreparable damage. The strategic question here involved is not, however, to be settled by merely abstract considerations. It depends upon the concrete conditions of the particular conflict in hand. If the naval forces of this country are so superior to those of the adversary that the latter cannot hope to secure the command of the sea, and will not risk all in contending for it, he will naturally turn to the alternative of attempting to harass British maritime commerce as much as possible. In that case it might be expedient to guard the trade routes from the outset, but always and only on the condition that the main fleets are not thereby so weakened as to place their command of the sea in any jeopardy. If, on the other hand, the enemy's naval forces are so powerful as to compel this country to use all its forces to overawe or overpower them, then, since the defence of commerce is merely a secondary object, and the command

of the sea always the primary, and to this country the paramount, object of naval warfare, it stands to reason that the primary object must not in any way or to any degree be sacrificed to the secondary. The same reasoning applies to the weaker belligerent. So long as he has any chance, or thinks he has any chance, of obtaining the command of the sea he will be exceedingly chary of detaching from his main fleets, which alone can enable him to compass his purpose, any ship, either fit to lie in the line or qualified to serve him by scouting, for the purpose of preying on commerce; and if she does not answer to one or other of these descriptions she will be a very inefficient commerce-destroyer at the best. The ship which is to prey upon commerce with any effect in these days will always have to be appreciably superior in speed, or else at least not inferior in armament, to any of those which are likely to be told off to defend it.

Let us now consider how it will fare with a commerce-destroyer thus detached, and compare the conditions of her warfare with those of her predecessors in the days of old. It may be presumed that she will start from the port or station in which the main forces of the enemy, or some considerable portion of them, are concentrated for the purposes of the main conflict—for if she is known to be isolated and detached already, the port in which she is stationed is not likely to be left unobserved. The first thing she has to do is to get away undetected, or at least unmolested, and it must be assumed as a matter of course that any port in which a main fleet of the enemy is concentrated will be closely watched by a superior force of the British Fleet. Evasion is not easy in these circumstances, but it will now and again, perhaps not infrequently, be successfully accomplished. Having regard to the port from which she issues, the trade routes which are nearest to it, and the limits of her coal-supply, it will not be difficult to determine her probable destination; and even if she has escaped entirely undetected, her presence in this or that locality will soon be known by the

non-arrival at home of merchant vessels she has captured, if not by the arrival in one of her own ports of her prizes for adjudication. In these days of telegraphs and universal publicity, proceedings such as these cannot long be kept secret. So far in the hypothetical case under consideration every advantage has been given to the commerce-destroyer. She has been allowed to escape undetected, to reach her cruising ground without mishap, and there to be unmolested until such time as the news of her depredations have reached this country. It need hardly be said that these favourable conditions will very rarely prevail in practice, but if we consider the worst case that could happen and see what it comes to, we shall be in a better position for considering any less extreme cases.

Next, having got our commerce-destroyer on to her cruising station, let us consider what she can do there. It is by no means so easy a thing for a commerce-destroyer in these days to capture a merchant vessel and send her into port for adjudication as it was in former times. The mere capture will, of course, be effected without difficulty. An unarmed merchant vessel has no choice but to surrender when summoned by an armed warship, and here it may be remarked parenthetically, that to arm a merchant vessel with a view to enabling her to resist must always be a very questionable policy in these days. She cannot by any feasible method of armament be made equal to the feeblest of cruisers likely to be employed in the attack on commerce, and any show of armed resistance will entitle her assailant to send her to the bottom without further parley. But assuming that she surrenders when summoned, what is the assailant then to do? In the old days, any half-dozen seamen commanded by a midshipman or a warrant officer were competent to navigate the prize into port. They had only to disarm the crew and put them under hatches and the thing was done. Nowadays the complement of a man-of-war is very highly specialized, and, as a rule, no man-of-war carries

more stokers and engine-room specialists than are required for the efficient working of the engines. As the assailant of commerce must always be ready to put forth her extreme speed in the very probable event of coming across an enemy, she will only part with any portion of her engine-room complement with very great reluctance. Every prize she makes in these circumstances materially impairs her own efficiency, and it is safe to say that she will make very few before she is at the end of her tether in this respect. It may be that very large cruisers will be able to provide in some measure against this contingency by shipping an extra complement at the outset. But their resources in this respect are strictly limited, not only by inexorable conditions of space, but also by the consideration that the supply of skilled stokers and other engine-room specialists is by no means inexhaustible, and that their employment in this subsidiary operation of warfare must needs *pro tanto* impair the efficiency of the main fighting fleets. If a commerce-destroyer must carry the engine-room complement of some three or four ordinary men-of-war for the purpose of capturing about a dozen merchant ships of the enemy, and must run an appreciable risk of having them all taken prisoners or sent to the bottom before she has made a single capture, it may well be questioned whether the game will be found to be worth the candle.

But, it may be suggested, there is another alternative. Instead of capturing the prizes and sending them into port for adjudication, the assailant may sink them without further ado. International Law sanctions this in certain contingencies, and no doubt it will sometimes be done even in defiance of International Law. But the proceeding is not without its difficulties and disadvantages. It entails the loss of all prize-money in respect of the ships so dealt with, and thereby it eliminates one of the strongest motives which actuated the commerce-destruction of the past. But besides this it requires the assailant to offer the hospitality of an already overcrowded ship to the

crews of the vessels thus disposed of. There will be no great consideration shown to such prisoners, of course. But in any case they must be fed, and they must be accorded as much cubic space as will suffice, if only barely, to keep them alive until they can be disembarked. The crew of a single tramp will cause very little difficulty. But if the assailant happens to come across an Atlantic liner with 2,000 or 3,000 persons on board, she is likely to find herself in a very awkward dilemma. If she determines to send her prize into port, she will have to provide an adequate prize crew for the purpose. If she determines to send her to the bottom, she must take on board, feed, and house all those 2,000 or 3,000 persons, and then her position if she has to fight an action will be no very enviable one. Perhaps the best thing for her to do would be to escort her prize into port. But this is to risk her own destruction as well as the recapture of the prize—which must be faced in any case—and it also withdraws her from her hunting ground.

There is yet another respect in which the modern commerce-destroyer is sharply differentiated from her predecessors in the past. They were propelled by sails and could keep the sea as long as their supply of food and other stores lasted, and this period may be put at not less than six months on the average. It is true that the supply of water was limited and could only be replenished by a visit to the shore. But a fully equipped naval base was not necessary for this purpose, and there were many secluded places on neutral coasts where water could be clandestinely obtained by a belligerent ship with very little risk of prevention, or even of detection. The modern commerce-destroyer, on the other hand, depends solely on steam, and must replenish her bunkers at least once a fortnight. Neutral ports are closed to her, for none but a very powerful and very benevolent neutral would risk the displeasure and possible retaliation of a belligerent in command of the sea by supplying the ships of the other belligerent with fuel to be immediately used in the further

prosecution of their belligerent enterprises. If the commerce-destroyer's own ports are far distant, she will use up no small percentage of her total coal-supply in going to and fro ; and broadly it may be stated that if the distance from her base to her cruising ground is much more than a quarter of her radius of action as measured by her coal-supply, she will be very slow to engage in the enterprise at all. Let us suppose that it takes her three and a half days to get to her cruising ground, and, of course, the same time to get back. Allowing her fourteen days' total coal-supply, how long will she be able to stay there ? Certainly less than seven days, because she must always keep an appreciable amount of coal in reserve to meet the contingency of a sustained pursuit at topmost speed by an adversary, neither weaker nor slower than herself. It is hazardous to attempt to evaluate the amount of this reserve in exact figures, but it could hardly be less than two days' supply at normal speed, because at high speed the consumption of coal increases much more nearly in a geometrical than in an arithmetical ratio to the increment of speed attained. No captain of a man-of-war in his senses would ever allow his coal-supply in time of war to run down to a point at which it would only just suffice to take him back to his nearest port at economical speed. Hence, in the case supposed, the number of days for which a commerce-destroyer with a supply of coal for fourteen days on board could engage in her enterprise at a distance of three and a half days' steaming from her base would be five at the outside. Her only alternative would be to coal at sea. But this cannot be done in all localities, nor in any but the finest weather. The colliers must meet her at a prearranged rendezvous, and they are liable to capture in transit. If she takes them with her they may still be captured by an enemy who puts her to flight ; and even if at last she finds a place and a time at which she can coal without great difficulty, she is liable at any and every moment to be surprised by an enemy just

when she is in the very worst trim either for fighting or for running away.

It remains to consider the part likely to be played by torpedo-craft in the work of commerce-destruction. In the first place a torpedo-craft is incapable either of furnishing a prize crew to a captured vessel or of taking on board the crew of a merchant vessel of any but the smallest size. Her radius of action is also extremely limited, because in the daytime she is no match for any sea-going warship except in speed. Hence she will for the most part confine her operations to half the distance she can cover between dusk and dawn, and the limits of her cruising ground being thus defined, it will not be difficult for a belligerent in command of the sea to organize an offensive defence against her attacks which will render her operations, to say the least, extremely hazardous. It is true that there are certain regions of the Mediterranean in which British merchant vessels might, in certain contingencies, be exposed to assault from hostile torpedo-craft. But the limits of these regions are determined by the radius of action of the torpedo-craft as above defined, and until the menace of the torpedo-craft within these limits is abated by the offensive defence above mentioned, it may be necessary to direct British merchant vessels to keep outside them. This question was very fully considered by the Food Supply Commission in view of an opinion advanced in his evidence by Admiral Sir John Hopkins to the effect that "on the assumption of our Channel and Mediterranean Fleets being masters of the situation to a *certain extent* . . . it is certain that a British ship could not go through the Mediterranean in those circumstances." The phrase "being masters of the situation to a *certain extent*" is not very happily chosen. If it means that the fleets in question are in effective command of the sea, then it also must mean, *ex vi termini*, that the operations of any commerce-destroyer, whether cruiser or torpedo-craft, will assuredly be extremely hazardous within the area of command. If, on the other

hand, it means anything less than this, then the assumption is totally at variance with the fundamental postulate that in any maritime war this country must command the sea or perish. It may be, indeed, that even when an effective command of the sea is established, it will be impossible, as Sir John Hopkins said, "to safeguard every route so minutely that hostile cruisers could not creep in on some part of it and molest our mercantile marine." So far as this is so it may perhaps serve in some measure to sustain the modified opinion subsequently expressed by Sir John Hopkins, to the effect that "a British ship could not go through the Mediterranean under the circumstances cited without running great risks." But on this it may be observed, first, that the risks run by the marauding cruisers are likely to be at least as great as those run by the mercantile marine; and, secondly, that the more effective way of safeguarding the route threatened may very well be to watch the ports of exit of the marauders, with a sufficient force properly disposed and adapted for the purpose, rather than to patrol the route itself and wait for the marauders to appear. Be this as it may, it is worthy of note that Admiral Bridge, on being asked if he concurred in the opinion of Sir John Hopkins, replied, "Not at all"; and that the Commission itself summed up the whole controversy as follows: "We may point out that in view of the geographical position of the principal maritime countries, British ships could scarcely be in any serious danger, except in the case of a war with France"—now, happily, a much more remote contingency than it was when the Commission was conducting its inquiries—"where they would be threatened with attack from the French torpedo-boat stations on the North African coast. Moreover, in this case the danger to commerce seems to be considerably less than would appear at first sight, when it is remembered that British vessels need not pass within one hundred miles of these stations, and that torpedo-craft are singularly ill-adapted for preying upon commerce. Such craft can neither spare prize-

crews nor accommodate any one above their complement number, so that, if employed against commerce, they could only compel vessels to follow them into port on pain of being torpedoed. A French torpedo-boat which had captured a grain-ship in the Mediterranean would very likely have had to steam two hundred miles, the speed on the return journey being limited, of course, by the speed of the captured ship." It may be added that in this process of convoying the prize into port the torpedo-craft would run great risk of capture, with very little chance of escape. The only other waters which might seem to afford good hunting ground for torpedo-craft bent on commerce-destroying are the English Channel and its approaches. But these are precisely the regions in which the British command of the sea is likely to be most effective and ubiquitous. Indeed, it may be affirmed, with some confidence, that so long as this country holds the effective command of the sea, hostile warships of any kind will be very chary of entering the Channel at all, and not very eager to approach it. Even in the contingency, now happily so remote, of a war with France, it must be remembered that torpedo-craft issuing from French ports in the Channel will be met by a sustained offensive defence on our part. If the experience, frequently repeated, of manœuvres is any guide it would seem that such an offensive defence, skilfully organized and relentlessly pursued, very soon results in effectually abating the menace of hostile torpedo-craft. At Port Arthur, again, the Russian torpedo-craft did next to nothing, being completely overmatched by the offensive defence of the Japanese.

It results, from the foregoing investigation, that, so long as this country retains an effective command of the sea, the maritime commerce of the whole Empire, though not entirely immune to injury and loss, will, on the whole, be exposed to far less risk than British maritime commerce had to incur in the war of the French Revolution and Empire. That risk has been estimated at not more

than $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum on the total value of the commerce involved. This conclusion is established by the following considerations :

1. All experience shows that commerce-destroying never has been, and never can be, a primary object of naval war.

2. There is nothing in the changes which modern times have witnessed in the methods and appliances of naval warfare to suggest that the experience of former wars is no longer applicable.

3. Such experience as there is of modern war points to the same conclusion and enforces it.

4. The case of the *Alabama*, rightly understood, does not disallow this conclusion, but on the whole rather confirms it.

5. Though the volume of maritime commerce has vastly increased, the number of units of naval force capable of assailing it has decreased in far greater proportion.

6. Privateering is, and remains, abolished, not merely by the fiat of International Law, but by changes in the methods and appliances of navigation and naval warfare which have rendered the privateer entirely obsolete.

7. Maritime commerce is much less assailable than in former times, because the introduction of steam has confined its course to definite trade routes of extremely narrow width, and has almost denuded the sea of commerce outside these limits. The trade routes being defined, they are much more easy to defend, and much more difficult to assail.

8. The modern commerce-destroyer is confined to a comparatively narrow radius of action by the inexorable limits of her coal-supply. If she destroys her prizes she must forgo the prize-money and find accommodation for the crews and passengers of the ships destroyed. If she sends them into port she must deplete her own engine-

room complement, and thereby gravely impair her efficiency.

9. Torpedo-craft are of little or no use for the purposes of commerce-destruction except in certain well-defined areas where special measures can be taken for checking their depredations.

Of course, all this depends on the one fundamental assumption that the commerce to be defended belongs to a Power which can, and does, command the sea. On no other condition can maritime commerce be defended at all. But on no other condition can the British Empire exist.

The foregoing essay was written early in 1906, and published in the *Naval Annual* in the spring of that year. In the summer of the same year the Admiralty organized a scheme of manœuvres, the main purpose of which was to elucidate the problems involved in the attack and defence of commerce by experiment on a large scale at sea, so far as such experimental examination of them could be prosecuted under the limiting conditions necessarily incidental to a state of peace. Two great fleets—the Red and the Blue—were opposed to each other, and their relative strength is sufficiently indicated for my purpose in the table given below of their comparative losses throughout the operations.

The "General Idea" of the operations was expounded by the Admiralty as follows :

The co-operation of the mercantile marine has been invited.

The general idea of the manœuvres is based upon the assumption (for manœuvre purposes) that war has broken out between a stronger naval power (Red), and a weaker but still formidable naval power (Blue).

Although under such circumstances the primary object of the Red Commander-in-Chief would be to seek out and defeat the Blue Fleet wherever it appeared, it is not to be expected that the Blue Commander-in-Chief would risk a general engagement with the Red Fleet unless he could bring to action a portion at a time, and under conditions favourable to himself.

Among the steps that he would be likely to take to cause a dispersion of the Red Fleet, with a view to obtaining such an opportunity, the most likely to succeed would be an attack on the Red trade.

In adopting this course he would count not only on the actual loss he would be able to inflict on his enemy, but also, if the Red nation was one largely dependent on its commerce, he would be able to reckon on creating a national panic which might compel the Red Commander-in-Chief to disperse his forces to an extent that neither the actual risk to commerce nor sound strategy would justify.

The investigation of the actual risks to which the trade is likely to be exposed under these conditions, and of the best means of affording it protection without sacrificing the main object of taking every opportunity of bringing the enemy's fleet to action, is evidently of great importance not only to those who have to conduct the operations, but also to the mercantile community.

An under-estimate of the risk to the trade, and a too great concentration of the Red forces, might give the enemy the chance of inflicting great and avoidable loss on the merchant shipping, while, on the other hand, an over-estimate of the risk might lead to a great rise in the rate of insurance and an almost complete stoppage of trade, which would be more injurious to the country than any losses likely to be inflicted directly by the enemy.

In either case a demand would probably arise on the part of the Red community for an injudicious dispersion of the Red forces on expeditions for the direct protection of trade, which would render them liable to be defeated in detail, and greatly reduce the chance of bringing the enemy's main fleet to action.

In the *Naval Annual* for 1907 I reviewed the results of these operations. I append here such extracts from

the remarks I then made as will enable my readers to judge how far my theoretical examination of the problem was or was not corroborated by a subsequent experimental study of it in the conditions prescribed by the Admiralty.

The operations of the Blue side were very narrowly restricted. Practically they could be directed only against merchant vessels plying to and from Mediterranean and South Atlantic ports, and even within these limits the Blue forces were not allowed to attack the trade at the points of its greatest concentration—that is, in the immediate neighbourhood of its home ports or within the Gut of Gibraltar. Hence, for practical purposes, some position on the trade route between Ushant and Cape St. Vincent was designated and virtually prescribed as that which the main body of the Blue Fleet should take up in the pursuit of its purpose of preying upon British maritime commerce. Moreover, only a fraction—considerably less than 25 per cent.—of the total amount of commerce travelling the trade route within the period of the operations was really assailable by the Blue forces. The trade route was traversed by upwards of four hundred vessels—either merchant steamers or warships representing merchant steamers—during the period in question. Of these only ninety-four in all—sixty merchant steamers and thirty-four warships—were liable to capture or destruction, and fifty-two of them, or 55 per cent., were actually captured before the operations came to an end. . . .

Of the several squadrons and divisions assigned to the Blue side, the Battle Squadron and Second and Fifth Cruiser Squadrons were told off by the Blue Commander-in-Chief to operate off the coast of Portugal in what may be called an oceanic attack on the trade. The Sixth Cruiser Squadron and all the Destroyer Divisions, except that at Lagos, together with the Submarine Flotilla, were left to operate nearer home with the Blue home ports as their bases. Their fate was significant, and may be here recorded. . . . Of the Fifth Cruiser Squadron the five

torpedo-gunboats were put out of action during the course of the operations without having made any captures at all. The *Sappho* and *Scylla* alone survived. The *Sappho* captured three merchant vessels and the *Scylla* seven. These two ships afford a striking illustration of the amount of damage to commerce that isolated vessels can do—so long as they are unmolested—even in waters strongly occupied by a greatly superior naval force. Their captures were all effected either at the mouth of the English Channel or within about a hundred miles south-west of Ushant. It seems probable that they managed to hit some point on the "clearly defined route" outside the ordinary trade route which was assigned by the Red Commander-in-Chief to merchant vessels associated in groups; and their success seems to suggest that a *guerre de course* conducted by isolated ships engaged on a roving cruise is by no means out of date yet. Between them the *Sappho* and the *Scylla* account for very nearly one-fifth, that is little less than 20 per cent., of all the captures effected by the Blue side. Both survived to the end, the *Sappho* making the first capture of the war, and very nearly the last. It must be added, however, that had the war been a real and a lasting one these two vessels would very soon have reached the end of their tether. The low enduring mobility—that is, the limited coal capacity—of the modern warship compels it to return very frequently to a base for coal. It is more than probable that, when the *Sappho* and the *Scylla* reached this point, they would have found the access to their base closely barred by the already victorious forces of the enemy.

Of the thirty-one destroyers assigned to the Blue side, five stationed at Lagos and the rest in Blue home ports, eighteen, or 58 per cent., were lost in the course of the operations, and only thirteen survived. Of the five destroyers at Lagos, three were lost, but not before they had captured four merchant vessels, and their loss was more than counterbalanced by the loss to the Red side

of four out of the five Mediterranean destroyers operating off Lagos. Of the twenty-six Blue destroyers operating from home ports, fifteen were lost, but the several flotillas accounted for the capture of nine merchant vessels, while of the Red forces, two cruisers and five destroyers were adjudged to have been put out of action by Blue destroyers. The Submarine Flotilla did nothing, and suffered no damage throughout the operations. Its opportunity might have come if any of the Blue ports had been blockaded by the Red side. But that phase of the operations was never reached, though it was well in sight before the manœuvres came to an end.

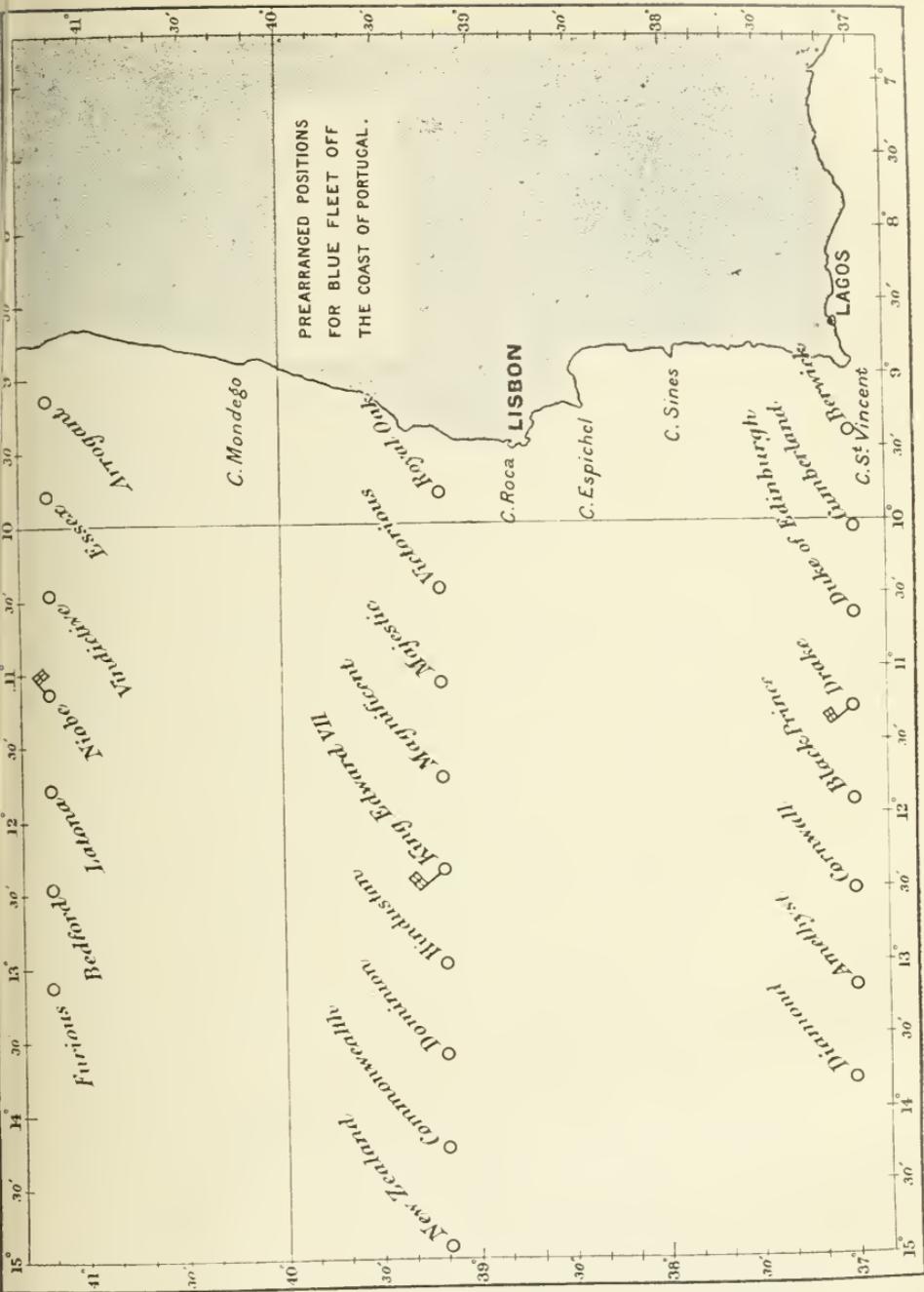
It is a fact of no little significance that of the fifty-two merchant vessels finally captured or sunk by the Blue side, nine were captured or sunk by two cruisers operating singly, and twelve were captured or sunk by a few destroyers operating in pairs or in small groups. In other words, the *guerre de course* proper prosecuted by these insignificant vessels—for the two cruisers were unarmoured third-class cruisers—accounted for twenty-one out of fifty-two captures in all—that is, for just over 40 per cent. These figures might at first sight be taken to imply that the *guerre de course* is still best conducted in this way, and that the comparatively slow, weak, unarmoured cruiser may still, as Admiral Custance, the distinguished author of *Naval Policy*, contends, have an important function to discharge in war. But before these conclusions are accepted we have to look at the operations as a whole, and to bear in mind that the time assigned to them was not sufficient to afford a complete view of the strategic conditions involved, nor of the final results to which these conditions must inevitably have led. It is the recorded opinion of the chief umpire that "it is practically certain that the commencement of the third week of the war would have seen all commerce-destroying ships either captured or blockaded in defended ports." If that is so, it is clear that the rate of capture maintained for a few days by the cruisers and destroyers in question

must in a few days longer have fallen to zero. We have also to consider that the Red Commander-in-Chief very properly made it his chief and primary business to seek out and engage the main body of the Blue Fleet, well knowing that, as Nelson said, if the trunk was destroyed, the branches would perish with it. With this task in hand he could well afford to neglect the sporadic *guerre de course* of his adversaries, in the assured confidence that as soon as his own command of the sea was firmly established the marauding vessels would very quickly be disposed of. In the opinion of the chief umpire this confidence was justified. It may further be doubted whether in real war the capture or destruction of merchant vessels by destroyers will be found to be as feasible as it was made to appear during the manœuvres. But this question is fully discussed in the preceding essay, and need not here be reopened.

“The Blue Commander-in-Chief,” says the comment of the Admiralty on the operations, “was directed to carry out a plan of campaign which is generally allowed to be strategically unsound.” The meaning of this seems to be that it was suggested in the “General Idea” that he would probably seek to cause a dispersion of the Red Fleet, and with that object he would organize an attack on the Red trade as the best means available to tempt the Red side to divide its forces and so give him a chance of engaging a portion of it at a time. As a rule, it may be said that an inferior naval force will not take the sea unless it means to fight. It is clear that the Blue Commander-in-Chief did not mean to fight if he could help it, or unless he could encounter a detached force of the enemy over which he could gain a decisive advantage before the latter could be reinforced. It would, therefore, be strategically unsound for him to take the sea at all with his Battle Squadron, unless he held, as apparently he did, that the instructions of the Admiralty required him to use his whole force in an organized and simultaneous attack on the Red trade. On that assump-

tion practically only one course was open to him—to occupy some portion of the trade route sufficiently removed from the Red bases to give him at least a chance of maintaining his position long enough to enable him to create a panic at home by the interruption and destruction of the floating trade. Such a position could not be near the entrance to the Channel, because that region was sure to be occupied in overwhelming force by the Red forces opposed to him. It must, therefore, be off the coast of the Peninsula, and not south of Cape St. Vincent, because the South Atlantic trade was not to be molested south of that latitude, and Cape St. Vincent was, moreover, in the immediate neighbourhood of his protected base at Lagos. Hence, if he adopted this plan of campaign, it was practically certain that his main force would, sooner or later, be found in the occupation of the trade route off the coast of Portugal. He did adopt this plan, and, viewing the situation as he did, it may be conceded, with the Admiralty, that, “he achieved his mission with great ability.” It is, however, as the same authority points out, “open to question whether he might not have achieved a greater measure of success by the employment of his cruisers only for the *guerre de course*, and the concentration of his battleships for attacks upon the line of the Red Admiral’s communications.” . . .

Regarded in the abstract as a means for the interception and destruction of floating commerce, nothing could be better than the disposition adopted by the Blue Commander-in-Chief, the nature of which may be gathered from the annexed chart reproduced from the official report on the operations. It spread a net through which no merchant vessel could pass without being detected in ordinary weather, because if any one line was passed in the night, the next, which was about a hundred and thirty miles distant, must be passed in the daytime. It permitted of rapid concentration by one line or another if the merchant vessels were accompanied by warships,



and though it exposed the battleship line to some risk of being overpowered in detail before the ships could be effectively concentrated for action, yet it placed a screen of cruisers so far ahead and astern of this line as to render such a risk almost infinitesimal in these days of wireless telegraphy. But, regarded in the concrete, the disposition is open to the fatal criticism that it must forthwith be dislocated and broken up as soon as the enemy appears in force. If the proof of the pudding is in the eating, this criticism is conclusive and final. It was not until the morning of June 27 that the ships were all in their stations. Before dark on that same day scarcely one of them remained there. The Battle Squadron was partly concentrated and partly captured or dispersed. The Fifth Cruiser Squadron was flying in all directions. The Second Cruiser Squadron was steaming as hard as it could for Lagos. . . .

In making this ill-fated disposition the Blue Commander-in-Chief was no doubt largely influenced by the instructions he had received from the Admiralty, which were in effect—as defined by myself as the correspondent of *The Times* attached to the Blue side—“to endeavour to use his fleets, as a real enemy would in like circumstances, for the purpose of causing a commercial crisis in England by the destruction rather than the capture of British merchant steamers, with a view to employing his fleets to advantage at a later stage if this measure had the desired effect of causing any dispersal of the British forces.” But if this was his purpose it was not fulfilled. The dispositions made off the coast of Portugal were very ineffectual for the destruction of commerce, as may be seen from the list of captures, and very disastrous to the ships and squadrons taking part in them. Nor had they any appreciable effect in causing a dispersal of the British forces. Hence there is no little force in the suggestion of the Admiralty that the Blue Commander-in-Chief might have “achieved a greater measure of success by the employment of his cruisers only for the *guerre de course*,

and the concentration of his battleships for attacks upon the Red Admiral's communications."

It remains to give the results of the campaign as tabulated in the official "Summary of Red and Blue losses," and then, to quote the comments of the Admiralty. The comparative losses of the two sides are given in the following table :

Class of Ship.	RED.				BLUE.			
	Number at commencement of hostilities.	Losses.	Remaining.	Per cent. lost.	Number at commencement of hostilities.	Losses.	Remaining.	Per cent. lost.
Battleships .	20	9	19.1	4.5	9	2	7	22.2
Armoured Cruisers	19	4	15	21.0	7	4	3	57.1
Other Cruisers .	24	8	16	33.3	10	4	6	40.0
Scouts .	8	Nil	8	Nil	Nil	—	—	—
Torpedo Gunboats	Nil	—	—	—	5	5	Nil	100
Destroyers .	41	13	28	31.7	31	18	13	58.0

These figures speak for themselves. The official comments also speak for themselves ; the only remark to be made on them is that the destruction of commerce in the face of a hostile command of the sea would probably be found in actual war to be a much more difficult business than the manœuvres made it appear. If that is so, it would seem that the risks involved are not likely to be greater than could be covered by insurance, if only owners and underwriters can be induced to keep their heads.

ADMIRALTY REMARKS

The manœuvres were deprived of much of their value owing to the small proportion of merchant vessels which accepted the Admiralty terms for taking part.

The percentage of loss of merchant vessels was high (55 per cent.), and would appear alarming were it not for the fact that this success of Blue was only achieved at the

expense of the complete disorganisation of his fighting forces, and that, as stated by the chief umpire, had hostilities continued, "it is practically certain that the commencement of the third week of the war would have seen all commerce-destroying ships either captured or blockaded in their defended ports."

It is probable also that the percentage of loss would have been very considerably lower had it been possible for all the merchant ships traversing the manœuvre area, to the number of upwards of four hundred, to take a part in the proceedings. As it was, the attack of the twenty-seven battleships and cruisers and thirty destroyers of the Blue Fleet was concentrated upon the inadequate number of sixty merchant steamers and thirty-four gunboats and destroyers representing merchant steamers; in consequence, the actual percentage of loss is misleading, and affords little or no basis for calculation of the risks of shipping in time of war. It should also be noted that considerations of expense and the fact that the attacking fleet was on the seaward flank of the trade routes prevented wide detours being made for the purpose of avoiding capture.

The summary of Red and Blue losses will show the cost of a *guerre de course* against a superior naval power, and proves that, although a temporary commercial crisis might possibly be caused in London by this form of attack, the complete defeat of the aggressor could not be long delayed, with the result that public confidence would be quickly re-established and the security of British trade assured.

To make an enemy's trade the main object of attack, while endeavouring to elude his fighting ships, is generally recognized as being strategically incorrect from the purely naval point of view, and this procedure could only be justified if there were reason to suppose the hostile Government could by such action be coerced into a misdirection of their strategy or premature negotiations for conclusion of hostilities.

As it was considered desirable, however, that the risks to British shipping should be examined, under the most unfavourable conditions conceivable, the Blue Commander-in-Chief was directed to carry out a plan of campaign which is generally allowed to be strategically unsound, and there is no doubt that, fettered as he was by these

limitations, he achieved his mission with great ability, though it is open to question whether he might not have achieved a greater measure of success by the employment of his cruisers only for the *guerre de course* and the concentration of his battleships for attacks upon the line of the Red Admiral's communications.

THE HIGHER POLICY OF DEFENCE¹

I MUST begin my lecture with an acknowledgment and an apology—an acknowledgment of the high honour done me by your commandant and your professor of military history in inviting me to address so well-informed and, I hope, so critical a professional audience as yourselves on a subject connected with your profession ; and an apology for my audacity in accepting their invitation. I am neither a sailor nor a soldier ; I am an outsider to both those noble professions, though I have devoted some time and thought to the study of their higher functions and relations. You will bear with me if I say many things which you know as well as I do, and some things which may provoke your dissent. I have no dogmas to propound. My sole object is to offer you some food for reflection and, perhaps, some material for profitable discussion among yourselves. If I can attain that object I shall not regret my audacity, and I am sure you will forgive it.

The subject of my lecture is what has been called " The Higher Policy of Defence." By this I understand the due co-ordination of all the agencies of warfare, naval and military, offensive and defensive, and their intelligent adaptation to the conditions historical, geographical, political, and economical, of the countries, states, or Powers supposed to be engaged in war. It will be seen at once that the problem of defence so conceived cannot be studied in the abstract. We cannot disengage it from

¹ A lecture delivered by request at the Royal Staff College, Camberley, on December 9, 1902, and printed in the *National Review*, January, 1903.

its circumstances and conditions. For instance, the problem of defence for a country like Switzerland, which has no seaboard, must differ fundamentally from the problem of defence for a Power like the British Empire, which is essentially a maritime Power, having no land frontiers except such as are in the last resort defensible only through the agency of sea power. These two cases are perhaps the extreme limits within which the problem of defence varies for different countries. On the one hand we have a country which has no direct interest in the sea at all, which has nothing but land frontiers to defend and nothing but land forces to defend them withal ; on the other, we have a country with vital interests in every quarter and on all the seas of the earth, which can neither defend itself nor attack its enemies without crossing the sea. I say it cannot defend itself without crossing the sea because that is a very poor conception of national, to say nothing of Imperial defence, which regards its primary object as the defence of our own shores. That might be, and, indeed, would be, our ultimate object if all else were lost. But before that object could even come into view our Empire would be at an end. The British Empire, it has been well said, is the gift of sea power. By sea power it has been won, by sea power it must be defended. This is not to say that it must or can be defended by naval force alone. On the contrary, that would be as fatal a mistake as to say that the problem of defence for England is concerned primarily with the defence of these shores. A few years ago we had to defend ourselves in South Africa. We should never have effected our purpose if we had relied on naval force alone. On the other hand, we should never even have begun to effect it if the seas had not been open to us. Sea power and naval force are not convertible terms. Naval force is that particular agency of warfare which takes the sea for its field of operations ; military force is that particular agency of warfare which takes the land for its field of operations. Both are essential elements

of sea power. Both are equally indispensable factors in any rational study of the problem of defence presented by the British Empire. The whole problem consists in co-ordinating their respective and characteristic functions, and in so applying their respective and characteristic agencies as to obtain the greatest effect from the least expenditure of energy. The higher policy of defence is, in fact, a problem in the economics of warfare.

I cannot pretend to offer anything like a complete solution of this tremendous problem within the limits of a lecture. I can only attempt to determine a few of its fundamental data, and, if it may be, to indicate the direction in which its solution must be looked for. I am confronted at the outset with a difficulty of nomenclature. For my particular purpose the word "defence" is, I must acknowledge, not very well chosen. From a political point of view it is, indeed, not only correct but indispensable. Of purely aggressive warfare, of wanton and unprovoked attacks on the rights, liberties, or territories of other nations I am not here to speak at all. Such warfare finds no place in the higher policy of defence. From a military point of view, on the other hand, the word "defence" tends unduly to confine our attention to only one branch, and that by no means the more important branch, of the operations of warfare. It is hardly a paradox to say that all defence is attack. It is nothing but the truth to say that attack is by far the most effective form of defence. "The more you hurt the enemy," said Farragut, "the less likely he is to hurt you"; and all operations of warfare between belligerents of anything like equal power are conducted on this principle. The belligerent who acts purely on the defensive is already more than half beaten, and is probably only holding out in the hope either of receiving assistance from without or of his assailant becoming exhausted. In either case the offensive is resumed the moment it becomes possible. In any other case, the issue is fore-ordained. For this reason no two nations are likely to go to war unless each expects

to overcome the other. For any object less paramount than national existence no nation will go to war well knowing beforehand that it must be beaten. If national existence is at stake it will, of course, prefer to perish fighting. That is the only case in which from a military point of view a belligerent will act on the defensive, and then only so far as he needs must. From a political point of view, on the other hand, defence, and defence only, is the sole object of all warlike preparation; but even so, as soon as issue is joined, defence will always in the first instance take the form of attack.

Beware

Of entrance to a quarrel; but, being in,
Bear it that the opposer may beware of thee.

This, then, is one fundamental datum of the higher policy of defence, and from it we may proceed with little dispute or difficulty to another. War reduces human relations to their simplest and most primitive form. It is a conflict of wills ending in a trial of strength. Each belligerent seeks to invade the territory of the other for the purpose of attacking his armed forces, and, if it may be, of defeating them. No conflict can take place until the common frontier has been passed by one belligerent or the other, and, as the fortune of war decides, the more successful of the two must needs advance further and further into the territory of the other, his ultimate object being to occupy the capital in which are concentrated the powers of government and the control of the state's resources. But no army can advance for a single day's march into an enemy's territory unless either it carries its own supplies, or can exact them from the enemy, or can organize a secure and continuous system of transport whereby its daily needs can be satisfied. To carry its own supplies for a lengthened campaign is impracticable. To exact them from the enemy in any sufficient measure is out of the question, and in respect of munitions of war quite impossible. Hence a system of continuous supply

along a secure line of communication is the only practicable expedient. It follows from this again that the line of advance into an enemy's territory must be determined by the indefeasible necessity of checking and, if it may be, of defeating the armed forces of the enemy, and thereby of making it impossible for them to interrupt the communications of the assailant. In the war of 1870 the Prussian armies had contained one French army at Metz and compelled another to surrender at Sedan before they advanced on Paris. I suppose no one will contend that until this had been done Paris could have been invested.

I have started with an analysis of the simplest conditions of warfare on land because that is the kind of warfare with which soldiers are professionally most familiar, and because, addressing an audience of soldiers, I shall hope to carry you more readily with me along the line of advance I propose to follow if I make no assumptions to begin with to which you are likely to take exception. We have seen first that attack is the most effective form of defence, and secondly that the further the attack is pushed the more absolutely does it depend on the security of the line of communication. There is a third condition, equally fundamental, perhaps, but much more difficult to determine in the abstract. "War," said Napoleon, "is an affair of positions." It is the special function of the strategic faculty to determine first, what is the most advantageous line of advance for an army seeking to invade an enemy's territory; secondly, what are the positions which make one line of advance more advantageous than another; and thirdly, what is the best way of seizing those positions and turning them to full advantage. All this would be simple enough if the armed forces of the enemy could be left out of account. But it must be assumed, of course, that he on his part is seeking to do precisely the same thing, so that at every stage of the campaign the position and probable intentions of the enemy are the dominant factors in the situation.

So much being premised, let us consider how far and in what way these fundamental conditions are affected by transferring the initial stages of the conflict from the land to the sea. I will assume, for simplicity's sake, that the two belligerents have no common land frontier, so that neither can attack the other or any of the other's possessions without first crossing the sea. I will assume further that both are largely engaged in maritime commerce, and that this commerce is carried on, for the most part, in ships flying their own flags. It is obvious that if both have navies, the first contact and conflict between two such belligerents must take place on the sea, and the question is, in what position each belligerent would desire it to take place—war being an affair of positions—if the choice lay with him? It will hardly be disputed that each belligerent would desire it to take place as near as possible to the shores of the other. He would desire to place his fleets in effective contact with the ports in which the enemy's fleets were lying, holding himself in readiness at all times to fight the latter if they came out, and making all practicable dispositions for preventing their exit without being compelled to fight. By this means, so long as they remained in port he would secure his own shores from assault and his own maritime commerce from attack, and he could employ such naval force of his own as remained available after providing for an effective watch on the enemy's ports in attacking the enemy's commerce so far as it remained at large. If he is not strong enough to do this he is not strong enough to act offensively on the seas, still less to attack his enemy across the seas. He must be content to see his fleets sealed up in their ports by the superior fleets of his enemy, and his maritime commerce either transferred to a neutral flag or else swept from the seas altogether. There is in the nature of things no other way of opening a war between two belligerents which have no common land frontier. If each thinks himself stronger than the other both may take the sea at once, but even then no military enterprise

of any moment is likely to be undertaken until the naval issue is decided, however long it takes to decide it. If either falters or hesitates to take the sea until it is too late the other will take care that, if ever he does take the sea, he will do so under every disadvantage of position.

If I have carried you with me so far, I hope I may now ask you to go with me a step further and to assent to the proposition that the operations of warfare on land and at sea are essentially identical in purpose, though their methods and appliances differ very materially and, at first sight, fundamentally. What is it that a nation aims at, and must of necessity aim at, when it goes to war? It is, and must be, to bend its enemy's will to its own, to exact what it holds to be its right, to obtain that which the enemy has refused to concede except on the compulsion of force. There is only one way of doing this, and that is by overcoming the armed forces of the enemy, which are the symbol, and in the last resort, the instrument, of his authority. Now, to overcome these armed forces you must attack them, and to attack them you must reach them. That is why the first overt act of warfare between two countries which have a common land frontier is the crossing of the frontier by the armed forces of one belligerent or the other. The procedure and the purpose are essentially the same when the two countries are separated by the sea. If one of the two belligerents has no naval force at all, the other will invade his territory and attack his armed forces on land. This, however, is not naval warfare; it is land warfare conducted across the sea. Such was essentially the character of the late war in South Africa. Naval force in this case operated on its own element only indirectly, so as to guarantee the security of transit and communication, but it operated most powerfully, nevertheless, because, if the naval force available had been insufficient, the security of transit and communication necessary to the success of our troops might have been fatally impaired by the intervention of some other naval power which sympathized and

might have sided with the enemy. The condition of naval warfare proper, however, only arises when both belligerents are equipped with naval force. In that case, though the ulterior purpose of hostilities remains unchanged, it will be found that no operations on land can be undertaken by either belligerent until the naval issue has been virtually decided—the assumption still being, of course, that the two belligerents have no common land frontier. This, I think, follows irresistibly from the foregoing premises. We have seen that in order to obtain the objects for which he goes to war one belligerent or the other must advance into the territory of his opponent, and must come to close quarters with the armed forces of the latter. We have seen that he cannot do this unless his communications are secure, and that his advance must instantly be arrested and turned into a retreat with capitulation as his only alternative if his communications are severed. The absolute dependence on its communications of an armed force in an enemy's country is, I believe, a commonplace with all soldiers—an axiom of the military art. This axiom loses not a jot of its validity when applied to offensive warfare across the sea. Before an armed force of any magnitude can land on an enemy's territory across the seas, there must be no hostile naval force at large strong enough to interrupt its communications. Any such force must be found, fought, and beaten if it is at large, or else it must be securely sealed within its own ports by an opposing force strong enough to keep it there and ready to fight it if it comes out.¹

There is one great historical example which seems

¹ It may be objected that a close military blockade of the enemy's ports, such as was maintained by the British fleets during the Napoleonic war, is no longer possible owing to the development of torpedo-craft and submarine mines. The objection is a valid one so far as it goes. But the difficulties, though formidable, are not insurmountable. Togo surmounted them throughout the war in the Far East, as I have pointed out in the preceding essay. The so-called blockade will be of a character different from that which was maintained in the Great War, but Togo's example shows that it need not be less effective.

at first sight to violate this axiom. Napoleon did succeed in reaching Egypt with his army across the Mediterranean without having first disposed of the British naval force in the Mediterranean. But he only did so at tremendous risk, and he only succeeded—so far as he did succeed—by an accident. A few more frigates at Nelson's disposal would have placed his fleet across the path of the expedition, and in that case it is safe to say that no single French soldier would ever have landed in Egypt. The whole scheme of campaign was radically faulty, and nothing but the destruction of Nelson's fleet by Brueys—either before the expedition had started or immediately after it had landed—could have given it a chance of success. But after the battle of the Nile had been fought and won by Nelson, the French army in Egypt was doomed. It was a Frenchman in Egypt who wrote that the battle of the Nile "is a calamity which leaves us here as children totally lost to the mother country. Nothing but peace can restore us to her." Nothing but peace did restore them. Baffled at Acre, deserted by Napoleon and Desaix, cut off from supplies, ammunition, and reinforcements, they finally capitulated to the number of three-and-twenty thousand, and were carried back to France in British transports just before the conclusion of the Peace of Amiens.

It may be that Napoleon was warned by this bitter experience not to attempt the invasion of England without first securing the naval command of the Channel. Certainly he made this at all times a *sine qua non*. Sometimes it was a few weeks he required, sometimes only a few hours, but at no time did he think that he could safely carry his troops across the Channel in the face of a hostile naval force. He was, as Sir Vesey Hamilton has shown, confronted at all times with a British naval force in the waters adjacent to his ports of exit sufficient to make the enterprise of invasion exceedingly hazardous, if not absolutely hopeless. He could do nothing until this opposing force was swept away. Of course, if the

outlying fleets opposed to him—those off Toulon, Brest, and the other French arsenals—could have been defeated, the victorious French fleets might have advanced up the Channel and have covered his transit. But this he was never able to bring about. Or, as a much more hazardous alternative, he may have hoped that the outlying French fleets, without defeating the British fleets opposed to them, might be able to give them the slip, and, getting the start of them, to give him the time he needed to get his army across. This, however, proved equally impracticable. There was a moment, as he saw himself, when Villeneuve might have given him the opportunity he desired. But Villeneuve's nerve failed him; he could not rise to the height of Napoleon's bold conceptions. He withdrew to Cadiz instead of either fighting or stealing his way into the Channel. It was then and many weeks before Trafalgar was fought that the Army of Boulogne was broken up and its columns were directed upon Austria to crush that Power at Austerlitz.

But while the great fleets of both belligerents were far away—none nearer than Brest, and two of them for a time in the West Indies—and while they were preoccupied with their own immediate objects, strategic and tactical, why, it may be asked, did not Napoleon seize the opportunity of their absence and preoccupation to transport his invading army across the Channel? For two reasons. Napoleon could not ignore the presence of a formidable naval force in home waters, although nearly all the commentators on the campaign have ignored it, and some even have denied its existence. Napoleon must have felt and acknowledged that this force denied him access to the shores of England, and that unless he could get rid of it for a time it was not possible for him even to embark his troops, to say nothing of landing them. The situation was exactly the same at the time of the Armada. There was Parma in Flanders with his army, and, like Napoleon, Parma had collected abundance of transport to carry his troops over to England. But

between him and the coast of England there lay a Dutch fleet, not always directly in the way, but never altogether out of the way, and Parma, like Napoleon, found it impossible to move. He awaited the arrival of Sidonia with the Armada to cover his passage, and as Sidonia was defeated as soon as he arrived—if not before—the whole enterprise came to nought. This, moreover, gives us the second reason why Napoleon could not move. The hazard was too great, and the memory of Egypt was too fresh. It was barely possible, though it was never very likely, that Villeneuve, had he been a better man, might have evaded the outlying British fleets and might have swept and kept the Channel for such a time as would have enabled Napoleon and his army to cross. But this would only have been a repetition of the Egyptian campaign, and Napoleon was not likely to forget how that had ended. It must have taught him that a military expedition which crosses the sea without having first made its communications secure is never likely to recross it except by favour of its enemies. The decisive naval battle might, in the case supposed, have been fought in the Channel and not at Trafalgar; but we know from the result of Trafalgar how it must have ended. At any rate, we may safely assume that Napoleon held two conditions to be essential not only to the success of his enterprise, but even to its prudent initiation—first, that the Channel should be free, if only for a time; and, second, that his communications should be secure, if not absolutely, then at least for so much time as he might deem sufficient to enable him to dictate peace in London before they were seriously assailed. As neither condition was ever fulfilled, the enterprise was never undertaken. Is it too much to assume that what Napoleon never dared no other man ever will dare?

Perhaps no man, save one, ever has dared a like enterprise with impunity. That man was Julius Cæsar; and Napoleon, as we know, was a great admirer of Cæsar's genius and a great student of his campaigns. Cæsar in

his final campaign against Pompey had little or no naval force of his own; certainly none that could make head for a moment against the Pompeian fleet, which was in undisputed command of the Adriatic. Yet although he was blockaded at Brundisium, he managed to escape with half his army, and, landing on the coast of Epirus, he established himself there to the southward of Dyrrhachium, a Pompeian stronghold which he was never able to reduce. His transports were sent back to bring over the remainder of his army under Mark Antony, but they were all captured on the way and destroyed. For some time Antony was blockaded in Brundisium, but, like Cæsar, he effected his escape in the end and landed to the northward of Dyrrhachium, the army of Pompey resting on that stronghold and intervening between the two detached portions of Cæsar's force. A junction was effected, however, and for a time Cæsar invested Dyrrhachium on the landward side. The sea being open to Pompey, his supplies were abundant and secure, whereas Cæsar, being cut off from it, was compelled to live on the country, and his troops fared hardly enough. An untoward reverse having compromised Cæsar's position at Dyrrhachium, he marched into Thessaly, whither Pompey tardily followed him. The campaign ended with the battle of Pharsalus, where Pompey was finally overthrown.

It has been suggested that Napoleon's plans for the invasion of England were inspired by a study of this campaign, and that he persuaded himself that he could do what Cæsar had done. But the analogy halts in at least three important respects. Cæsar had no alternative. If he could not destroy Pompey it was certain that Pompey would destroy him. He could not remain in Italy and rest content with his possession of Gaul and his conquests of Spain and Sicily, because Pompey, being in command of the sea and in possession of the resources of the East, would sooner or later have attacked him there, and Cæsar was too good a soldier to remain on the defensive so long as the offensive was open to him in any way—even

in the most desperate way. Secondly, the war was a civil one, in which the inhabitants of the invaded country were practically neutral, as is shown by the readiness with which they furnished Cæsar with such supplies as they had. Thirdly, so long as the Roman soldier retained his sword, he carried his ammunition with him. I need not point out to an audience of soldiers how greatly the problem of transport is simplified, and even how largely the necessity for secure communications is abated, for an army which needs no ammunition save what it carries as a matter of course, and does not expend in fighting, and no food beyond what the inhabitants of the country in which it is fighting are willing and able to supply. If Napoleon thought of the example of Cæsar at all, we may be quite sure that he did not overlook considerations of this kind.

The proposition that oversea attack of a military character is best prevented by naval force, and can with certainty be prevented by adequate naval force properly disposed for the purpose, is, I think, more familiar and more acceptable to sailors than it is to soldiers; and for this reason I have thought it expedient not merely to advance it but to illustrate it by historical examples. It is in reality an indefeasible deduction from the axiom that an army cannot pursue the offensive unless its communications are secure. "A modern army," says Lord Wolseley, "is such a very complicated organism that any interruption in the line of communications tends to break up and destroy its very life." Hence, where the geographical relations of two belligerents are such that neither can reach the other without crossing the sea, it follows irresistibly that the belligerent who is unable to establish a secure line of communication across the sea is *ipso facto* debarred from undertaking an invasion of his adversary's territory. Conversely, by denying the sea to your adversary you establish at the same time your own freedom of transit across it. This was clearly shown in the expedition to the Crimea. Both aspects of the matter were

illustrated not less clearly in quite recent times by the war between Spain and the United States. So long as the four Spanish warships in the Atlantic were at large no attempt was made to land American troops in Cuba. It was only when they were known for certain to be in Santiago and were there blockaded by a naval force irresistibly superior to them that the military expedition was allowed to proceed. This is, perhaps, the most extreme case on record, and it is also one of the most significant. At a very early period of naval warfare we have Cæsar's bold and successful defiance of a superior naval force which sought to bar his passage, but which happened to be out of the way when he actually embarked and set sail. In that case, however, the difference between a transport full of armed men and a warship proper was not very great. Each carried the same kind of armament—namely, a complement of armed men, and each could manœuvre with approximately the same freedom and mobility when either could manœuvre at all. Hence the disparity between a warship and a transport was in those days comparatively insignificant except in conditions of weather which enabled the ram to be brought into play. In these days, on the other hand, it is immense and incalculable, the warship being armed with long-range weapons of deadly precision, whereas the transport carries no effective armament at all. No wonder, then, that in one of the latest phases of naval warfare the mere menace of a couple of warships and a few destroyers at large was held by the American naval authorities to be an absolute bar to the transit of a military expedition from the ports of Florida to the southern coast of Cuba. There is no sort of doubt about the matter. Even when two Spanish cruisers and two destroyers were known to be in Santiago, the Secretary of the United States navy telegraphed to Admiral Sampson: "Essential to know if all four Spanish armoured cruisers in Santiago. Military expedition must wait this information." This is one of the last words of practical

naval warfare on the subject. And if it be thought that the American naval authorities were unduly timorous in the matter, let it be remembered that Captain Mahan, the highest living authority on naval warfare, was a member of the War Board which organized and controlled the campaign.¹

We have now reached this point, then—that a military force which seeks to cross the sea for the purpose of acting on the offensive in its enemy's territory is even more dependent on the security of its communications than the same force acting across a land frontier; that its communications are more assailable by sea than on land; that the forces capable of assailing it are less easily located and countered; and that, if its communications are once severed, its retreat in the event of a reverse is rendered impossible. You may make good your retreat until you reach the sea, but there you must stand and face your victorious foe, unless you have transport ready to take you away. It would have been no use for Sir John Moore to retreat to Coruña if the French fleets had been in command of the adjacent seas. It follows from all this that the first thing for each of two belligerents which have no common land frontier to do must be to endeavour to destroy the naval forces of its adversary, and if that proves to be impossible to seal them up in their ports. In the absence of a common land frontier this is precisely equivalent at sea to the crossing of a common frontier on land by the army of one belligerent or the other, and until the naval issue is decided

¹ Since my lecture was originally delivered a later and still more emphatic word has been uttered during the war in the Far East; but it was practically the same word. The first stroke of the war was the elimination of the only "fleet in being" which Russia possessed in the Far East, to be followed at once by the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. Its last stroke was the destruction of the only other "fleet in being" which Russia was able to send to the Far East. Could this latter fleet have established an effective command of the waters in dispute, either Japan must have sued for peace or the Japanese invasion of Manchuria must sooner or later have been followed by a Russian invasion of Japan.

all military operations of an offensive character must be in abeyance on both sides. Naval operations are thus, in the case supposed, essentially preliminary to military operations, but for that very reason they are rarely conclusive in themselves. The utmost that naval force can do is to drive the enemy's flag from the seas. If that does not compel him to yield, military force must be employed to complete the work which naval force has begun.

Let us now consider the defence of the British Empire, and the problems it presents, in the light of the conclusions we have reached. The British Empire, I need scarcely remind you, consists of an insular nucleus where the powers of government are concentrated, and of transmarine possessions in all parts of the world. It has grown from within outwards. Its growth has at all times been associated with freedom to cross the seas, and must have been arrested at once if that freedom had at any time been denied to the merchants and people, and, in the last resort, to the warships and troops of this country. It is this freedom of maritime transit, associated with the commercial enterprise which is its foundation, and with the political power which is its result, that has given us in succession the East and West Indies, the North American Continent—half of which we lost mainly through a temporary default of sea-power—the whole of Australasia, so much of Africa as is now subject to our hegemony, together with all the other transmarine possessions of the Crown. An insular State endowed with commercial aptitudes and ambitions must needs trade across the seas, and to that end must secure respect for its flag and free transit for its ships. For this reason, even when the power of England was wholly confined within the four seas, she claimed and asserted the sovereignty of those seas. On the cover of the volumes published by the Navy Records Society you will find the figure of a gold coin issued by Edward III. in 1344. On it is represented a ship of the period, in which is seated

a crowned Sovereign, bearing in one hand a sword and in the other a shield displaying the Royal arms of England, thus typifying the armed strength and sovereignty of England resting on the sea. Even so early as the reign of Henry VI. this symbolism of Edward III.'s noble was recorded in the following lines :

For four things our noble sheweth to me—
King, ship, and sword, and power of the sea.

“ It was no mere coincidence,” says Sir John Laughton, “ which led to the adoption of such a device in 1344, four years after the most bloody and decisive victory of Western war—the battle of Sluys—which, by giving England the command of the sea, determined the course of the great war which followed, determined that Crécy and Poitiers should be fought on French soil, not on English.” What was determined then by the battle of Sluys has been determined ever since by the offensive prowess of the same defensive arm. Freedom of transit across the seas secured to ourselves and denied to our enemies—secured and denied by one and the same agency, that of supremacy at sea—has kept these islands from invasion and expanded our Empire into the uttermost parts of the earth. Is it presumptuous to believe that what has made the Empire will keep it ? Is it to slight the Army to insist that the prowess of the sister service alone has enabled it to achieve so glorious and so ubiquitous a record ? Surely it is much more unworthy of both services to insist that, as the Navy may no longer be able to do what it always has done for more than 800 years—namely, to keep the seas open—the army must now be prepared to do what it never has done throughout the same long period—namely, to defend its native soil. No, no. The Navy to keep the seas, the Army to fight across them, is the policy that has made the Empire. It is the only policy that can keep it.

For let us not deceive ourselves. The freedom of

transit across the seas which has made the Empire is also essential to its continued existence and cohesion. It matters not by what agency this freedom is interrupted. If it is once interrupted the Empire is at an end. The Empire does not consist merely of the British Islands and the many Britains across the seas. It is a living organism, not a mere geographical skeleton. Its nervous system consists of the lines of communication which link all its parts together, its vascular system of the commerce which flows incessantly along those lines. Its vital principle is the sentiment of common nationality, of community in race, language, literature, history, and institutions. But just as life itself becomes extinct if the nervous system is paralysed and the vascular system obstructed, so the living organism which we call the Empire could not survive a similar catastrophe. If, for instance, the specific gravity of the sea were to be so changed that no ship could float on it, we can all see that two consequences must immediately follow. These islands would be impregnable to human assault, but the British Empire would cease to exist. We should never communicate with any part of it again except by telegraph. Every detached portion of it would be thrown entirely on its own resources, and human intercourse would be circumscribed for ever by the boundaries of sea and land. Precisely the same result as regards the Empire would follow from such a change in the balance of naval power as should drive the British flag from the seas. Such a change could only come about in one way—namely, by the overthrow, complete, final, and irretrievable, of our supremacy at sea. In this case it needs no argument to show that with the destruction of its nervous and vascular system the Empire itself would perish. The wants of its several parts might be supplied by the ships and traders of other nations, but we could send no single man to defend them, and they would one and all be liable to invasion and conquest except so far as they were able to defend themselves. It is not less plain that the effect on these islands

would be equally disastrous and irretrievable. They would be liable to invasion, of course, for not six Army Corps nor six times that number would enable us to withstand the vast military forces of the Continental Powers if there were no British warships afloat to prevent their reaching our shores. But they might not even be worth invading. When the German armies invested Paris their leaders never dreamt of attempting to take it by assault. They knew that by interrupting its communications and by cutting off its supplies it must sooner or later be reduced, and in the meanwhile they had work to do in France which, if it could be successfully accomplished, was certain to bring about the advent of the "psychological moment" of surrender. A similar policy applied to these islands in the case supposed would inevitably produce the same result in time, and it is rather an economic than a military problem to determine whether reduction by maritime investment would or would not be a more efficient and less costly way of effecting the desired result than reduction by invasion in irresistible force. I shall not attempt to solve this problem. I cannot believe that the people of this country and their rulers will ever be so unmindful of the things which belong to their peace as to allow it to become a practical one. I have shown that it never can become a practical one until the Empire is at an end. If it ever does become a practical one it will hardly matter the toss of a half-penny whether the enemy invests or invades. In either alternative he will conquer, and the sun of England will set for ever. I do not mean that maritime investment will starve us out. There is always food in this country for many months, and there is never at any moment much more food in the world than would keep its inhabitants alive until after the next harvest or a little longer. It is, moreover, impossible to blockade these islands so completely that neutral nations anxious to trade with us would recognize the blockade as effective; and therefore sufficient food to keep us alive at famine

prices might always be expected to reach us in neutral bottoms. But this country does not live by bread alone. It lives by maritime commerce so vast, so ubiquitous, and so complicated in its international dealings and relations, that if the British flag were driven from the seas the neutral tonnage remaining available would be quite insufficient to carry the world's commerce. In that case all countries would suffer in proportion to the volume of their maritime trade and the amount of it carried in British ships. But this country would suffer far more than any other, because the volume of our maritime trade is not far from equal to that of all the rest of the world, and nearly all of it is carried in British ships. These ships incessantly moving to and fro, representing a money value of at least two hundred millions always afloat, and a capital employed in the industries they sustain at home of many times that amount, cannot be driven from the seas without entailing an economic crisis of unexampled magnitude and severity. It would mean, as I have said elsewhere, that our mills were standing, our forges silent, our furnaces cold, and our mines closed. It is, in fact, no more possible to conceive of this country subsisting without maritime commerce than it is of a steam-engine working without water in the boiler.

Thus, even if there were no risk of invasion, it would still be necessary for us to keep the seas open for the security of our maritime commerce, which is our very life blood. Moreover, the naval force which suffices for this paramount purpose is also sufficient to protect these shores from invasion and *a fortiori* to protect from serious attack the outlying possessions of the Crown. The maritime commerce of the British Empire cannot be suppressed by a few *Alabamas*. It could only be suppressed by a naval force more powerful than our own. "It is not," says Captain Mahan, "the taking of individual ships or convoys, be they few or many, that strikes down the money power of the nation; it is the possession of that overbearing power on the sea which drives the enemy's

flag from it, and allows it to appear only as a fugitive, and which, by controlling the great common, closes the highways by which commerce moves to or from the enemy's shores. That overbearing power can only be exercised by great navies." It is this "overbearing power on the sea"—I should prefer to call it "overmastering" myself, for there is nothing arrogant nor aggressive about it—which this country has always sought to exercise, and, as a matter of fact, nearly always has exercised, from the battle of Sluys onwards. Our claim to exercise it is no menace to other nations. It is merely the assertion of our right to exist as a nation ourselves, the expression in strategic terms of our insular position and of our mercantile necessities as affected thereby. Every Continental nation makes essentially the same claim when it takes such measures as it thinks fit for defending its own frontiers. The frontiers of the British Empire lie on the further side of the seas which wash its territories, not on the hither side. The sea, it is true, is "the great common," as Captain Mahan calls it. In time of peace every flag which represents a civilized Power and a peaceful purpose has as much right to every part of it as any other. But it is a common over which run the highways of the world's commerce. In time of war every naval Power seeks to deny the use of those highways, whether for military or for commercial purposes, to the ships flying its enemy's flag. In the war between France and Prussia in 1870 the superiority of France at sea was so great that the Prussian flag practically disappeared for a time from the seas. This was a disadvantage to Prussia, but ~~not~~ at that time almost cause her maritime insignificance, and because her inferiority at sea was far more than balanced by her triumphant superiority on land. But the case is very different with this country. England can assert no superiority on land except by virtue of an assured superiority at sea. She could not even defend her two land frontiers in India and in North

America unless the seas were open to the transport of troops and supplies. Of the ships which frequent the ocean highways of the world's commerce some 50 per cent. carry the British flag. To deny them the use of those highways would be to dismember the Empire by severing its communications, and, in the words of the late Lord Carnarvon, to reduce this country, in a very short time, to "a pauperized, discontented, overpopulated island in the North Sea." The only way to avert these calamities, calamities so crushing and so universal that even the invasion of these islands could add little to their effect, is to regard the whole extent of the ocean highways—that is, all the navigable seas of the globe—as so much territory to be held and defended, and to be defended with as much preparation, forethought, and tenacity as a Continental Power devotes to the defences of its land frontier.

The thing is impossible, you will perhaps say. That may be, and of course must be if the forces opposed to us are overwhelming and irresistible. But so far as it is impossible and in whatever circumstances it may become impossible the defence of the British Empire is also impossible. In all reasonably probable contingencies of warfare, however, it is not only possible, but imperative. Let us admit at once that if all the great naval Powers of the world were combined against us we should perish. We might hold out for a time, as Denmark held out against Prussia and Austria, but the issue would be certain and inevitable. But the combination of all the great naval Powers of the world against this country is ^{said of the} ~~probable~~ ^{most} probable contingency of warfare. Curran ^{pull out of bed,} ~~unanimous~~ they would have pulled ^{if they had only been} ~~unanimous~~ if they were not unanimous. ^{his safety lay in the fact that they were not unanimous.} We must be either very wicked or very foolish, if not both, if we ever give to all the Powers of the world such simultaneous provocation as would endow them with the unanimity denied to Curran's fleas. The reasonably

probable contingencies of warfare extend only to conflicts with this or that Great Power or with a limited combination of Great Powers. For such contingencies we must be prepared. The higher policy of defence consists in preparing for them adequately, intelligently, and with rational regard to the inexorable conditions of the case.

Now the broad outlines of this policy are clearly set forth in the whole course of our naval history from the battle of Sluys onwards. They have only been obscured and obliterated for a time when the conduct of this or that campaign has been taken out of the hands of the seamen who knew their business and undertaken by politicians who had never mastered the secret of the sea. The campaign of the Armada is perhaps the most famous illustration of this perilous proceeding. It is well known that if the great sea-captains of Elizabeth had had their way they would never have allowed the Armada to quit the shores of Spain. Drake, the greatest of them all, wrote to the Council, "With fifty sail of shipping we shall do more good upon their own coast than a great many more will do here at home; and the sooner we are gone, the better we shall be able to impeach them." Later he wrote to the Queen herself: "These great preparation of the Spaniard may be speedily prevented as much as in your Majesty lieth, by sending your forces to encounter them somewhat far off, and more near their own coasts, which will be the better cheap for your Majesty and people, and much the dearer for the enemy." Later still Howard wrote in exactly the same sense: "The opinion of Sir Francis Drake, Mr. Hawkyns ^{and} others that be men of the ^{best} ^{and} ^{experience} ^{and} ^{concurring} with them in the same, is that the surest way to meet with the Spanish fleet is upon their own coast, or in any harbour of their own, and there to defeat them." This is the true policy of offensive defence displayed in all its fulness. But the Queen and her Council would have none of it. They thought it, as Walsingham wrote to Howard, "not convenient that

your Lordship should go so far to the south as the Isles of Bayona, but to ply up and down in some indifferent place between the coast of Spain and this realm, so that you may be able to answer any attempt that the said fleet shall make against this realm, Ireland, or Scotland." They could not understand, as I have said elsewhere, that if you wish to impeach a hostile fleet with certainty you must go where it is certain to be found, not wait for it to appear in some one or other of half a dozen places where, after all, it may never be found, and where, if it does appear, you may not be at hand to impeach it. Hence Howard was forbidden to go and look for the Spaniard on his own coast, and practically compelled to await his advent in British waters. He triumphed in the end, as we know. But to pursue such a policy in these days would be fatal. It would leave the seas open and the British mercantile flag at the mercy of the enemy. In other words, the policy of passive defence spells disaster.

Thus, after a long circuit, I have come back to the point from which we started. We have now ascertained where the frontiers of the British Empire are. Broadly speaking, they lie on the further side of all the seas frequented by British shipping—that is, of all the navigable seas of the globe; and the critical frontier for the time being is the coast-line of the enemy's territory, because there only can access be gained to his territory by a Power which, like England, must cross the sea before it can fight on land; and there also must the enemy be ^{reached}—to borrow the expressive Elizabethan word ^{or invading} ~~any part~~ the sea for the purpose of assailing British commerce afloat. There are two exceptions to this general definition. The British Empire has two land frontiers, one in India and another in North America, each of which is assailable by a Power having the resources of a great State and a vast territory at its command. But except so far as these two frontiers are

defensible by local forces and local resources, reinforced as far as may be by Imperial forces transported thither or stationed there in anticipation of hostilities, it stands to reason that they are not defensible at all unless the seas are open, because on that condition alone can they derive any further strength or defence from the resources either of this country or of any other part of the Empire. I do not include in the same category our land frontiers in Africa, because they are not, like our frontiers in India and North America, directly assailable by a Power of the first rank. No such Power can assail them seriously without first crossing the sea, and no such Power will or can cross the sea to assail them so long as England commands the sea—that is, so long as her real frontiers, those which lie on the sea itself, are inviolate. Thus all our frontiers, whether on land or on sea, are in the last resort defensible by the power of the sea, and by the power of the sea alone. Two only are assailable by military forces which have not crossed the sea, and even those are defensible only by military forces which have crossed the sea. In point of fact, the power of the sea is never more impressively manifested than when, as it did in South Africa, and as it has done from the first in India, it enables military forces to operate at thousands of miles from their own shores. Every soldier in the British Army is in this sense as real and as essential an instrument of sea power as are the ships of His Majesty's Fleet. He will never be called upon to defend his native soil until our power at sea is overthrown. So long as our power at sea is maintained he may have to defend his country either hemisphere or on either shore.

It may be thought, perhaps, that the defence of so vast a maritime territory as is defined by the further shores of the navigable seas of the globe is beyond the compass of a single naval Power, that the sovereignty of the four seas which our forefathers asserted and maintained is a very different thing from the command of the sea

in general and much easier to maintain. A little consideration will show, however, that this argument is unsound. The sea is all one, as Lord Selborne told the Colonial Conference, and the command of it once established is in large measure independent of the area to be covered. The true measure of the naval strength required to establish an effective command of the sea is determined not so much by the area to be covered as by the naval strength of the enemy to be encountered. In the Crimean War the naval forces of Russia were locked up in Kronstadt and in Sevastopol by the superior naval forces of her adversaries, and the command of the sea enjoyed by England and France in consequence was absolute in all parts of the world, though it was only directly operative in the waters immediately in dispute. No Russian merchant vessel could venture afloat, while the merchant vessels of England and France traversed the seas in all directions as safely as if the whole world had been at peace. I do not know that history affords a more striking illustration of the meaning, extent, and effect of an assured command of the sea. The local command established and maintained at the critical points became by the very nature of the case universal, absolute, and complete in all parts of the sea. By preventing the Russian naval forces from crossing the sea-frontiers as defined above, the English and French fleets made it impossible for Russia to do any harm whatever beyond those frontiers. The maritime commerce of England and France enjoyed complete immunity from attack, their armies were free to move in any direction across the seas without the ^{the unspate their} ~~the unspate their~~ communications, and did move across territory. This was only possible, ^{invasion of the enemy's} ~~invasion of the enemy's~~ it may be said, because the available seaboard of Russia was very limited in extent, and because the naval forces of Russia were completely overmatched by those of England and France. This is true, of course, but it does not vitally affect the argument. The available seaboard of any naval Power

consists mainly of the arsenals and anchorages in which its warships are equipped and sheltered, and of any other ports in which a military expedition may be preparing. Be these few or many, they are known beforehand, and the mobile forces they contain are also approximately known at all times. There is no certain way of preventing these forces from crossing the frontier to be defended except by placing a superior force in a position to impeach them. If this cannot be done there is no command of the sea such as England needs unless her Empire is to be overthrown. But if it can be done her effective command of the sea will be unshaken until each one of her fleets in position has been challenged, defeated, and driven back into port by the fleets of the enemy. That it ought to be done, that it is, indeed, the fixed policy of this country to do it, is made perfectly clear by the famous declaration of the Duke of Devonshire in 1896: "The maintenance of sea-supremacy has been assumed as the basis of the system of Imperial defence against attacks from over the sea. This is the determining factor in fixing the whole defensive policy of the Empire."

Let me here take a homely illustration. If you have a large farm adjacent to a rabbit warren it is certain that your crops will be ravaged by the rabbits unless you can confine them within the limits of their proper territory and keep them off your crops altogether. Where, in that case, would you put the frontier of their territory? Obviously you would put it at the further side of your cultivated fields. Your farmhouse may be a mile away from the warren. But if you stop at home with a gun in your hand—or a whole armoury for that—you will kill very few rabbits, while a great many rabbits will ravage your crops in all directions and will in time eat you out of house and home. But if you surround the warren with a fence which the rabbits cannot pass, your crops will be unmolested, and you may cultivate your fields as freely as if there were no rabbits in the world. Here and there,

perhaps, a hole will be made in the fence and one or two rabbits will get through. But a very modest share of sporting strategy will enable you to dispose of these rare and fugitive marauders. Your terriers will make their life a burden to them, even if your gun does not make an end of them, and at the worst the harm they could do would be little more than trifling. Of course, if you choose to neglect your fence, your crops will be ravaged and your farm ruined. But that is your look-out. You can keep the rabbits out if you choose to take the trouble and pay for a proper fence. Otherwise you must take the consequences. There is no alternative between closing the warren and losing the crops. In like manner there is no alternative between command of the sea and the loss of the Empire.

Of course, as warships are not rabbits, there is always the possibility that the fence may be broken down and the rabbits escape in a body. In that case, to drop the illustration, your sea-frontier is invaded and you must take measures accordingly. This opens out the whole field of naval strategy, and, as I am not writing a treatise on the methods of naval warfare, I must leave it in large measure unexplored. The broad principle was admirably stated by the late Admiral Colomb, and I quote his words with the more satisfaction because they apply sound military analogies to the elucidation of the naval problem. "The British Navy," he says, "like the French or German armies on the defensive, must in the first instance guard the frontier and keep their territory—in this case water and not land—free to lawful passage and barred to ~~invasion~~ ^{invasion} of enemies. Should they fail to keep the and endeavour to beat ^{back} the enemies ^{which have invaded} it over the frontier again. Should they fail in this—as France failed in the last war—the Empire is conquered, even as the French Empire was, notwithstanding that a sea-girt Metz or a water-surrounded Paris of the British Empire should prove so strong in local defence that invest-

ment, and not assault, must be the tactic employed to reduce them." There are thus three possible phases in which the command of the sea may be considered, and no more. First, where it is complete, as it was in the Crimean War. In this case the military forces of the Power which commands the sea are as free to act against any portion of the enemy's seaboard as if an undefended land frontier were alone in question. For, as Raleigh said nearly three hundred years ago, "A strong army in a good fleet which neither foot nor horse is able to follow cannot be denied to land where it list in England, France, or elsewhere, unless it be hindered, encountered, or shuffled together by a fleet of equal or of answerable strength." The second phase is when the command of the sea is disputed, as it was when Villeneuve gave Nelson the slip at Toulon, and making a wide sweep to the westward, sought to join hands with the other French fleets beleaguered in the Atlantic ports. "Falling back within the water-territory," Nelson pursued the absolutely correct strategy. He was not decoyed away, as has too often been represented. His fleet was at all times a far more potent factor in the defence of this country than if it had been guarding these shores. Wherever it went in pursuit of Villeneuve it was where every British fleet ought to be in time of war—namely, in the position most advantageous in the circumstances for bringing its immediate adversary to book. Finding that his frontier had been crossed and that the water-territory he was set to guard had thereby been invaded, Nelson pursued the single and supreme purpose of "endeavouring to beat the enemies which had invaded it over the frontier again." He effected that purpose and ~~consequently~~ ^{consequently} ~~the third and last phase is where the command of the sea~~ ^{is overthrown.} Happily we have no experience in this country of this last phase later than the Norman Conquest. If we ever do experience it again Admiral Colomb has pithily told us what it means—"The Empire is conquered." Or, in the famous words of the three admirals

who reported on the naval manœuvres of 1888: "England ranks among the great Powers of the world by virtue of the naval position she has acquired in the past. . . . The defeat of her Navy means to her the loss of India and her colonies, and of her place among the nations. . . . Under the conditions in which it would be possible for a great Power successfully to invade England, nothing could avail her, as, the command of the sea once being lost, it would not require the landing of a single man on her shores to bring her to an ignominious capitulation, for by her Navy she must stand or fall."

We thus see how pregnant and profound is Napoleon's maxim—that war is an affair of positions—when applied to naval warfare. The proper position for the fleets of England in any possible war with a naval Power capable of coping with her on the seas is in front of the ports and arsenals of the enemy. If that position cannot be maintained the war enters at once on a new phase—that of a disputed command of the sea, wherein the chosen frontier is crossed and the water-territory is invaded, but it remains essentially an affair of positions. It would carry me too far to develop this proposition in detail, and it is the less necessary to do so because the whole subject has quite lately been treated in masterly fashion by Captain Mahan, whose volume, entitled *Retrospect and Prospect*, contains one of his best papers, "Considerations Governing the Disposition of Navies." It must suffice to have directed your attention to this most authoritative exposition of the subject. I will only add a single remark. The occupation of positions in any given war is no matter of arbitrary choice. Dispositions in relation to the position are determined by the fact that they must at the outset be on the sea-frontier of the enemy. If, notwithstanding, the enemy succeeds in crossing the frontier, new positions will have to be occupied, but they will still be determined by considerations, geo-

graphical in the main, which leave to neither belligerent very much room for choice. These propositions, at once elementary and fundamental, are too often ignored by heedless and inconsequent thinkers. How often do we hear that we cannot trust to naval defence for a country which can only be reached across the sea, because, forsooth, the Navy, however strong, may chance to be in the wrong place at the critical moment? Why should it be in the wrong place when its one business and duty is to be in the right place? Do you ever plan military campaigns on this preposterous assumption? Was Napoleon III. likely to mass his armies in the Pyrenees when the German armies were advancing towards his eastern frontier? When an enemy is seeking to invade this country, are our fleets at all likely to be found anywhere but where they can best impeach the enterprise? "I will conquer India on the banks of the Vistula," said Napoleon. It was a vain boast. It is no vain boast, but a plain statement of inexorable strategic fact, that England can best defend all parts of her Empire on the sea-frontier of the enemy who seeks to attack them.

You will perhaps ask me at this point—perhaps, indeed, you have been asking all along—where in all this does the Army come in? I can only answer that in this, the preliminary defensive stage—defensive in purpose, but offensive in method—of a great war to be waged across the seas, the Army does not, and cannot, come in at all. It cannot come in for the defence of these islands, because so long as the sea-frontier is inviolate, and, indeed, until the naval forces entrusted with its occupation and defence are not only driven back, but finally ousted ~~from~~ the intervening water-territory ~~and~~ the seas to ~~reach~~ reach them. ^{Nor} territory of the enemy, or any of his outlying possessions, until the command thereof by the British naval forces is so firmly established that its transit and communications are secure from all serious attack. These are the only conditions in which the Army can come in for the defence

of an Empire which can only be defended by crossing the sea, and they are also the conditions in which it always has come in throughout the whole course of its history. This is why no British regiment bears on its colours the record of any military achievement on its native soil, while all are justly proud to associate their glories with nearly every land but their own. If this is not a record and a function with which the Army can be content I can assign it no other, nor as regards function can I think of a higher one to assign it. I cannot even think of the Army as defending these islands, because before I can do so I must think of the Empire as destroyed. I can only think of the Army as doing what it always has done, training itself at home for faithful service abroad, garrisoning the Empire's outposts in all parts of the world, occupying in far-flung échelons the long lines of communication which lead to the confines of the Empire—and lead also in time of war to weak points in an enemy's armour—ready at all times to move in any direction at the call of duty and the nation's needs. But when I think of the Army as doing all this I must also think of the Navy as alone enabling it to do all this. The functions of the two arms, the naval and the military, are not to be enclosed in separate watertight compartments with no communication between them. They are correlative and inseparable. The Army must not attempt to do what the Navy alone can do—namely, keep the invader at bay; the Navy must not attempt to do what the Army alone can do—namely, attack the enemy wherever he is assailable on land. If the Navy relieves the Army of the duty of defending these islands, it also ~~imposes on~~ ^{relieves} the Army the duty, and provides it with the services are required. Fifty years ~~ago~~ ^{ago} the seas wherever its policy of defence was little understood and less appreciated, a special military force was organized for the defence of this country against the invader. Fifty years ago I was a member of that force myself, and I shared the

ideas which inspired its formation. Those ideas were largely false, and if fortune had so willed it, they might have been fatal to the Empire. But patriotism is justified of all her children. I have the utmost respect for the Volunteers, and their successors of the Territorial Force, as a valuable auxiliary and reserve—never more valuable than in these days—for a mobile Army, for an Army which so long as the Empire endures will always be, not a forlorn hope for the defence of these shores, but the offensive and ubiquitous weapon of a sea-supremacy co-extensive with the Empire ; and I congratulate the sons and the grandsons of my comrades-in-arms of 1859 that the facts of war have revealed to them what was hidden from us by the fallacies of peace, and that the only foe they have ever met in the field was encountered at a distance of 6,000 miles from the shores they were enrolled to defend.

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