

# ALFRED THAYER MAHAN

TYPES OF NAVAL  
OFFICERS, DRAWN FROM  
THE HISTORY OF THE  
BRITISH NAVY

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**Drawn from the History**  
**of the British Navy**

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# Содержание

PREFACE	4
INTRODUCTORY	15
HAWKE	83
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	113

# **A. T. Mahan**

## **Types of Naval Officers, Drawn from the History of the British Navy**

### **PREFACE**

Although the distinguished seamen, whose lives and professional characteristics it is the object of this work to present in brief summary, belonged to a service now foreign to that of the United States, they have numerous and varied points of contact with America; most of them very close, and in some instances of marked historical interest. The older men, indeed, were during much of their careers our fellow countrymen in the colonial period, and fought, some side by side with our own people in this new world, others in distant scenes of the widespread strife that characterized the middle of the eighteenth century, the beginnings of "world politics;" when, in a quarrel purely European in its origin, "black men," to use Macaulay's words, "fought on the coast of Coromandel, and red men scalped each other by the great lakes of North America." All, without exception, were actors in the prolonged conflict that began

in 1739 concerning the right of the ships of Great Britain and her colonies to frequent the seas bordering the American dominions of Spain; a conflict which, by gradual expansion, drew in the continent of Europe, from Russia to France, spread thence to the French possessions in India and North America, involved Spanish Havana in the western hemisphere and Manila in the eastern, and finally entailed the expulsion of France from our continent. Thence, by inevitable sequence, issued the independence of the United States. The contest, thus completed, covered forty-three years.

The four seniors of our series, Hawke, Rodney, Howe, and Jervis, witnessed the whole of this momentous period, and served conspicuously, some more, some less, according to their age and rank, during its various stages. Hawke, indeed, was at the time of the American Revolution too old to go to sea, but he did not die until October 16, 1781, three days before the surrender of Cornwallis at Yorktown, which is commonly accepted as the closing incident of our struggle for independence. On the other hand, the two younger men, Saumarez and Pellew, though they had entered the navy before the American Revolution, saw in it the beginnings of an active service which lasted to the end of the Napoleonic wars, the most continuous and gigantic strife of modern times. It was as the enemies of our cause that they first saw gunpowder burned in anger.

Nor was it only amid the commonplaces of naval warfare that they then gained their early experiences in America. Pellew in

1776, on Lake Champlain, bore a brilliant part in one of the most decisive—though among the least noted—campaigns of the Revolutionary contest; and a year later, as leader of a small contingent of seamen, he shared the fate of Burgoyne's army at Saratoga. In 1776 also, Saumarez had his part in an engagement which ranks among the bloodiest recorded between ships and forts, being on board the British flag-ship Bristol at the attack upon Fort Moultrie, the naval analogue of Bunker Hill; for, in the one of these actions as in the other, the great military lesson was the resistant power against frontal attack of resolute marksmen, though untrained to war, when fighting behind entrenchments,—a teaching renewed at New Orleans, and emphasized in the recent South African War. The well-earned honors of the comparatively raw colonials received generous recognition at the time from their opponents, even in the midst of the bitterness proverbially attendant upon family quarrels; but it is only just to allow that their endurance found its counterpart in the resolute and persistent valor of the assailants. In these two battles, with which the War of Independence may be said fairly to have begun, by land and by water, in the far North and in the far South, the men of the same stock, whose ancestors there met face to face as foes, have now in peace a common heritage of glory. If little of bitterness remains in the recollections which those who are now fellow-citizens retain of the struggle between the North and the South, within the American Republic, we of two different nations, who yet share a common tongue and a common tradition

of liberty and law, may well forget the wrongs of the earlier strife, and look only to the common steadfast courage with which each side then bore its share in a civil conflict.

The professional lives of these men, therefore, touch history in many points; not merely history generally, but American history specifically. Nor is this contact professional only, devoid of personal tinge. Hawke was closely connected by blood with the Maryland family of Bladen; that having been his mother's maiden name, and Governor Bladen of the then colony being his first cousin. Very much of his early life was spent upon the American Station, largely in Boston. But those were the days of Walpole's peace policy; and when the maritime war, which the national outcry at last compelled, attained large dimensions, Hawke's already demonstrated eminence as a naval leader naturally led to his employment in European waters, where the more immediate dangers, if not the greatest interests, of Great Britain were then felt to be. The universal character, as well as the decisive issues of the opening struggle were as yet but dimly foreseen. Rodney also had family ties with America, though somewhat more remote. Cæsar Rodney, a signer of the Declaration of Independence from Delaware, was of the same stock; their great-grandfathers were brothers. It was from the marriage of his ancestor with the daughter of a Sir Thomas Cæsar that the American Rodney derived his otherwise singular name.

Howe, as far as known, had no relations on this side of the water; but his elder brother, whom he succeeded in the title, was

of all British officers the one who most won from the colonial troops with whom he was associated a personal affection, the memory of which has been transmitted to us; while the admiral's own kindly attitude towards the colonists, and his intimacy with Franklin, no less than his professional ability, led to his being selected for the North American command at the time when the home country had not yet lost all hope of a peaceable solution of difficulties. To this the Howe tradition was doubtless expected to contribute. Jervis, a man considerably younger than the other three, by the accidents of his career came little into touch with either the colonies or the colonists, whether before or during the Revolutionary epoch; yet even he, by his intimate friendship with Wolfe, and intercourse with his last days, is brought into close relation with an event and a name indelibly associated with one of the great landmarks—crises—in the history of the American Continent. Although the issue of the strife depended, doubtless, upon deeper and more far-reaching considerations, it is not too much to say that in the heights of Quebec, and in the name of Wolfe, is signalized the downfall of the French power in America. There was prefigured the ultimate predominance of the traditions of the English-speaking races throughout this continent, which in our own momentous period stands mediator between the two ancient and contrasted civilizations of Europe and Asia, that so long moved apart, but are now brought into close, if not threatening, contact.

Interesting, however, as are the historical and social

environments in which their personalities played their part, it is as individual men, and as conspicuous exemplars—types—of the varied characteristics which go to the completeness of an adequate naval organization, that they are here brought forward. Like other professions,—and especially like its sister service, the Army,—the Navy tends to, and for efficiency requires, specialization. Specialization, in turn, results most satisfactorily from the free play of natural aptitudes; for aptitudes, when strongly developed, find expression in inclination, and readily seek their proper function in the body organic to which they belong. Each of these distinguished officers, from this point of view, does not stand for himself alone, but is an eminent exponent of a class; while the class itself forms a member of a body which has many organs, no one of which is independent of the other, but all contributive to the body's welfare. Hence, while the effort has been made to present each in his full individuality, with copious recourse to anecdote and illustrative incident as far as available, both as a matter of general interest and for accurate portrayal, special care has been added to bring out occurrences and actions which convey the impression of that natural character which led the man to take the place he did in the naval body, to develop the professional function with which he is more particularly identified; for personality underlies official character.

In this sense of the word, types are permanent; for such are not the exclusive possession of any age or of any service, but are

found and are essential in every period and to every nation. Their functions are part of the bed-rock of naval organization and of naval strategy, throughout all time; and the particular instances here selected owe their special cogency mainly to the fact that they are drawn from a naval era, 1739-1815, of exceptional activity and brilliancy.

There is, however, another sense in which an officer, or a man, may be accurately called a type; a sense no less significant, but of more limited and transient application. The tendency of a period,—especially when one of marked transition,—its activities and its results, not infrequently find expression in one or more historical characters. Such types may perhaps more accurately be called personifications; the man or men embodying, and in action realizing, ideas and processes of thought, the progress of which is at the time united, but is afterwards recognized as a general characteristic of the period. Between the beginning and the end a great change is found to have been effected, which naturally and conveniently is associated with the names of the most conspicuous actors; although they are not the sole agents, but simply the most eminent.

It is in this sense more particularly that Hawke and Rodney are presented as types. It might even be said that they complement each other and constitute together a single type; for, while both were men of unusually strong personality, private as well as professional, and with very marked traits of character, their great relation to naval advance is that of men who by natural

faculty detect and seize upon incipient ideas, for which the time is ripe, and upon the practical realization of which the healthful development of the profession depends. With these two, and with them not so much contemporaneously as in close historical sequence, is associated the distinctive evolution of naval warfare in the eighteenth century; in their combined names is summed up the improvement of system to which Nelson and his contemporaries fell heirs, and to which Nelson, under the peculiar and exceptional circumstances which made his opportunity, gave an extension that immortalized him. Of Hawke and Rodney, therefore, it may be said that they are in their profession types of that element of change, in virtue of which the profession grows; whereas the other four, eminent as they were, exemplify rather the conservative forces, the permanent features, in the strength of which it exists, and in the absence of any one of which it droops or succumbs. It does not, however, follow that the one of these great men is the simple continuator of the other's work; rather it is true that each contributed, in due succession of orderly development, the factor of progress which his day demanded, and his personality embodied.

It was not in the forecast of the writer, but in the process of treatment he came to recognize that, like Hawke and Rodney, the four others also by natural characteristics range themselves in pairs,—presenting points of contrast, in deficiencies and in excellencies, which group them together, not by similarity chiefly, but as complementary. Howe and Jervis were both

admirable general officers; but the strength of the one lay in his tactical acquirements, that of the other in strategic insight and breadth of outlook. The one was easy-going and indulgent as a superior; the other conspicuous for severity, and for the searchingness with which he carried the exactions of discipline into the minute details of daily naval life. Saumarez and Pellew, less fortunate, did not reach high command until the great days of naval warfare in their period had yielded to the comparatively uneventful occupation of girdling the enemy's coast with a system of blockades, aimed primarily at the restriction of his commerce, and incidentally at the repression of his navy, which made no effort to take the sea on a large scale. Under these circumstances the functions of an admiral were mainly administrative; and if Saumarez and Pellew possessed eminent capacity as general officers on the battle-field, they had not opportunity to prove it. The distinction of their careers coincides with their tenure of subordinate positions in the organisms of great fleets. With this in common, and differentiating them from Howe and Jervis, the points of contrast are marked. Saumarez preferred the ship-of-the-line, Pellew the frigate. The choice of the one led to the duties of a division commander, that of the other to the comparative independence of detached service, of the partisan officer. In the one, love of the military side of his calling predominated; the other was, before all, the seaman. The union of the two perfects professional character.

The question may naturally be asked,—Why, among types of

naval officers, is there no mention, other than casual, of the name of Nelson? The answer is simple. Among general officers, land and sea, the group to which Nelson belongs defies exposition by a type, both because it is small in aggregate numbers, and because the peculiar eminence of the several members,—the eminence of genius,—so differentiates each from his fellows that no one among them can be said to represent the others. Each, in the supremacy of his achievement, stands alone,—alone, not only regarded as towering above a brilliant surrounding of distinguished followers, but alone even as contrasted with the other great ones who in their own day had a like supremacy. Such do not in fact form a class, because, though a certain community of ideas and principles may be traced in their actions, their personalities and methods bear each the stamp of originality in performance; and where originality is found, classification ceases to apply. There is a company, it may be, but not a class.

The last four biographies first appeared as contributions to the "Atlantic Monthly," in 1893 and 1894. I desire to return to the proprietors my thanks for their permission to republish. The original treatment has been here considerably modified, as well as enlarged. I am also under special obligation to Mr. Fleetwood Hugo Pellew, who gave me the photograph of Lord Exmouth, with permission also to reproduce it. It represents that great officer at the age most characteristic of his particular professional distinction, as by me understood.

*A. T. MAHAN.*

*October, 1901.*

# INTRODUCTORY

## Naval Warfare at the Beginning of the Eighteenth Century

The recent close of the nineteenth century has familiarized us with the thought that such an epoch tends naturally to provoke an estimate of the advance made in the various spheres of human activity during the period which it terminates. Such a reckoning, however, is not a mere matter of more and less, of comparison between the beginning and the end, regardless of intermediate circumstances. The question involved is one of an historical process, of cause and effect; of an evolution, probably marked, as such series of events commonly are, by certain salient incidents, the way-marks of progress which show the road traversed and the succession of stages through which the past has become the present. Frequently, also, such development associates itself not only with conspicuous events, but with the names of great men, to whom, either by originality of genius or by favoring opportunity, it has fallen to illustrate in action the changes which have a more silent antecedent history in the experience and reflection of mankind.

The development of naval warfare in the eighteenth century,

its advance in spirit and methods, is thus exemplified in certain striking events, and yet more impressively is identified with the great names of Hawke and Rodney. The period of nearly half a generation intervened between their births, but they were contemporaries and actors, though to no large extent associates, during the extensive wars that occupied the middle of the century—the War of the Austrian Succession, 1739-1748, and the Seven Years War, 1756-1763. These two conflicts are practically one; the same characteristic jealousies and motives being common to both, as they were also to the period of nominal peace, but scarcely veiled contention, by which they were separated. The difference of age between the two admirals contributed not only to obviate rivalry, by throwing their distinctive activities into different generations, but had, as it were, the effect of prolonging their influence beyond that possible to a single lifetime, thus constituting it into a continuous and fruitful development.

They were both successful men, in the ordinary acceptation of the word success. They were great, not only in professional character, but in the results which do not always attend professional desert; they were great in achievement. Each name is indissolubly linked with a brilliant victory, as well as with other less known but equally meritorious actions; in all of which the personal factor of the principal agent, the distinctive qualities of the commander-in-chief, powerfully contributed and were conspicuously illustrated. These were, so to say, the examples, that enforced upon the men of their day the professional ideas

by which the two admirals were themselves dominated, and upon which was forming a school, with professional standards of action and achievement destined to produce great effects.

Yet, while this is so, and while such emphatic demonstrations by deeds undoubtedly does more than any other teaching to influence contemporaries, and so to promote professional development, it is probably true that, as a matter of historical illustration, the advance of the eighteenth century in naval warfare is more clearly shown by two great failures, for neither of which were these officers responsible, and in one only of which in fact did either appear, even in a subordinate capacity. The now nearly forgotten miscarriage of Admiral Mathews off Toulon, in 1744, and the miserable incompetency of Byng, at Minorca, in 1756, remembered chiefly because of the consequent execution of the admiral, serve at least, historically, to mark the low extreme to which had then sunk professional theory and practice—for both were there involved. It is, however, not only as a point of departure from which to estimate progress that these battles—if they deserve the name—are historically useful. Considered as the plane to which exertion, once well directed and virile, had gradually declined through the prevalence of false ideals, they link the seventeenth century to the eighteenth, even as the thought and action—the theory and practice—of Hawke and Rodney uplifted the navy from the inefficiency of Mathews and Byng to the crowning glories of the Nile and Trafalgar, with which the nineteenth century opened. It is thus, as the

very bottom of the wave, that those singular and signal failures have their own distinctive significance in the undulations of the onward movement. On the one hand they are not unaccountable, as though they, any more than the Nile and Trafalgar, were without antecedent of cause; and on the other they serve, as a background at least, to bring out the figures of the two admirals now before us, and to define their true historical import, as agents and as exponents, in the changes of their day.

It is, therefore, important to the comprehension of the changes effected in that period of transition, for which Hawke and Rodney stand, to recognize the distinctive lesson of each of these two abortive actions, which together may be said to fix the zero of the scale by which the progress of the eighteenth century is denoted. They have a relation to the past as well as to the future, standing far below the level of the one and of the other, through causes that can be assigned. Naval warfare in the past, in its origin and through long ages, had been waged with vessels moved by oars, which consequently, when conditions permitted engaging at all, could be handled with a scope and freedom not securable with the uncertain factor of the wind. The motive power of the sea, therefore, then resembled essentially that of the land,—being human muscle and staying power, in the legs on shore and in the arms at sea. Hence, movements by masses, by squadrons, and in any desired direction corresponding to a fixed plan, in order to concentrate, or to outflank,—all these could be attempted with a probability of success not predicable of the

sailing ship. Nelson's remarkable order at Trafalgar, which may almost be said to have closed and sealed the record of the sail era, began by assuming the extreme improbability of being able at any given moment to move forty ships of his day in a fixed order upon an assigned plan. The galley admiral therefore wielded a weapon far more flexible and reliable, within the much narrower range of its activities, than his successor in the days of sail; and engagements between fleets of galleys accordingly reflected this condition, being marked not only by greater carnage, but by tactical combinations and audacity of execution, to which the sailing ship did not so readily lend itself.

When the field of naval warfare became extended beyond the Mediterranean,—for long centuries its principal scene,—the galley no longer met the more exacting nautical conditions; and the introduction of cannon, involving new problems of tactics and ship-building, accelerated its disappearance. The traditions of galley-fighting, however, remained, and were reinforced by the habits of land fighting,—the same men in fact commanding armies on shore and fleets at sea. In short, a period of transition ensued, marked, as such in their beginnings are apt to be, by an evident lack of clearness in men's appreciation of conditions, and of the path of development, with a consequent confusion of outline in their practice. It is not always easy to understand either what was done, or what was meant to be done, during that early sail era; but two things appear quite certainly. There is still shown the vehemence and determination of action which characterized

galley fighting, visible constantly in the fierce effort to grapple the enemy, to break his ranks, to confuse and crush him; and further there is clear indication of tactical plan on the grand scale, broad in outline and combination, involving different—but not independent—action by the various great divisions of the fleet, each of which, in plan at least, has its own part, subordinate but contributory to the general whole.

The results, though not unimportant, were not satisfactory, for men were compelled to see that from various causes the huge numbers brought upon the field lapsed into confusion, and that battle, however well planned in large outline, resolved itself into a mere mass of warring units incoherently struggling one with another. There was lack of proportion between effort exerted and effect achieved. A period of systematization and organization set in. Unwieldy numbers were reduced to more manageable dimensions by excluding ships whose size and strength did not add to the efficiency of the order of battle; the powers and limitations of those which remained were studied, and certain simple tactical dispositions, fitted to particular emergencies, were recognized and adopted,—all tending to impart unity of movement and action, and to keep the whole in regulated order under the hand of the commander-in-chief, free from confusion.

To this point there was improvement; but reaction, as often, went too far. The change in accepted ideas is emphatically shown by a comparison of the Fighting Instructions of 1740 and 1756, when the crystallization of the system was complete but

disintegration had not yet begun, with those issued in 1665 by the Duke of York, afterwards James II., at the beginning of the second of the three Anglo-Dutch Wars. His in turn are directly deducible from others framed shortly after the first war, in 1652-1654, when sail tactics had not passed the stage of infancy, and were still strongly affected by the galley tradition. There is here found, on the one hand, the prescription of the line of battle,—a single column of ships formed in each other's wake,—with the provision that if the enemy is to leeward, and awaits attack, the headmost squadron of the British shall steer for the headmost of the enemy's ships. This accords with the general tenor of the later Instructions; but there occurs elsewhere, and previously, the direction that, when the enemy is to windward, if the leading British Squadron finds it can weather any considerable part of them, it is to "tack and stand in, and strive to divide the enemy's body," and that, "being got to windward, is to bear down on those ships to leeward of them," which have thus been cut off.

The thing to be observed here is the separate, but positive, initiative prescribed for a portion of the fleet, with a view to divide the enemy, and then concentrate the whole fleet upon the fraction thus isolated. The British van takes a particular, but not an independent, action; for the other divisions contribute their part to the common purpose. "The middle squadron is to keep her wind, and to observe the motion of the enemy's van, which" [that is, "which" action of the middle squadron] "the last squadron—the rear—is to second; and both of these squadrons

are to do their utmost to assist or relieve the first squadron, that divided the enemy's fleet." Evidently here we have tactical combination in order to decisive action; clearly contemplated also beforehand, not merely by a capable individual general, but by the consensus of professional opinion which such a paper as the Fighting Instructions necessarily reflects. The stamp of the galley period is upon this: strenuous and close battle, the piercing of the enemy's order, the movement of the squadrons differentiated, in order that they may in a real and effective sense *combine*, instead of being merely *distributed*, as they afterwards were by both the letter of the later Instructions and the tradition by which these became encrusted. Nor should there be overlooked, in this connection, the discretion allowed the centre and rear. They are to "keep their wind;" an expression which leaves optional whether to tack, or stand as they are, whether to engage the separated enemies to windward or to leeward, as occasion may offer, in support of the van. The provisions of 1665 afterwards disappear. In 1740, and even as late as 1781, they are traceable only in certain colorless articles, suggestive of the atrophied organs of a body concerning whose past use physiologists may speculate.

As in the restoration of sounder methods, with which we shall be concerned, this degeneration of ideals was a work of time. In June, 1666, the British met with a severe check in the Four Days Battle, in which Monk, a soldier, commanded in chief. This reverse is chiefly to be attributed to antecedent strategic

errors, which made a portion only of the available British force bear the brunt of the first three days; but, among the inevitable criticisms, we find stress laid upon fighting in line as essential to success. This insistence upon the line as an effective instrument proceeded, among others, from Sir William Penn, a seaman, and was at that time in the direction of professional advance. The line had not yet obtained the general professional acceptance needed to establish and utilize its indisputable value. This process was gradual, but when effected it followed the usual laws of human development; from a valuable means, it became in men's estimation an exaggerated necessity. It came to pass in time that the line no longer existed for tactics, but tactics for the line, in which they found their consummation and end.

There intervened, however, a happier period,—one of transition,—and in the third Anglo-Dutch war, 1672-1674, we seem to find a close approach to just proportion between regularity of formation and decisive tactical purpose; in which the principle of the line is recognized and observed, but is utilized by professional audacity for definite and efficient tactical action, aiming at conclusive results. The finest exponent of this, the culminating epoch of naval warfare in the seventeenth century, is the Dutchman Ruyter, who, taken altogether, was the greatest naval seaman of that era, which may be roughly identified with the reign of Charles II. After that, naval warfare was virtually suspended for fifteen years, and when resumed in the last decade of the century, the traces of incipient degeneracy

can already be noted amid much brilliant performance. From that time completeness of military achievement became in men's minds less of an object than accurate observance of rule, and in practice the defensive consideration of avoiding disaster began to preponderate over offensive effort for the destruction of the enemy.

In the development of tactical science, the French had played a leading part, as they usually have where reflective mental processes and formal evolution of ideas are concerned. Among admirals, the greatest name of this later period is the French Tourville, a master of the science of his profession, and gifted with a personal courage of the heroic type; while the leading exponent of Tourville's ideas, as well as historian of his achievements, was the French priest Paul Hoste,—chaplain to his fleet, and the father of the systematic treatment of naval evolutions. But with Tourville's name is associated not only a high level of professional management, but a caution in professional action not far removed from timidity, so that an impatient Minister of Marine of his day and nation styled him "poltroon in head, though not in heart." His powers were displayed in the preservation and orderly movement of his fleet; in baffling, by sheer skill, and during long periods, the efforts of the enemy to bring him to action; in skilful disposition, when he purposely accepted battle under disadvantage; but under most favorable opportunities he failed in measures of energy, and, after achieving partial success, superfluous care of his own

command prevented his blows from being driven home.

Tourville, though a brilliant seaman, thus not only typified an era of transition, with which he was contemporary, but foreshadowed the period of merely formal naval warfare, precise, methodical, and unenterprising, emasculated of military virility, although not of mere animal courage. He left to his successors the legacy of a great name, but also unfortunately that of a defective professional tradition. The splendid days of the French Navy under Louis XIV. passed away with him,—he died in 1701; but during the long period of naval lethargy on the part of the state, which followed, the French naval officers, as a class, never wholly lost sight of professional ideals. They proved themselves, on the rare occasions that offered, before 1715 and during the wars of Hawke and Rodney, not only gallant seamen after the pattern of Tourville, but also exceedingly capable tacticians, upon a system good as far as it went, but defective on Tourville's express lines, in aiming rather at exact dispositions and defensive security than at the thorough-going initiative and persistence which confounds and destroys the enemy. "War," to use Napoleon's phrase, "was to be waged without running risks." The sword was drawn, but the scabbard was kept ever open for its retreat.

The English, in the period of reaction which succeeded the Dutch wars, produced their own caricature of systematized tactics. Even under its influence, up to 1715, it is only just to say they did not construe naval skill to mean anxious care to keep one's own ships intact. Rooke, off Malaga, in 1704, illustrated

professional fearlessness of consequences as conspicuously as he had shown personal daring in the boat attack at La Hougue; but his plans of battle exemplified the particularly British form of inefficient naval action. There was no great difference in aggregate force between the French fleet and that of the combined Anglo-Dutch under his orders. The former, drawing up in the accustomed line of battle, ship following ship in a single column, awaited attack. Rooke, having the advantage of the wind, and therefore the power of engaging at will, formed his command in a similar and parallel line a few miles off, and thus all stood down together, the ships maintaining their line parallel to that of the enemy, and coming into action at practically the same moment, van to van, centre to centre, rear to rear. This ignored wholly the essential maxim of all intelligent warfare, which is so to engage as markedly to outnumber the enemy at a point of main collision. If he be broken there, before the remainder of his force come up, the chances all are that a decisive superiority will be established by this alone, not to mention the moral effect of partial defeat and disorder. Instead of this, the impact at Malaga was so distributed as to produce a substantial equality from one end to the other of the opposing fronts. The French, indeed, by strengthening their centre relatively to the van and rear, to some extent modified this condition in the particular instance; but the fact does not seem to have induced any alteration in Rooke's dispositions. Barring mere accident, nothing conclusive can issue from such arrangements. The result

accordingly was a drawn battle, although Rooke says that the fight, which was maintained on both sides "with great fury for three hours, ... was the sharpest day's service that I ever saw;" and he had seen much,—Beachy Head, La Hougue, Vigo Bay, not to mention his own great achievement in the capture of Gibraltar.

This method of attack remained the ideal—if such a word is not a misnomer in such a case—of the British Navy, not merely as a matter of irreflective professional acceptance, but laid down in the official "Fighting Instructions." It cannot be said that these err on the side of lucidity; but their meaning to contemporaries in this particular respect is ascertained, not only by fair inference from their contents, but by the practical commentary of numerous actions under commonplace commanders-in-chief. It further received authoritative formulation in the specific finding of the Court-Martial upon Admiral Byng, which was signed by thirteen experienced officers. "Admiral Byng should have caused his ships to tack together, and should immediately have borne down upon the enemy; his van steering for the enemy's van, his rear for its rear, each ship making for the one opposite to her in the enemy's line, under such sail as would have enabled the worst sailer to preserve her station in the line of battle." Each phrase of this opinion is a reflection of an article in the Instructions. The line of battle was the naval fetich of the day; and, be it remarked, it was the more dangerous because in itself an admirable and necessary instrument, constructed on principles

essentially accurate. A standard wholly false may have its error demonstrated with comparative ease; but no servitude is more hopeless than that of unintelligent submission to an idea formally correct, yet incomplete. It has all the vicious misleading of a half-truth unqualified by appreciation of modifying conditions, and so seamen who disdained theories, and hugged the belief in themselves as "practical," became *doctrinaires* in the worst sense.

It would seem, however, that a necessary antecedent to deliverance from a false conception,—as from any injurious condition,—is a practical illustration of its fallacy. Working consequences must receive demonstration, concrete in some striking disastrous event, before improvement is undertaken. Such experience is painful to undergo; but with most men, even in their private capacity, and in nearly all governmental action where mere public interests are at stake, remedy is rarely sought until suffering is not only felt, but signaled in a conspicuous incident. It is needless to say that the military professions in peace times are peculiarly liable to this apathy; like some sleepers, they can be awakened only by shaking. For them, war alone can subject accepted ideas to the extreme test of practice. It is doubtless perfectly true that acquaintance with military and naval history, mastery of their teachings, will go far to anticipate the penalty attaching to truth's last argument—chastisement; but imagination is fondly impatient of warning by the past, and easily avails itself of fancied or superficial differences in contemporary conditions, to justify measures which ignore, or even directly

contravene, ascertained and fundamental principles of universal application.

Even immediate practical experience is misinterpreted when incidents are thus viewed through the medium of a precedent bias. The Transvaal War, for instance, has afforded some striking lessons of needed modifications, consequent upon particular local factors, or upon developments in the material of war; but does any thoughtful military man doubt that imagination has been actively at work, exaggerating or distorting, hastily waiving aside permanent truth in favor of temporary prepossessions or accidental circumstance? It is at least equally likely that the naval world at the present time is hugging some fond delusions in the excessive size and speed to which battle-ships are tending, and in the disproportionate weight assigned to the defensive as compared to the offensive factors in a given aggregate tonnage. Imagination, theory, *a priori* reasoning, is here at variance with rational historical precedent, which has established the necessity of numbers as well as of individual power in battle-ships, and demonstrated the superiority of offensive over defensive strength in military systems. These—and other—counterbalancing considerations have in past wars enforced the adoption of a medium homogeneous type, as conducive both to adequate numbers,—which permit the division of the fleet when required for strategic or tactical purposes,—and also directly to offensive fleet strength by the greater facility of manoeuvring possessed by such vessels; for the strength of a fleet

lies not chiefly in the single units, but in their mutual support in elastic and rapid movement. Well tested precedent—experience—has here gone to the wall in favor of an untried forecast of supposed fundamental change in conditions. But experience is uncommonly disagreeable when she revenges herself after her own fashion.

The British Navy of the eighteenth century in this way received an unpleasant proof of the faultiness of its then accepted conclusions, in the miscarriages of Mathews off Toulon, in 1744, and of Byng off Minorca, in 1756. So fixed were men's habits of thought that the lessons were not at once understood. As evidenced by the distribution of censure, the results were attributed by contemporary judges to particular incidents of each battle, not to the erroneous underlying general plans, contravening all sound military precedent, which from the first made success improbable, indeed impossible, except by an inefficiency of the enemy which was not to be presumed. These battles therefore are important, militarily, in a sense not at all dependent upon their consequences, which were ephemeral. They are significant as extreme illustrations of incompetent action, deriving from faulty traditions; and they have the further value of showing the starting point, the zero of the scale, from which the progress of the century is to be measured. In describing them, therefore, attention will be given chiefly to those circumstances which exhibit the shackles under which fleet movements then labored, not only from the difficulties inherent

to the sea and sailing ships, but from the ideas and methods of the times. Those incidents also will be selected which show how false standards affected particular individuals, according to their personal characteristics.

In Admiral Mathews' action, in February, 1744, an allied fleet composed of sixteen French ships-of-the-line and twelve Spanish lay in Toulon, waiting to sail for a Spanish port. The British, in force numerically equal, were at anchor under the Hyères Islands, a few miles to the eastward. They got underway when the allied movement began on February 20th; but anchored again for the night, because the enemy that day came no farther than the outer road of Toulon. The next morning the French and Spaniards put to sea with a wind at first westerly, and stretched to the southward in long, single column, the sixteen French leading. At 10 A.M. the British followed, Vice-Admiral Lestock's division taking the van; but the wind, shifting to east, threw the fleet on the port tack, on which the rear under Rear-Admiral Rowley had to lead. It became necessary, therefore, for this division and the centre to pass Lestock, which took some time with the light airs prevailing. Two or three manoeuvres succeeded, with the object of forming the fighting order, a column similar and parallel to that of the enemy, and to get closer to him. When night fell a signal was still flying for the line abreast, by which, if completed, the ships would be ranged on a line parallel to the allies, and heading towards them; consequently abreast of each other. It would then need only a change of course

to place them in column, sides to the enemy; which, as before said, was the fighting order—the "line of battle."

The line abreast, however, was not fully formed at dark. Therefore the admiral, in order to hasten its completion, soon afterwards made a night signal, with lanterns, for the fleet to bring-to,—that is, bring their sides to the wind, and stop. He intended thereby that the ships already in station should stand still, while the others were gaining their places, all which is a case of simple evolution, by land as by sea. It was contended by the admiral that Vice-Admiral Lestock's division was then too far to the right and rear, and hence too distant from the enemy, and that it was his duty first to get into his station and then to bring-to. To this the vice-admiral on his trial replied, first, that he was not out of his station; and, second, that if he were, the later signal, to bring-to, suspended the earlier, to form line abreast, and that it was therefore his business, without any discretion, to stop where he was. Concerning the first plea, a number of witnesses, very respectable in point of rank and opportunity for seeing, testified that the vice-admiral did bring-to three or four miles to the right and rear of his place in the line abreast, reckoning his station from the admiral's ship; yet, as the Court peremptorily rejected their evidence, it is probably proper to accept the contemporary decision as to this matter of fact.

But as regards the second plea, being a matter of military correctness, a difference of opinion is allowable. The Court adopted as its own the argument of the vice-admiral. Without

entering here into a technical discussion, the Court's ruling, briefly stated, was that the second signal superseded the first, so that, if the vice-admiral was in the wrong place, it was not his duty to get into the right before stopping; and that this was doubly the case because an article of the Night Signals (7) prescribed that, under the conditions of the alleged offence, "a fleet sailing before the wind, or nearly so, if the admiral made the signal for the fleet to bring-to, the windward ships should bring-to first." Therefore, if Lestock was to windward, as the charge read, it was his duty to bring-to first and at once. It is evident, however, that even the Sailing Instructions, cast-iron as they were, contemplated a fleet in order, not one in process of forming order; and that to bring-to helter-skelter, regardless of order, was to obey the letter rather than the spirit. Muddle-headed as Mathews seems to have been, what he was trying to do was clear enough; and the duty of a subordinate was to carry out his evident aim. An order does not necessarily supersede its predecessor, unless the two are incompatible. The whole incident, from Lestock's act to the Court's finding, is instructive as showing the slavish submission to the letter of the Instructions; a submission traceable not to the law merely, but to the added tradition that had then fast hold of men's minds. It is most interesting to note that the unfortunate Byng was one of the signers of this opinion, as he was also one of the judges that sentenced Mathews to be dismissed from the navy, as responsible for the general failure.

During the night of the 21st the allies, who had stopped after dark, appear again to have made sail. Consequently, when day broke, the British found themselves some distance astern and to windward—northeast; the wind continuing easterly. Their line, indifferently well formed in van and centre, stretched over a length of nine miles through the straggling of the rear. Lestock's ship was six miles from that of Mathews, whereas it should not have been more than two and a half, at most, in ordinary sailing; for battle, the Instructions allowed little over a half-mile. Accepting the Court's finding that he was in position at dark, this distance can only be attributed, as Lestock argued and the Court admitted, to a current—that most convenient of scape-goats in navigation. The allies, too, had a lagging rear body, five Spanish ships being quite a distance astern; but from van to rear they extended but six miles, against the British nine. It was the distance of the British rear, not straggling in van or centre, that constituted this disadvantage.

Mathews wished to wait till Lestock reached his place, but the allies were receding all the time; and, though their pace was slackened to enable the five sternmost Spaniards to come up, the space between the fleets was increasing. It was the duty of the British admiral to force an action, on general principles; but in addition he believed that the French intended to push for Gibraltar, enter the Atlantic, and join their Brest fleet, in order to cover an invasion of England by an army reported to be assembling at Dunkirk. Clearly, therefore, something must

be done; yet to enter into a general engagement with near a third of his command out of immediate supporting distance was contrary to the accepted principles of the day. The fleet was not extended with that of the enemy, by which is meant that the respective vans, centres, and rears were not opposed; the British van being only abreast of the allied centre, their centre of the allied rear, Lestock tailing away astern and to windward, while the dozen leading French were some distance ahead of both bodies. Now the Fighting Instructions required that, "If the admiral and his fleet have the wind of the enemy, and they have stretched themselves in a line of battle, the van of the admiral's fleet is to steer with the van of the enemies, and *there* to engage them." There was no alternative course laid down; just as there was no punishment alternative to death in the Article of War under which Byng was shot.

Yet the indications all were that to wait for this most formal and pedantic disposition, which ignored every principle of warfare, would be to throw away the chance of battle. The French, fresh from port and clean-bottomed, out-sailed the bulk of the British, as did the Spaniards, though to a less degree; and it was part of Lestock's defence, admitted by the Court, that, doing his utmost, his division, as a whole, certainly could not get abreast the allied rear. Lestock, indeed, directly submitted to the Court that the commander-in-chief was at fault in not waiting till his line was thus extended and formed, and then all bearing down together, in line abreast; although by his own contention no such

issue could have been reached that day, unless the allies were obliging enough to wait. "I aver, and I shall die in this opinion, that no man that is an officer, who knows his duty, will make the signal for line abreast to steer down upon an enemy, until the fleet has been stretched and extended in a line of battle, according to the 19th Article of the Fighting Instructions. Can it be service," he adds, "to bear down so much unformed and in confusion, that the van cannot possibly join battle with, or engage the van of the enemy, the centre with the centre, and the rear with the rear?"

Mathews not being then on trial, the Court in its finding did not reply directly to this question; but indirectly it left no doubt as to its opinion. "The Admiral, by bearing down as he did upon the rear division of the combined fleet, excluded the Vice-Admiral from any part of the engagement, if he could have come up; for if both lines had been closed, when the Admiral engaged the *Real*, there would have been no more than one ship of the enemy's fleet for the Vice-Admiral and his whole division to have engaged." Again, "It does not appear that the Vice-Admiral was in any part the cause of the miscarriage of his Majesty's fleet in the Mediterranean; the *bringing on of the general engagement according to the 19th Article* of the Fighting Instructions ... not depending upon him." Sixteen officers of the rank of captain and above signed these opinions, and there is no denying the words of the 19th Article; yet one wonders to see no recognition of the necessity of using your opportunity as you find it, of the moral effect of an approaching reserve, which Lestock's division

would have constituted, of the part it may take in improving or repairing the results of an action—taking the place of injured friends, preventing injured foes escaping, turning doubtful battle into victory. But no; these commonplaces of to-day and of all time were swamped by the Fighting Instructions. It will be seen in the sequel what a disastrous moral influence Lestock's aloofness exercised upon a few timid captains, and not improbably upon the entire subsequent course and worst errors of his unfortunate superior.

One of the witnesses in the ensuing Courts-Martial testified that the commander-in-chief, under these perplexing circumstances, went into the stern gallery of the flag-ship *Namur*, and called to Captain Cornwall of the *Marlborough*, next astern, asking what he thought. Cornwall replied he "believed they would lose the glory of the day, if they did not attack the Spaniards,"—*i.e.*, the allied rear-centre and rear,—"the Vice-Admiral—Lestock—being so far astern." To which the admiral said, "If you'll bear down and attack the *Real*,"—the *Real Felipe*, Spanish flag-ship,—"I'll be your second." This was about one o'clock, and the signal to engage had been made two hours earlier, probably with the double object of indicating the ultimate intention of the movements in hand, and the immediate urgency of forming the line. The admiral's words betray the indecision of an irresolute nature and of professional rustiness, but not of timidity, and Cornwall's words turned the scale. The course of the flag-ship *Namur* had hitherto been but a

little off the wind, "lasking" down, to use the contemporary but long obsolete expression, in such manner as to show the admiral's desire to engage himself with the enemy's centre, according to the Fighting Instructions; but now, in hopelessness of that result, she kept broad off, directly for the nearest enemy, accompanied closely by the *Norfolk*, her next ahead, and by the *Marlborough*. Rear-Admiral Rowley, commanding the van, imitated the admiral's example, bringing the French ship abreast him to close action. He also was thoroughly supported by the two captains next astern of him, the second of whom was Edward Hawke,—afterwards the brilliant admiral,—in the *Berwick*. Two British groups, each of three ships, were thus hotly engaged; but with an interval between them of over half a mile, corresponding to the places open for six or seven other vessels. The conduct of the ships named, under the immediate influence of the example set by the two admirals, suggests how much the average man is sustained by professional tone; for a visible good example is simply a good standard, a high ideal, realized in action.

Unfortunately, however, just as Hawke's later doings showed the man able to rise above the level of prescribed routine duty, there was found in the second astern of the *Namur* a captain capable of exceptional backwardness, of reasoning himself into dereliction of clear duty, and thus effecting a demonstration that the example of timidity is full as contagious and more masterful than that of audacity. The flag-ships and their supporters ranged themselves along the hostile line to windward, within point-blank

range; according to the 20th Article of the Fighting Instructions, which read, "Every Commander is to take care that his guns are not fired till he is sure he can reach the enemy upon a point-blank; and by no means to suffer his guns to be fired over any of our own ships." The point-blank is the range of a cannon laid level, and the requirement was necessary to efficient action in those days of crude devices for pointing, with ordnance material of inferior power. Even sixty years later Nelson expressed his indifference to improvements in pointing, on the ground that the true way of fighting was to get so close that you could not miss your aim. Thus Mathews' captain placed the *Namur*, of ninety guns, within four hundred yards—less than quarter of a mile—of the Spanish flag-ship, the *Real Felipe*, of one hundred and ten guns; and Cornwall brought the *Marlborough* immediately in the wake of the *Namur*, engaging the Spanish *Hercules*. But the *Dorsetshire*, which should have followed the *Marlborough*, was stopped by her commander, Captain George Burrish, at a distance which was estimated by several witnesses to be from half a mile to nearly a mile from the enemy, or, to use a very expressive phrase then current, "at random shot." The Court-Martial, however, in pronouncing upon this point, decided that inasmuch as a bar-shot came on board the *Dorsetshire* in this early part of the engagement, she must be construed to have brought to within extreme point-blank. In view of the mass of testimony to the greater distance, this seems to have been simply giving the benefit of a doubt.

Thus situated, the action between the *Namur* and *Marlborough* on the one side, and the *Real Felipe* and *Hercules* on the other, was for some time very hot; but the *Marlborough*, moving faster than the *Namur*, closed upon her, so that she had to get out of the way, which she did by moving ahead and at the same time hauling to windward, till she reached as far from the Spanish line as the *Dorsetshire* had remained. The Court in this matter decided that, after the admiral had thus hauled off, the *Dorsetshire* was in a line, or as far to leeward—towards the enemy—as the admiral. The *Marlborough* was thus left alone, exposed to the fire of a ship heavier than herself, and also to that of the *Hercules*, which was able to train upon her a considerable part of her battery. Under these circumstances, it was the duty of the *Dorsetshire*, as it was the opportunity of her commander, by attacking the *Hercules*, to second, and support, the engaged ship; but she continued aloof. After two hours—by 3 P.M.—the main and mizzen masts were cut out of the *Marlborough*, and she lost her captain with forty-two men killed, and one hundred and twenty wounded, out of a crew of seven hundred and fifty. Thus disabled, the sails on the foremast turned her head towards the enemy, and she lay moving sluggishly, between the fleets, but not under control. The admiral now sent an officer to Burrish—the second that morning—to order him into his station and to support the *Marlborough*; while to the latter, in response to an urgent representation by boat of her condition, and that she was threatened by the approach of the hitherto separated ships of the

Spanish rear, he replied that the *Namur* was wearing and would come to her assistance.

When Burrish received his message, he sent for his lieutenants on the quarter-deck, and spoke to them words which doubtless reflect the reasoning upon which he was justifying to himself his most culpable inaction. "Gentlemen, I sent for you to show you the position of our ships to windward," (*i.e.* the ships of the centre division behind him, and Lestock's division), "likewise those five sail [Spanish] of the enemy that are astern of us. I have my orders to engage the *Real*, and you see I am bearing down for that purpose." The lieutenants remarked that he could do so with safety. To this he rejoined, with a curtness that testifies to the uneasiness of his mind, "I did not send for you to ask your opinions, but only to observe that not one of our ships is coming down to my assistance, in order to cut those five sail off, and in case those five sail should oblige me to haul my wind again, and leave the *Marlborough*, that you may be able to indemnify my conduct, if called in question." One witness also testified that he "was angry that Admiral Lestock's division did not bear down,"—which was just enough,—and that "he thought it most advisable to keep his station;" meaning by this, apparently, to remain where he was. His cross-examination of the evidence was directed to prove the danger to his ship from these remaining Spaniards. This anxiety was wholly misplaced, and professionally unworthy. Quite independent of orders by signal and message, he was bound, in view of the condition of the *Marlborough*, to

go to her relief, and to assume that the three English ships of the centre division, in his rear, would surely sustain him. To base contrary action upon a doubt of their faithfulness was to condemn himself. Four ships to five under such conditions should be rather a spur than a deterrent to an officer of spirit, who understands the obligation of his calling.

Till this, the *Dorsetshire* had been under her three topsails only. She appears then to have stood down under more sail, but very slowly, and here occurred another disaster which was largely chargeable to her being out of her station. Seeing the desperate state of the *Marlborough*, Mathews, who throughout managed blunderingly, with the single exception of the original attack, had thought to aid her and divert the fire of the *Real* by sending against the latter a fire-ship. It was elementary that vessels of this class needed energetic support and cover in their desperate work. Small in size, of no battery-force except against boat attacks, loaded with combustibles and powder, success in the use of them under an enemy's guns required not only imperturbable coolness and nerve, but the utmost attainable immunity from the attention of the enemy. This could be secured only by a heavy and sustained fire from their own fleet. With the *Norfolk*, *Namur*, *Marlborough*, and *Dorsetshire* in close line, as they should have been, and heavily engaged, a fire-ship might have passed between them, and, though at imminent hazard even so, have crossed the four hundred yards of intervening water to grapple the hostile flag-ship; but with the *Marlborough* lying

disabled and alone, the admiral himself acting with indecision, and the *Dorsetshire* hanging aloof, the attempt was little short of hopeless. Still it was made, and the *Anne Galley*—such was her odd name—bore down, passing close by the *Dorsetshire*.

It became doubly the duty of Burrish to act, to push home whatever demonstration was in his power to make; the fire-ship, however, went by him and was permitted to pursue her desperate mission without his support. The *Real*, seeing the *Anne* approach, bore up out of her line, and at the same time sent a strongly-manned launch to grapple and tow her out of the way. This was precisely one of the measures that it was the business of supporting ships to repel. The captain of the fire-ship, thrown upon his own resources, opened fire, a most hazardous measure, as much of his priming was with loose powder; but the launch readily avoided injury by taking position directly ahead, where the guns would not bear. The crew of the *Anne* were now ordered into the boat, except the captain and five others, who were to remain to the last moment, and light the train; but from some cause not certainly demonstrated she exploded prematurely, being then within a hundred yards of the *Real*. It is necessary to say that the Court-Martial acquitted Burrish of blame, because he "had no orders to cover the fire-ship, either by signal or otherwise." Technically, the effect of this finding was to shift an obvious and gross blunder from the captain to some one else; but it is evident that if the *Dorsetshire* had occupied her station astern of the *Marlborough*, the fire-ship's attempt would

have been much facilitated.

The Court decided unanimously that Burrish "ought to have borne down as far to leeward as where the admiral first began to engage, notwithstanding that the admiral might be hauled off before the *Dorsetshire* got so far to leeward." The point upon which the line should have been formed was thus established by the Court's finding. The subsequent proceedings of this ship need not be related. She now came slowly into close action, but that part of the enemy's order was already broken, and their rear vessels, the fear of which had controlled her captain, passed by as they came up without serious action.

How far Burrish's example influenced the captains immediately behind him cannot certainly be affirmed. Such shyness as he displayed is not only infectious, but saps that indispensable basis upon which military effectiveness reposes, namely, the certainty of co-operation and support, derived from mutual confidence, inspired by military discipline, obedience, and honor. It is well to note here that the remoteness of Lestock's division thus affected Burrish, who evidently could not understand either its distance or its failure to approach, and who, being what he was, saw himself threatened with want of that backing which he himself was refusing to the *Marlborough*. While he was blaming Lestock, hard things were being said about him in Lestock's division; but the lesson of Lestock's influence upon Burrish is not less noteworthy because the latter forfeited both duty and honor by his hesitation. It is to be feared that the

captain of the *Essex*, following the *Dorsetshire*, was a coward; even so Burrish, an old captain, certainly did not cheer his heart by good example, but rather gave him the pretext for keeping still farther off. The rearmost two ships of the division but confirm the evidences of demoralization, and the more so that their captains seem from the evidence to have been well-disposed average men; but the five Spanish vessels approaching, with the *Dorsetshire* and the *Essex* holding aloof, was too much for their resolution—and not unnaturally. The broad result, however, was lamentable; for four British ships feared to come to the aid of an heroic and desperately injured consort, in deadly peril, because five enemies were drawing nigh.

Upon these four therefore fell, and not unjustly, the weight of national anger. Burrish was cashiered, and declared forever incapable of being an officer in the Navy. Norris, of the *Essex*, absconded to avoid trial. The two others were pronounced unfit to command, but, although never again employed, mitigating circumstances in their behavior caused them to be retained on the lists of the Navy. It is not too much to say that they were men just of the stamp to have escaped this shame and ruin of reputation, under more favorable conditions of professional tone.

Concerning the vice-admiral's action at this time, which had its share in the ruin of these captains, another curious instance of men's bondage to the order of battle transpires. The three rear ships of his squadron were clean, that is, relatively fast; and they were rearmost for this very reason of speed, because,

when the division led on the other tack, they, as headmost ships of the fleet, would be ready to chase. Nevertheless, when the admiral sent to Lestock in the forenoon to hurry him into line, no order was given to these ships to press ahead. Why? Lestock answers that to send those ships ahead, out of the place in the line prescribed to them by the commander-in-chief, was breaking the line, which should expose him to condign punishment; and this opinion the Court also adopts: "The [only] messages sent to the Vice-Admiral by the Admiral's two lieutenants were to make what sail he possibly could, and to close the line with his division; no signal was made for him to chase with his division, or send ships of his division to chase; without which, *while the signal for the line of battle was flying*, and more especially after the messages brought him, he could not, *without breach of duty*, either have chased or sent ships to chase out of the line." It is to be noted that the word "chase" is here used in the strictest technical sense, not merely to exclude Lestock from diverting a ship to some other purpose than that of the engagement, but even from shifting her place in the general order in the view of furthering the engagement; for the Court says again: "The Vice-Admiral could not send any ships of his division to the relief of the *Namur* and *Marlborough* without breaking the order of battle, there being four ships of the Admiral's division" (to wit, the *Dorsetshire* and that crowd) "stationed between the Vice-Admiral's division and the *Marlborough*, which four ships might have gone to the assistance of the *Marlborough*."

The second in command thus had no liberty to repair either the oversights of his superior, or the results of obvious bad conduct in juniors; for Burrish's backwardness was observed throughout the rear. There was a long road yet to travel to Nelson's personal action at St. Vincent and Copenhagen, or to his judicious order at Trafalgar, "The Second in command will, after my intentions are made known to him, have the entire direction of his line." Even that great officer Hood, off the Chesapeake in 1781, felt himself tied hand and foot by the union flag at the mizzen peak,—the signal for the line. Only the commander-in-chief could loose the bonds; either by his personal initiative alone, and vigilant supervision, as did Hawke and Rodney, or by adding to this the broad view of discretion in subordinates which Nelson took. Before leaving this subject, note may be taken of a pettifogging argument advanced by Lestock and adopted by the Court, that orders to these three ships to press ahead would have resulted in nothing, because of the lightness of the wind then and afterwards. True, doubtless, and known after the fact; but who before the event could predict the uncertain Mediterranean breeze, or how much each foot gained might contribute to the five minutes which measure the interval between victory and defeat. It is not by such lagging hesitations that battles are won.

It is a trivial coincidence, though it may be noted in passing, that as it was the second astern of the commander-in-chief on whom fell the weight of the disgrace, so it was the second astern of the commander of the van who alone scored a distinct

success, and achieved substantial gain of professional reputation. Hawke, at first bearing down, had come to close action with the Spanish *Neptuno*, a vessel nominally of less force than his own ship, the *Berwick*. The *Neptuno* was at length driven out of her line, with a loss of some two hundred killed and wounded. Thus left without an immediate antagonist, Hawke's attention was attracted by another Spanish vessel, the *Poder*, of the same nominal force as the *Neptuno*, and following her in the order; with which four or five of the seven British ships, that should have closed the interval between Mathews and Rowley, were carrying on a distant and circumspect engagement, resembling in caution that of the *Dorsetshire* and her followers. He carried the *Berwick* close alongside the new enemy, dismasted her, and after two hours compelled her to strike her flag; the only vessel in either fleet that day to surrender, and then only after a resistance as honorable to Spain as that of the *Marlborough* had been to Great Britain. Her commander refused to yield his sword to any but Hawke, who also took possession of the prize with a party from his own ship; thus establishing beyond dispute, by all customary formalities, his claim to the one trophy of the day. The occurrences through which she was afterwards lost to the British, so that only the honor of the capture remained, and that to Hawke alone, must be briefly told; for they, too, are a part of the mismanagement that has given to this battle its particular significance in naval history.

As the unlucky fire-ship bore down, Mathews began wearing

the *Namur*,—turning her round, that is, from the wind, and therefore towards the *Marlborough* and her opponents. In this he seems to have had first in view supporting the fire-ship and covering the *Marlborough*. Boats were ahead of the latter towing her from the enemy. As she was thus being dragged off, but after the fire-ship blew up, the *Namur* passed between her and the hostile line; then, hauling to the wind on the starboard tack, she stood north towards Lestock's division. This movement to the rear was imitated by the British ships of the centre,—the *Dorsetshire* and others,—and, beyond a brush with the rear five Spanish vessels as they came up, the action in the centre here ceased.

This retrograde movement of Mathews and his division drew the centre away from the van. At about the same time the allied van, composed wholly of French ships, seeing the straits of the *Poder* and the *Real*, tacked—turned round—to come down to their assistance. This imposed a like movement upon the British van, lest it should be engaged apart from the rest of the fleet, and perhaps doubled on, by a number of perfectly fresh ships. The *Poder*, having lost her chief spars, could not be carried off, nor was Hawke able even to remove the men he had thrown on board. She was therefore retaken by the French. Lieutenant Lloyd, the officer in charge, escaped with a part of the prize crew, taking with him also a number of Spanish prisoners; but a junior lieutenant and some seamen were left behind and captured. The *Berwick* being compelled to follow her division, Lloyd could not

rejoin her till the following day, and sought refuge for that night on board another ship.

The next day, February 23d, Mathews had another chance. As he did not pursue during the night, while the allies continued to retire, he was a long way off at daylight; but his fleet was now united, and the enemy retreating. He need therefore have no anxiety about the crippled *Marlborough*, but could follow freely; whereas, the enemy being pursued, their injured ships both retarded the movement and were endangered. In the course of the day, the *Poder* had lagged so far behind that Admiral Rowley, who had recognized Hawke's enterprise the day before, directed him to move down upon her. As he approached, the French ship in company abandoned her, but in taking possession Hawke was anticipated by the *Essex*, which Mathews himself had ordered to do so. The captain of the *Essex* got hold of the Spanish flag, with some other small trophies, which he afterwards refused to give up unless compelled; and, as Mathews would not give an order, Hawke never got them. Thus curiously it came to pass that the one man who above several misdemeanants distinguished himself by bad conduct, amounting to cowardice, and who ran away to escape trial, kept the tokens of the single achievement of the day from him whose valor had won them. The *Poder* herself was set on fire, and destroyed.

The British fleet continued to follow during the 23d, and at nightfall was within three or four miles of the enemy, when Mathews again stopped. The allies, continuing to withdraw,

were next morning nearly out of sight, and further pursuit was abandoned.

Thus ended this almost forgotten affair, which in its day occasioned to an unusual degree the popular excitement and discussion which always follow marked disaster, and but rarely attend success. Besides the particular missteps of Lestock and the individual captains, which have been mentioned, Mathews's conduct was marked by serious failures in professional competency. The charge preferred against him which seems most to have attracted attention, and to have been considered most damaging, was taking his fleet into action in a confused and disorderly manner. It is significant of professional standards that this should have assumed such prominence; for, however faulty may have been his previous management, the most creditable part of his conduct was the manner of his attack. He did not wait for a pedantically accurate line, but by a straightforward onslaught, at a favorable moment, upon a part of the enemy,—and that the rear,—set an example which, had it been followed by all who could do so, would probably have resulted in a distinct and brilliant success. He was justified—if he reasoned at all—in expecting that Lestock could get into action as soon as the French van; or, at the least, before it could reverse the conditions which would have ensued from a vigorous encounter upon the lines of Mathews's attack. It is most doubtful, indeed, whether the French van would have ventured to engage, in the case supposed; for the French admiral, writing to the

French ambassador in Spain, used these words: "It is clear, in the situation I was in, it could not be expected that a French admiral should go to the assistance of the Spaniards; neither could the vanguard of the fleet do it without running the hazard of being surrounded by the vanguard of the English, which had the wind of them; but *as soon as the English left me* I drew together all the ships of both squadrons, and sailed immediately to the assistance of the *Real Felipe*, in doing which I was exposed to the fire of the whole English line; but happily the English did not punish my *rashness* as it deserved." Evidently De Court shared to the full the professional caution which marked the French naval officers, with all their personal courage; for if it was rash to pass the hostile line after it wore, it would be reckless to do so before.

Considered simply as a tactical situation, or problem, quite independent of any tactical forethought or insight on the part of the commander-in-chief,—of which there is little indication,—the conditions resulting from his attack were well summed up in a contemporary publication, wholly adverse to Mathews in tone, and saturated with the professional prepossessions embodied in the Fighting Instructions. This writer, who claims to be a naval officer, says:

"The whole amount of this fight is that the centre, consisting of eleven ships-of-the-line, together with two of-the-line and two fifty-gun ships of the Rear-Admiral's division [the van], *were able to destroy* the whole Spanish squadron, much more so as three of those ships went on

with the French [the allied van], and four of the sternmost did not get up with their admiral before it was darkish, long after the fire-ship's misfortune, so that the whole afternoon there were only five, out of which the *Constante* was beat away in less than an hour; what then fifteen ships could be doing from half an hour past one till past five, no less than four hours, and these ships not taken, burnt, and destroyed, is the question which behoves them to answer."

In brief, then, Mathews's attack was so delivered that the weight of thirteen of-the-line fell upon five Spanish of the same class, the discomfiture of which, actually accomplished even under the misbehavior of several British ships, separated the extreme rear, five other Spanish vessels, from the rest of the allies. Whatever the personal merit or lack of merit on the part of the commander-in-chief, such an opportunity, pushed home by a "band of brothers," would at the least have wiped out these rear ten ships of the allies; nor could the remainder in the van have redeemed the situation. As for the method of attack, it is worthy of note that, although adopted by Mathews accidentally, it anticipated, not only the best general practice of a later date, but specifically the purpose of Rodney in the action which he himself considered the most meritorious of his whole career,—that of April 17, 1780. The decisive signal given by him on that occasion, as explained by himself, meant that each ship should steer, not for the ship corresponding numerically to her in the enemy's order, but for the one immediately opposite at the time the signal was made. This is what Mathews and his seconds did,

and others should have imitated. Singularly enough, not only was the opportunity thus created lost, but there is no trace of its existence, even, being appreciated in such wise as to affect professional opinion. As far as Mathews himself was concerned, the accounts show that his conduct, instead of indicating tactical sagacity, was a mere counsel of desperation.

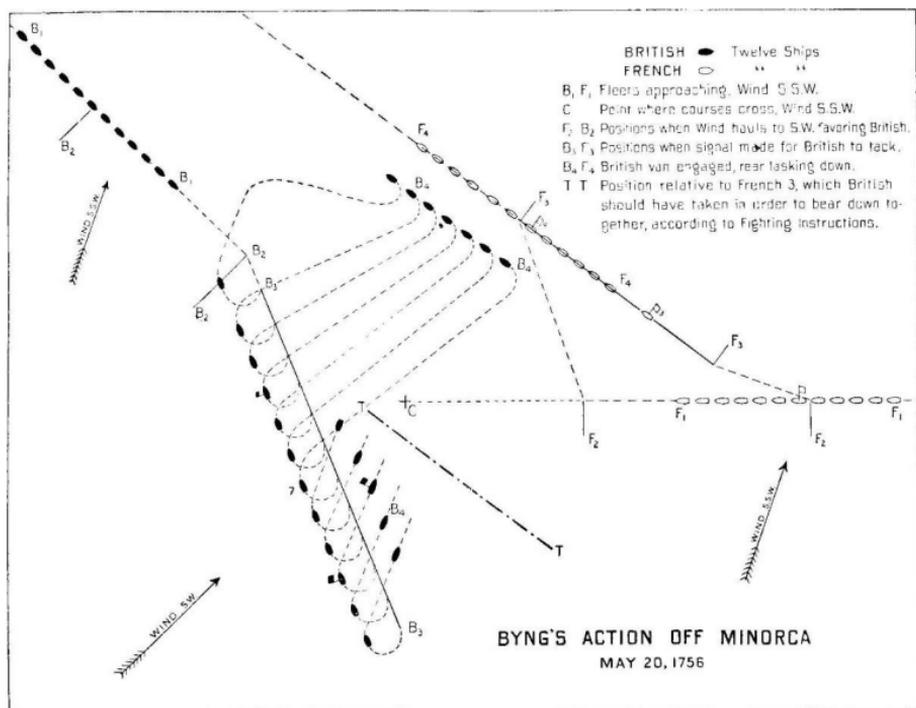
But after engaging he committed palpable and even discreditable mistakes. Hauling to windward—away—when the *Marlborough* forced him ahead, abandoned that ship to overwhelming numbers, and countenanced the irresolution of the *Dorsetshire* and others. Continuing to stand north, after wearing on the evening of the battle, was virtually a retreat, unjustified by the conditions; and it would seem that the same false step gravely imperilled the *Berwick*, Hawke holding on, most properly, to the very last moment of safety, in order to get back his prize-crew. Bringing-to on the night of the 23d was an error of the same character as standing north during that of the 22d. It was the act of a doubtful, irresolute man,—irresolute, not because a coward, but because wanting in the self-confidence that springs from conscious professional competency. In short, the commander-in-chief's unfitness was graphically portrayed in the conversation with Cornwall from the quarter gallery of the flag-ship. "If you approve and will go down with me, I will go down." Like so many men, he needed a backer, to settle his doubts and to stiffen his backbone. The instance is far from unique.

In the case of Byng, as of Mathews, we are not concerned

with the general considerations of the campaign to which the battle was incidental. It is sufficient to note that in Minorca, then a British possession, the French had landed an army of 15,000 men, with siege artillery sufficient to reduce the principal port and fortress, Port Mahon; upon which the whole island must fall. Their communications with France depended upon the French fleet cruising in the neighborhood. Serious injury inflicted upon it would therefore go far to relieve the invested garrison.

Under these circumstances the British fleet sighted Minorca on the 19th of May, 1756, and was attempting to exchange information with the besieged, when the French fleet was seen in the southeast. Byng stood towards it, abandoning for the time the effort to communicate. That night both fleets manoeuvred for advantage of position with regard to the wind. The next day, between 9 and 10 A.M., they came again in view of each other, and at 11 were about six miles apart, the French still to the southeast, with a breeze at south-southwest to southwest. The British once more advanced towards them, close hauled on the starboard tack, heading southeasterly, the enemy standing on the opposite tack, heading westerly, both carrying sail to secure the weather gage (B1, F1). It appeared at first that the French would pass ahead of the British, retaining the windward position; but towards noon the wind changed, enabling the latter to lie up a point or two higher (B2). This also forced the bows of the several French vessels off their course, and put them out of a regular line of battle; that is, they could no longer sail in each other's wake

(F2). Being thus disordered, they reformed on the same tack, heading northwest, with the wind very little forward of the beam. This not only took time, but lost ground to leeward, because the quickest way to re-establish the order was for the mass of the fleet to take their new positions from the leewardmost vessel. When formed (F3), as they could not now prevent the British line from passing ahead, they hove-to with their main-topsails aback,—stopped,—awaiting the attack, which was thenceforth inevitable and close at hand.



Plan of Byng's Action off Minorca, May 20, 1756

In consequence of what has been stated, the British line (B2-B3)—more properly, column—was passing ahead of the French (F2-F3), steering towards their rear, in a direction in a general sense opposite to theirs, but not parallel; that is, the British course made an angle, of between thirty and forty-five degrees, with the line on which their enemy was ranged. Hence, barring orders to the contrary,—which were not given,—each British ship was at its nearest to the enemy as she passed their van, and became more and more distant as she drew to the rear. It would have been impossible to realize more exactly the postulate of the 17th Article of the Fighting Instructions, which in itself voiced the ideal conditions of an advantageous naval position for attack, as conceived by the average officer of the day; and, as though most effectually to demonstrate once for all how that sort of thing would work, the adjunct circumstances approached perfection. The admiral was thoroughly wedded to the old system, without an idea of departing from it, and there was a fair working breeze with which to give it effect, for the ships under topsails and foresail would go about three knots; with top-gallant sails, perhaps over four. A fifty-gun ship, about the middle of the engagement, had to close her lower deck ports when she set her top-gallant sails on the wind, which had then freshened a little.

The 17th Article read thus: "If the admiral see the enemy standing towards him, and he has the wind of them, the van of the fleet is to make sail till they come the length of the enemy's

rear, and our rear abreast of the enemy's van; then he that is in the rear of our fleet is to tack first, and every ship one after another as fast as they can throughout the whole line; and if the admiral will have the whole fleet to tack together, the sooner to put them in a posture of engaging the enemy, he will hoist" a prescribed signal, "and fire a gun; and whilst they are in fight with the enemy the ships will keep at half a cable's length—one hundred yards—one of the other." All this Byng aimed to do. The conditions exactly fitted, and he exactly followed the rules, with one or two slight exceptions, which will appear, and for which the Court duly censured him.

When thus much had been done, the 19th Article in turn found its postulate realized, and laid down its corresponding instruction: "If the admiral and his fleet have the wind of the enemy, and they have stretched themselves in a line of battle, the van of the admiral's fleet is to *steer with* the van of the enemy's, and there to engage with them." The precise force of "steer with" is not immediately apparent to us to-day, nor does it seem to have been perfectly clear then; for the question was put to the captain of the flag-ship,—the heroic Gardiner,—"You have been asked if the admiral did not express some uneasiness at Captain Andrews"—of the van ship in the action—"not seeming to understand the 19th Article of the Fighting Instructions; Do not you understand that article to relate to our van particularly when the two fleets are [already] in a parallel line of battle to each other?" (As TT, F3). *Answer*: "I apprehended it in the

situation" [not parallel] "we were in<sup>1</sup> if the word *For* were instead of the word *With*, he would, I apprehend, have steered directly *for* the van ship of the Enemy." *Question*. "As the 19th Article expresses to steer with the van of the enemy, if the leading ship had done so, in the oblique line we were in with the enemy, and every ship had observed it the same, would it not have prevented our rear coming to action at all, at least within a proper distance?" *Answer*: "Rear, and van too." "Steer with" therefore meant, to the Court and to Gardiner, to steer parallel to the enemy,—possibly likewise abreast,—and if the fleets were already parallel the instruction would work; but neither the articles themselves, nor Byng by his signals, did anything to effect parallelism before making the signal to engage.

The captain of the ship sternmost in passing, which became the van when the fleet tacked together according to the Instructions and signals, evidently shared Gardiner's impression; when about, he steered parallel to—"with"—the French, who had the wind nearly abeam. The mischief was that the ships ahead of him in passing were successively more and more distant from the enemy, and if they too, after tacking, steered with the latter, they would never get any nearer. The *impasse* is clear. Other measures doubtless would enable an admiral to range his fleet parallel to the enemy at any chosen distance, by taking a position himself and forming the fleet on his ship; or, in this particular instance, Byng being with the van as it,

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<sup>1</sup> This wording and punctuation is exact from the text.

on the starboard tack, was passing the enemy (B3 B3), could at any moment have brought his fleet parallel to the French by signalling the then van ship to keep away a certain amount, the rest following in her wake. Nothing to that effect being in the Instructions, it seems not to have occurred to him. His one idea was to conform to them, and he apprehended that after tacking, as they prescribed, the new van ship would bear down and engage without further orders, keeping parallel to the French when within point-blank, the others following her as they could; a process which, from the varying distances, would expose each to a concentrated fire as they successively approached. Byng's action is only explicable to the writer by supposing that he thus by "steer with" understood "steer for;" for when, after the fleet tacked together, the new van ship (formerly the rear) did not of her own motion head for the leading enemy, he signalled her to steer one point, and then two points, in that direction. This, he explained in his defence, was "to put the leading captain in mind of his Instructions, who I perceived did not steer away with the enemy's leading ship agreeable to the 19th Article of the Fighting Instructions." The results of these orders not answering his expectations, he then made the signal to engage, as the only remaining way perceptible to him for carrying out the Instructions.

To summarize the foregoing, up to the moment the signal for battle was made: While the fleets were striving for the weather gage, the wind had shifted to the southwest. The French,

momentarily disordered by the change, had formed in line ahead about noon, heading northwest, westerly, so as just to keep their main topsails aback and the ships with bare steerage way, but under command (F3). The British standing south-southeast, by the wind, were passing (B2-B3) across the head of the enemy's fleet at a distance of from three to two miles—the latter being the estimate by their ships then in the rear. The French having twelve vessels in line and the British thirteen, the gradual progress of the latter should bring their then van "the length of the enemy's rear," about the time the rear came abreast of his van. When this happened, the Instructions required that the fleet tack together, and then stand for the enemy, ship to ship, number one to number one, and so along the line till the number twelves met<sup>2</sup>.

This Byng purposed to do, but, unluckily for himself, ventured on a refinement. Considering that, if his vessels bore down when abreast their respective antagonists, they would go bows-on, perpendicularly, subject to a raking—enfilading—fire, he deferred the signal to tack till his van had passed some distance beyond the French rear, because thus they would have to approach in a slanting direction. He left out of his account here the fact that all long columns tend to straggle in the rear; hence, although he waited till his three or four leading ships had passed the enemy before making signal to tack, the rear had got no

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<sup>2</sup> So far was literalism carried, that, before the signal for battle, Byng evened numbers with his opponent by directing his weakest ship to leave the line, with no other orders than to be ready to take the place of a disabled vessel.

farther than abreast the hostile van. Two of the clearest witnesses, Baird of the *Portland*, next to the then rear ship, and Cornwall of the *Revenge*, seventh from it, testified that, after tacking together, to the port tack, when they kept away for the enemy in obedience to the signal for battle, it was necessary, in order to reach their particular opponents, to bring the wind not only as far as astern, but on the starboard quarter, showing that they had been in rear of their station before tacking, and so too far ahead after it; while Durell of the *Trident*, ninth from rear and therefore fifth from van, asserted that at the same moment the British van, which after tacking became the rear, had overpassed the enemy by five or six ships. This may be an exaggeration, but that three or four vessels had gone beyond is proved by evidence from the ships at that end of the line.

The Court therefore distinctly censured the admiral for this novelty: "Unanimously, the Court are of opinion that when the British fleet on the starboard tack were stretched abreast, *or about the beam* of the enemy's line, the admiral should have tacked the fleet all together, and immediately have conducted it on a direct course for the enemy, the van steering for the enemy's van," etc. The instructive point, however, is not Byng's variation, nor the Court's censure, but the idea, common to both, that the one and only way to use your dozen ships under the conditions was to send each against a separate antagonist. The highest and authoritative conception of a fleet action was thus a dozen naval duels, occurring simultaneously, under initial

conditions unfavorable to the assailant. It is almost needless to remark that this is as contrary to universal military teaching as it was to the practice of Rodney, Howe, Jervis, and Nelson, a generation or two later.

This is, in fact, the chief significance of this action, which ratified and in a measure closed the effete system to which the middle eighteenth century had degraded the erroneous, but comparatively hearty, tradition received by it from the seventeenth. It is true, the same blundering method was illustrated in the War of 1778. Arbuthnot and Graves, captains when Byng was tried, followed his plan in 1781, with like demonstration of practical disaster attending false theory; but, while the tactical inefficiency was little less, the evidence of faint-hearted professional incompetency, of utter personal inadequacy, was at least not so glaring. It is the combination of the two in the person of the same commander that has given to this action its pitiful pre-eminence in the naval annals of the century.

It is, therefore, not so much to point out the lesson, as to reinforce its teaching by the exemplification of the practical results, that there is advantage in tracing the sequel of events in this battle. The signal to tack was made when the British van had reached beyond the enemy's rear, at a very little after 1 P.M. (B3). This reversed the line of battle, the rear becoming the van, on the port tack. When done, the new van was about two miles from that of the French (F4); the new rear, in which

Byng was fourth from sternmost, was three and a half or four from their rear. Between this and 2 P.M. came the signals for the ship then leading to keep two points, twenty-five degrees, more to starboard,—towards the enemy; a measure which could only have the bad effect of increasing the angle which the British line already made with that of the French, and the consequent inequality of distance to be traversed by their vessels in reaching their opponents. At 2.20 the signal for battle was made, and was repeated by the second in command, Rear-Admiral Temple West, who was in the fourth ship from the van. His division of six bore up at once and ran straight down before the wind, under topsails only, for their several antagonists; the sole exception being the van-most vessel, which took the slanting direction desired by Byng, with the consequence that she got ahead of her position, had to back and to wear to regain it, and was worse punished than any of her comrades. The others engaged in line, within point-blank, the rear-admiral hoisting the flag for close action (B4). Fifteen minutes later, the sixth ship, and rearmost of the van, the *Intrepid*, lost her foretopmast, which crippled her.

The seventh ship, which was the leader of the rear, Byng's own division, got out of his hands before he could hold her. Her captain, Frederick Cornwall, was nephew to the gallant fellow who fell backing Mathews so nobly off Toulon, and had then succeeded to the command of the *Marlborough*, fighting her till himself disabled. He had to bring the wind on the starboard quarter of his little sixty-four, in order to reach the seventh in

the enemy's line, which was an eighty-gun ship, carrying the flag of the French admiral. This post, by professional etiquette, as by evident military considerations, Byng owed to his own flag-ship, of equal force.

The rest of the rear division the commander-in-chief attempted to carry with himself, slanting down; or, as the naval term then had it, "lasking" towards the enemy. The flag-ship kept away four points—forty-five degrees; but hardly had she started, under the very moderate canvas of topsails and foresail, to cover the much greater distance to be travelled, in order to support the van by engaging the enemy's rear, when Byng observed that the two ships on his left—towards the van—were not keeping pace with him. He ordered the main and mizzen topsails to be backed to wait for them. Gardiner, the captain, "took the liberty of offering the opinion" that, if sail were increased instead of reduced, the ships concerned would take the hint, that they would all be sooner alongside the enemy, and probably receive less damage in going down. It was a question of example. The admiral replied, "You see that the signal for the line is out, and I am ahead of those two ships; and you would not have me, as admiral of the fleet, run down as if I was going to engage a single ship. It was Mr. Mathews's misfortune to be prejudiced by not carrying his force down together, which I shall endeavor to avoid." Gardiner again "took the liberty" of saying he would answer for one of the two captains doing his duty. The incident, up to the ship gathering way again, occupied less than ten minutes; but with the

van going down headlong—as it ought—one ceases to wonder at the impression on the public produced by one who preferred lagging for laggards to hastening to support the forward, and that the populace suspected something worse than pedantry in such reasoning at such a moment. When way was resumed, it was again under the very leisurely canvas of topsails and foresail.

By this had occurred the incident of the *Intrepid* losing her foretopmast. It was an ordinary casualty of battle, and one to be expected; but to such a temper as Byng's, and under the cast-iron regulations of the Instructions, it entailed consequences fatal to success in the action,—if success were ever attainable under such a method,—and was ultimately fatal to the admiral himself. The wreck of the fallen mast was cleared, and the foresail set to maintain speed, but, despite all, the *Intrepid* dropped astern in the line. Cornwall in the *Revenge* was taking his place at the moment, and fearing that the *Intrepid* would come back upon him, if in her wake, he brought up first a little to windward, on her quarter; then, thinking that she was holding her way, he bore up again. At this particular instant he looked behind, and saw the admiral and other ships a considerable distance astern and to windward; much Lestock's position in Mathews's action. This was the stoppage already mentioned, to wait for the two other ships. Had Cornwall been Burrish, he might in this have seen occasion for waiting himself; but he saw rather the need of the crippled ship. The *Revenge* took position on the *Intrepid's* lee quarter, to support her against the enemy's fire, concentrated on her when her mast was

seen to fall. As her way slackened, the *Revenge* approached her, and about fifteen minutes later the ship following, the *Princess Louisa*,—one of those for which Byng had waited,—loomed up close behind Cornwall, who expected her to run him on board, her braces being shot away. She managed, however, with the helm to back her sails, and dropped clear; but in so doing got in the way of the vessel next after her, the *Trident*, which immediately preceded Byng. The captain of the *Trident*, slanting down with the rest of the division, saw the situation, put his helm up, ran under the stern of the *Louisa*, passed on her lee side,—nearest the enemy,—and ranged up behind the *Revenge*; but in doing this he not only crossed the stern of the *Louisa*, but the bow of the admiral's ship—the *Ramillies*.

Under proper management the *Ramillies* doubtless could have done just what the *Trident* did,—keep away with the helm, till the ships ahead of her were cleared; she would be at least hastening towards the enemy. But the noise of battle was in the air, and the crew of the *Ramillies* began to fire without orders, at an improper distance. The admiral permitted them to continue, and the smoke enveloping the ship prevented fully noting the incidents just narrated. It was, however, seen before the firing that the *Louisa* was come up into the wind with her topsails shaking, and the *Trident* passing her to leeward. There should, therefore, have been some preparation of mind for the fact suddenly reported to the admiral, by a military passenger on the quarter deck, that a British ship was close aboard, on the lee bow. It was the *Trident*

that had crossed from windward to leeward for the reasons given, and an instant later the *Louisa* was seen on the weather bow. Instead of keeping off, as the *Trident* had done, the admiral ordered the foresail hauled up, the helm down, luffed the ship to the wind, and braced the fore-topsail sharp aback; the effect of which was first to stop her way, and then to pay her head off to leeward, clear of the two vessels. About quarter of an hour elapsed, by Captain Gardiner's evidence, from the time that the *Ramillies's* head pointed clear of the *Trident* and *Louisa* before sail was again made to go forward to aid the van. The battle was already lost, and in fact had passed out of Byng's control, owing to his previous action; nevertheless this further delay, though probably due only to the importance attached by the admiral to regularity of movement, had a discreditable appearance.

The Court held that the admiral was justified in not trying to go to leeward of the two ships, under the circumstances when they were seen; but blamed him for permitting the useless cannonade which prevented seeing them sooner. The results at this moment in other parts of the field should be summarized, as they show both the cause and the character of the failures due to faulty management.

The five ships of the British van had already seen their adversaries withdraw after a sharp engagement. This seems to have been due to the fact that two were individually overmatched and driven off; whereupon the other three retired because unable to contend with five. But no support reached the British van at

this important moment; on the contrary, the British rear was now two or three miles distant, astern and to windward. The lagging of the crippled *Intrepid* held back the *Revenge*. Cornwall was detained some time by the old idea that he needed a signal to pass her, because to do so was breaking the order established by the admiral; but concluding at last that Byng was unaware of the conditions, and seeing that his immediate opponent—the French admiral—was drawing ahead, he sent word to the *Intrepid* to hold her fire for a few moments till he could go by. He then made sail.

The French rear with its commander-in-chief had been watching the incidents narrated: the crippling of the *Intrepid*, the consequent disorder in the British rear, and the increasing distance between it and the van. When the *Revenge*, however, passed ahead, and Byng disentangled his flag-ship, the moment for a decisive step arrived. The French rear vessels were nearer the British van than Byng's division was. They now filled their topsails, made more sail, stood for the British leading ships, already partially unrigged, passed by, and in so doing gave them the fire of a number of substantially fresh vessels, which had undergone only a distant and ineffective cannonade. Byng saw what was about to happen, and also set more canvas; but it was no longer possible to retrieve the preceding errors. The French admiral had it in his power very seriously to damage, if not to destroy the hostile van; but in accordance with the tradition of his nation he played an over-prudent game, strictly defensive, and kept too far off. After exchanging distant broadsides, he

steered northwest towards Mahon, satisfied that he had for the time disabled his opponent. The British that evening tacked off-shore and stood to the southeast. Four days later they abandoned the field, returning to Gibraltar. The fall of Minorca followed.

Nothing could have been much worse than the deplorable management of this action on the part of the commander-in-chief. It is a conspicuous instance of weak and halting execution, superimposed upon a professional conception radically erroneous; and it reflected throughout the timid hesitancy of spirit which dictated the return to Gibraltar, under the always doubtful sanction of a Council of War. But the historical value of the lesson is diminished if attention is confined to the shortcomings of the admiral, neglectful of the fact that his views as to the necessity to observe the routine of the Fighting Instructions are reproduced in the evidence of the captains; and that the finding of the Court censures, not the general idea, but certain details, important yet secondary. Durell, being asked whether the admiral could not have passed under the stern of the *Trident*, as the *Trident* had under that of the *Louisa*, replies, "Yes, but she would have been to leeward of those ships ahead;" that is, to leeward of the line. Gardiner "knows no other method than what the admiral took, for preserving the line regular." Cornwall cannot pass the *Intrepid* without a signal, because it would be breaking the order. These were all good men.

The Court, composed of four admirals and nine captains, the junior of whom had over ten years seniority, give in their finding

no shadow of disapproval to the broad outlines of the action. There can be, therefore, no doubt about service standards. The questions put to the witnesses reveal indeed a distinct preference for forming the line of battle *parallel* to that of the enemy before bearing down, so that all the ships may have the same distance to go, have a clear field ahead of each, and the comparatively simple mutual bearing of "abeam" to observe; but it refrains from censuring the admiral for forming on a line very oblique to that of the enemy, which entailed the burden of changing the relative positions during standing down, so as to arrive all together, on a line parallel to his; while the course itself being oblique alike to their own front and the enemy's, each preceding ship was liable to get in the way, "to prove an impediment," to its follower,—as actually happened. It was indeed impossible to fault the commander-in-chief in this particular, because his action was conformable to the letter of the Instructions, with which he was evidently and subserviently eager to comply.

The decision of the Court therefore was, in substance, that in bearing down upon the enemy Byng did not do wrong in starting upon a line oblique to them; but that he should have steered such a course, and maintained such spread of sail, graduated to the speed of the slowest ship in the fleet, that all should reach point-blank range at the same time, and be then ranged on a line parallel to that of the enemy. "When on the starboard tack, the admiral should have tacked the fleet all together and immediately conducted it on a direct course for the enemy; ... each ship

steering for her opposite ship in the enemy's line, and under such sail as might have enabled the worst sailing ship, under all her plain sail, to preserve her station." It is needless to insist with any naval man, or to any soldier, that such an advance, in orderly fashion, oblique to the front, is unattainable except by long drill, while this fleet had been but a few weeks assembled; and the difficulty is enhanced when each ship has not only to keep its station in line, but to reach a particular enemy, who may not be just where he ought, having respect to the British order. The manoeuvre favored by the Court for the fleet as a whole was in fact just that which Byng attempted for his own division, with the results that have been narrated. These were aggravated by his mismanagement, but did not originate from it.

The invariable result of an attack thus attempted, however vigorously made, was that the van of the assailant got into action first, receiving the brunt of the enemy's fire without proper support. Not infrequently, it also underwent a second hammering from the enemy's rear, precisely in the same way as occurred in Byng's action; and whether this happened or not depended more upon the enemy than upon the British rear. In ignoring, therefore, the idea of combining an attack in superior numbers upon a part of the enemy, and adopting instead that of an onslaught upon his whole, all along the line, the British practice of the eighteenth century not only surrendered the advantage which the initiative has, of effecting a concentration, but subjected their own fleets to being beaten in detail, subject only to the skill of the opponent in

using the opportunity extended to him. The results, at best, were indecisive, tactically considered. The one apparent exception was in June, 1794, when Lord Howe, after long vainly endeavoring a better combination with a yet raw fleet, found himself forced to the old method; but although then several ships were captured, this issue seems attributable chiefly to the condition of the French Navy, greatly fallen through circumstances foreign to the present subject. It was with this system that Rodney was about to break, the first of his century formally to do so. A false tactical standard, however, was not the only drawback under which the British Navy labored in 1739. The prolonged series of wars, which began when the establishment of civil order under Cromwell permitted the nation to turn from internal strife to external interests, had been for England chiefly maritime. They had recurred at brief intervals, and had been of such duration as to insure a continuity of experience and development. Usage received modification under the influence of constant warlike practice, and the consequent changes in methods, if not always thoroughly reasoned, at the least reflected a similar process of professional advance in the officers of the service. This was consecutively transmitted, and by the movement of actual war was prevented from stagnating and hardening into an accepted finality. Thus the service and its officers, in the full performance of their functions, were alive and growing. Nor was this all. The same surroundings that promoted this healthful evolution applied also a continual test of fitness to persons. As each war began,

there were still to be found in the prime of vigor and usefulness men whose efficiency had been proved in its predecessor, and thus the line of sustained ability in leadership was carried on from one naval generation to another, through the sixty-odd years, 1652-1713, over which these conditions extended.

The peace of Utrecht in 1713 put an end to this period. A disputed succession after the death of Queen Anne, in 1714, renewed the condition of internal disquietude which had paralyzed the external action of England under Charles I.; and this co-operated with the mere weariness of war, occasioned by prolonged strife, to give both the country and the navy a temporary distaste to further military activity. The man of the occasion, who became the exponent and maintainer of this national inclination, was Sir Robert Walpole; to whom, during his ministry of over twenty years, can fairly be applied Jefferson's phrase concerning himself, that his "passion was peace." But, whatever the necessity to the country of such a policy, it too often results, as it did in both these cases, in neglect of the military services, allowing the equipment to decay, and tending to sap the professional interest and competency of the officers.

From this last evil the United States Navy in Jefferson's day was saved by the simple fact that the officers were young men, or at the most in the early prime of life,—the Navy itself, in 1812, being less than twenty years old as a corporate organization. The British Navy of 1739 was in very different case. For a quarter of a century the only important military occurrence had

been the Battle of Cape Passaro, in 1718, where the British fleet in a running fight destroyed a much inferior Spanish force; and the occasion then was not one of existent war, but of casual hostilities, which, precipitated by political conditions, began and ended with the particular incident, as far as the sea was concerned. Back of this lay only Malaga, in 1704; for the remaining years of war, up to 1713, had been unmarked by fleet battles. The tendency of this want of experience, followed by the long period—not of peace only, but—of professional depression resultant upon inactivity and national neglect, was to stagnation, to obviate which no provision existed or was attempted. Self-improvement was not a note of the service, nor of the times. The stimulus of occupation and the corrective of experience being removed, average men stuck where they were, and grew old in a routine of service, or, what was perhaps worse, out of the service in all but name. In naval warfare, the Battle of Malaga, the last point of performance, remained the example, and the Fighting Instructions the passively accepted authority. The men at the head of the Navy, to whom the country naturally looked, either had no record—no proof of fitness—because but youths in the last war, or else, in simple consequence of having then had a chance to show themselves, were now superannuated. This very fact, however, had the singular and unfortunate result that, because the officers of reputation were old, men argued, by a curious perversion of thought, that none but the old should be trusted.

Of this two significant cases will tell more than many words. Mathews, who commanded at Toulon in 1744, was then sixty-seven years old, and had not been at sea between 1724 and 1742. Hawke, in 1747, when he had already established an excellent reputation as a captain, and for enterprise in recent battle, was thought young to be entrusted with a squadron of a dozen ships-of-the-line, although he was forty-two,—two years older than Nelson at the Nile, but four years younger than Napoleon and Wellington at Waterloo, and one year less in age than Grant at the close of the American Civil War. Such instances are not of merely curious interest; they are symptoms of professional states of mind, of a perplexity and perversion of standards which work disastrously whenever war succeeds to a prolonged period of peace, until experience has done its work by sorting out the unsound from among the fair-seeming, and has shown also that men may be too old as well as too young for unaccustomed responsibility. The later prevalence of juster views was exemplified in the choice of Wolfe, who was but thirty-two when he fell before Quebec in 1759, charged with one of the most difficult enterprises that had then been entrusted to a British general.

It is these two factors, therefore, an erroneous standard and a lethargic peace, which principally caused the weakness of the British official staff for battle service at the period of lowest descent, which was reached in the first quarter of the eighteenth century, but was prolonged and intensified by a protracted

interval of professional apathy. Other grievous evils doubtless existed, serious defects in administration, involving indifferent equipment, bad and scanty provisions, inferior physique in the ships' companies, and wretched sanitary arrangements; but while all these unquestionably gravely affected general efficiency for war, they belonged rather to the civil than the military side of the profession. In the hour of battle it was not these, but the tone and efficiency of the officers, that chiefly told. A false pattern of action had been accepted at a moment favorable to its perpetuation, when naval warfare on the grand scale had ceased, owing to the decline of the principal enemy, the navy of France; while the average competency of naval officers had been much lowered through want of professional incentive, and the absence of any sifting process by which the unfit could be surely eliminated. That plenty of good material existed, was sufficiently shown by the number of names, afterwards distinguished, which soon began to appear. Weeding went on apace; but before its work was done, there had to be traversed a painful period, fruitful of evidences of unfitness, of personal weakness, of low or false professional ideas.

It is with this period that we have first had to do as our point of departure, by which not only to estimate the nature and degree of the subsequent advance, but to illustrate also the part specifically contributed to it by Hawke and Rodney, through their personal and professional characteristics. While types, they are more than mere exponents of the change as a whole, and

will be found to bear to its particular relations,—its leaders in fact, as well as in name. It is not merely fanciful to say that Hawke stands for and embodies the spirit of the new age, while Rodney rather exemplifies and develops the form in which that spirit needed ultimately to clothe itself in order to perfect its working. The one is a protest in act against the professional faintheartedness, exaggerated into the semblance of personal timidity, shown by the captains off Toulon in 1774; the other, in the simple but skilful methods and combinations adopted by him, both represents and gives effect to a reaction against the extravagant pedantry, which it fell to Byng, in all the honesty of a thoroughly commonplace man, to exhibit in unintentional caricature.

In thus ascribing to these great men complementary parts in leading and shaping the general movement, it is not meant that either is deficient on the side attributed to the other. Hawke showed by his actions that he was by no means indifferent to tactical combinations, which is another way of saying that he appreciated the advantage of form in warfare; while Rodney, though a careful organizer and driller of fleets, and patient in effort to obtain advantage before attacking, exhibited on occasion headlong, though not inconsiderate, audacity, and also tenacious endurance in fight. Still, it will probably be admitted by the student of naval biography that to him Hawke suggests primarily the unhesitating sudden rush—the swoop—upon the prey, while Rodney resembles rather the patient astute watcher, carefully

keeping his own powers in hand, and waiting for the unguarded moment when the adversary may be taken suddenly at unawares. Certain it is that, with opportunities much more numerous than were permitted to Hawke, his successes would have been far greater but for an excess of methodical caution. There was a third, who combined in due proportion, and possessed to an extraordinary degree, the special qualities here assigned to each. It is one of the ironies of history that the first Sir Samuel Hood should have had just opportunity enough to show how great were his powers, and yet have been denied the chance to exhibit them under conditions to arrest the attention of the world; nay, have been more than once compelled to stand by hopelessly, and see occasions lost which he would unquestionably have converted into signal triumphs. In him, as far as the record goes, was consummated the advance of the eighteenth century. He was the greatest of the sowers. It fell to Nelson, his pupil,—in part at least,—to reap the harvest.

Before closing this part of our subject, the necessary preliminary to understanding the progress of naval warfare in the eighteenth century, it is pertinent to note the respect in which advance there differs from that of the nineteenth, and in some degree, though less, from that of the seventeenth centuries. The period was not one of marked material development. Improvements there were, but they were slow, small in ultimate extent, and in no sense revolutionary. Ships and guns, masts and sails, grew better, as did also administrative processes; it may

indeed be asserted, as an axiom of professional experience, that as the military tone of the sea-officers rises, the effect will be transmitted to those civil functions upon which efficiency for war antecedently depends. Still, substantially, the weapons of war were in principle, and consequently in general methods of handling, the same at the end of the period as at the beginning. They were intrinsically more efficient; but the great gain was not in them, but in the spirit and intellectual grasp of the men who wielded them. There was no change in the least analogous to that from oars to sails, or from sails to steam.

Under such conditions of continued similarity in means, advance in the practice of any profession is effected rather in the realm of ideas, in intellectual processes; and even their expert application involves mind rather than matter. In the nineteenth century such intellectual processes have been largely devoted to the purposes of material development, and have found their realization, in the navy as elsewhere, in revolutionizing instruments, in providing means never before attainable. The railroad, the steamer, the electric telegraph, find their counterpart in the heavily armored steamship of war. But in utilizing these new means the navy must still be governed by the ideas, which are, indeed, in many ways as old as military history, but which in the beginning of the eighteenth century had passed out of the minds of naval men. It was the task of the officers of that period to recall them, to formulate them anew, to give them a living hold upon the theory and practice of the profession.

This they did, and they were undoubtedly helped in so doing by the fact that their attention was not diverted and absorbed, as that of our day very largely has been, by decisive changes in the instruments with which their ideas were to be given effect. Thus they were able to make a substantial and distinctive contribution to the art of naval warfare, and that on its highest side. For the artist is greater than his materials, the warrior than his arms; and it was in the man rather than in his weapons that the navy of the eighteenth century wrought its final conspicuous triumph.



Edward, Lord Hawke

# HAWKE

**1705-1781**

The first great name in British naval annals belonging distinctively to the eighteenth century rather than to the seventeenth, is that of Edward Hawke. He was born in 1705, of a family of no marked social distinction, his father being a barrister, and his grandfather a London merchant. His mother's maiden name was Bladen. One of her brothers held an important civil office as Commissioner of Trade and Plantations, and was for many years a member of Parliament. Under the conditions which prevailed then, and for some generations longer, the influence attaching to such positions enabled the holder to advance substantially the professional interests of a naval officer. Promotion in rank, and occupation both in peace and war, were largely a matter of favor. Martin Bladen naturally helped his nephew in this way, a service especially valuable in the earlier part of a career, lifting a man out of a host of competitors and giving him a chance to show what was in him. It may readily be believed that Hawke's marked professional capacity speedily justified the advantage thus obtained, and he seems to have owed his promotion to post-captain to a superior officer when serving

abroad; though it is never possible to affirm that even such apparent official recognition was not due either to an intimation from home, or to the give and take of those who recognized Bismarck's motto, "Do ut des."

However this may have been, the service did not suffer by the favors extended to Hawke. Nor was his promotion unduly rapid, to the injury of professional character, as often happened when rank was prematurely reached. It was not till March 20, 1734, that he was "made post," as the expression went, by Sir Chaloner Ogle into the frigate *Flamborough*, on the West India Station. Being then twenty-nine years old, in the prime of life for naval efficiency, he had reached the position in which a fair opportunity for all the honors of the profession lay open to him, provided he could secure occupation until he was proved to be indispensable. Here also his uncle's influence stood good. Although the party with which the experienced politician was identified had gone out of power with Sir Robert Walpole, in 1742, his position on the Board dealing with Colonial affairs left him not without friends. "My colleague, Mr. Cavendish," he writes, "has already laid in his claim for another ship for you. But after so long a voyage" (he had been away over three years) "I think you should be allowed a little time to spend with your friends on shore. It is some consolation, however, that I have some friends on the new Board of Admiralty." "There has been a clean sweep," he says again, "but I hope I may have some friends amongst the new Lords that will upon my account afford you

their protection."

This was in the beginning of 1743, when Hawke had just returned from a protracted cruise on the West India and North American stations, where by far the greater part of his early service was passed. He never again returned there, and very shortly after his uncle's letter, just quoted, he was appointed to the *Berwick*, a ship-of-the-line of seventy guns. In command of her he sailed in September, 1743, for the Mediterranean; and a few months after, by his decided and seamanlike course in Mathews's action, he established his professional reputation and fortunes, the firm foundations of which had been laid during the previous years of arduous but inconspicuous service. Two years later, in 1746, Martin Bladen died, and with him political influence, in the ordinary acceptation, departed from Hawke. Thenceforth professional merit, forced upon men's recognition, stood him in stead.

He was thirty-nine when he thus first made his mark, in 1744. Prior to this there is not found, in the very scanty records that remain of his career, as in that of all officers of his period while in subordinate positions, any certain proof that he had ever been seriously engaged with an enemy. War against Spain had been declared, October 19, 1739. He had then recently commissioned a fifty-gun ship, the *Portland*, and in her sailed for the West Indies, where he remained until the autumn of 1742; but the inert manner in which Spain maintained the naval contest, notwithstanding that her transmarine policy was

the occasion of the quarrel, and her West Indian possessions obviously endangered, removed all chance of active service on the large scale, except in attacking her colonies; and in none of those enterprises had the *Portland* been called upon to share.

Meantime, a general European war had begun in 1740, concerning the succession to the Austrian throne; and, in the political combinations which followed, France and Great Britain had as usual ranged themselves on opposite sides, though without declaring war upon each other. Further, there had existed for some time a secret defensive alliance between France and Spain, binding each party to support the other, under certain conditions, with an effective armed force, to be used not for aggressive purposes, but in defence only. It was claimed, indeed, that by so doing the supporting country was not to be considered as going to war, or even as engaged in hostilities, except as regarded the contingent furnished. This view received some countenance from international law, in the stage of development it had then reached; yet it is evident that if a British admiral met a Spanish fleet, of strength fairly matching his own, but found it accompanied by a French division, the commander of which notified him that he had orders to fight if an attack were made, friendly relations between the two nations would be strained near to the breaking point. This had actually occurred to the British Admiral Haddock, in the Mediterranean, in 1741; and conditions essentially similar, but more exasperated, constituted the situation under which Hawke for the first time was brought

into an action between two great fleets.

On the 11th of January, 1744, when the *Berwick* joined the British fleet, it had rendezvoused at the Hyères Islands, a little east of Toulon, watching the movements of twelve Spanish ships-of-the-line, which had taken refuge in the port. As these were unwilling to put to sea trusting to their own strength, the French Admiral De Court was ordered to accompany and protect them when they sailed. This becoming known, Admiral Mathews had concentrated his fleet, which by successive reinforcements—the *Berwick* among others—numbered twenty-eight of-the-line when the allies, in about equal force, began to come out on the 20th of February.

The action which ensued owes its historical significance wholly to the fact that it illustrated conspicuously, and in more than one detail, the degenerate condition of the official staff of the British navy; the demoralization of ideals, and the low average of professional competency.<sup>3</sup> That there was plenty of good metal was also shown, but the proportion of alloy was dangerously great. That the machinery of the organization was likewise bad, the administrative system culpably negligent as well as inefficient, had been painfully manifested in the equipment of the ships, in the quality of the food, and in the indifferent character of the ships' crews; but in this respect Hawke had not less to complain of than others, having represented forcibly

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<sup>3</sup> For the account of Mathews's action, including Hawke's personal share in it, see *ante*, pp. 21-47.

to the Admiralty the miserable unfitness of the men sent him. Nevertheless, despite all drawbacks, including therein a signalling system so rudimentary and imperfect as to furnish a ready excuse to the unwilling, as well as a recurrent perplexity to those honestly wishing to obey their orders, he showed that good will and high purpose could not only lead a man to do his full duty as directed, but guide him to independent initiative action when opportunity offered. Under all external conditions of difficulty and doubt, or even of cast-iron rule, the principle was as true then as when Nelson formulated it, that no captain when in doubt could do very wrong if he placed his ship alongside an enemy. That Hawke so realized it brought out into more glaring relief the failure of so many of his colleagues on this occasion.

But the lesson would be in great part lost, if there were to be seen in this lapse only the personal element of the delinquents, and not the widespread decline of professional tone. Undoubtedly, of course, it is true that the personal equation, as always, made itself felt, but here as intensifying an evil which had its principal source elsewhere.

Hawke carried Nelson's maxim into effect. Upon the signal for battle he took his own ship into close action with the antagonist allotted to him by the order of the fleet; but after beating her out of the line he looked round for more work to do. Seeing then that several of the British vessels had not come within point-blank, but, through professional timidity, or over-cautious reverence for the line of battle, were engaging at long range a single Spaniard,

he quitted his own position, brought her also to close quarters, and after an obstinate contest, creditable to both parties, forced her to surrender. She was the only ship to haul down her flag that day, and her captain refused to surrender his sword to any but Hawke, whom alone he accepted as his vanquisher.

A generation or two later Hawke's conduct in this matter would have drawn little attention; it would not have been exceptional in the days of St. Vincent and Nelson, nor even in that of Howe. At the time of its occurrence, it was not only in sharp contrast with much that happened on the same field of battle, but it was somewhat contrary to rule. It possessed so far the merit of originality; and that on the right side,—the side of fighting. As in all active life, so in war a man is more readily pardoned for effecting too much than too little; and it was doubly so here, because it was evident from the behavior of his peers that he must expect no backing in the extra work he took upon himself. Their aloofness emphasized his forwardness; and the fact that through the withdrawal of his admiral for the night, the prize was ultimately retaken, together with an officer and seamen he had placed on board, fixed still further attention upon the incident, in which Hawke's action was the one wholly creditable feature.

The effect of the battle upon his fortunes was summed up in a phrase. When his first lieutenant was sent to report the loss of the prize-crew to Rear-Admiral Rowley, the commander of the division, the latter replied, among other things, that "he had not been well acquainted with Captain Hawke before, but he

should now be well acquainted with him from his behavior." Like Nelson at St. Vincent, Hawke was now revealed, not to the navy only but to the nation,— "through his behavior." Somewhat exceptionally, the king personally took knowledge of him, and stood by him. George II. paid most interested attention to the particulars elicited by the Courts-Martial,—a fact which doubtless contributed to make him so sternly unyielding in the case of Byng, twelve years later. To the king Hawke became "my captain;" and his influence was directly used when, in a flag promotion in 1747, some in the Admiralty proposed to include Hawke in the retirement of senior captains, which was a common incident in such cases. "I will not have Hawke 'yellowed,'" was the royal fiat; a yellow admiral being the current phrase for one set aside from further active employment.

Such were the circumstances under which Hawke first received experience of the fighting conditions of the navy. Whatever his previous attitude towards accepted traditions of professional practice, this no doubt loosened the fetters; for they certainly never constrained him in his subsequent career. He remained in the Mediterranean fleet, generally upon detached services in command of divisions of ships, until the end of 1745. Returning then to England, he saw no further active service until he became a Rear-Admiral—of the White—on July 15, 1747.

The promotions being numerous, Hawke's seniority as captain carried him well up the list of rear-admirals, and he was immediately employed; hoisting his flag July 22d. He then

became second to Sir Peter Warren, commander-in-chief of the "Western Squadron." This cruised in the Bay of Biscay, from Ushant to Finisterre, to intercept the naval divisions, and the accompanying convoys of merchant and transport ships, with which the French were then seeking to maintain their colonial empire in North America and in India: an empire already sorely shaken, and destined to fall finally in the next great war.

Hawke was now in the road of good luck, pure and unadulterated. His happy action in capturing the *Poder* illustrates indeed opportunity improved; but it was opportunity of the every day sort, and it is the merit that seized it, rather than the opportunity itself, that strikes the attention. The present case was different. A young rear-admiral had little reason to hope for independent command; but Warren, a well-tryed officer, possessing the full confidence of the First Lord, Anson, himself a master in the profession, was in poor health, and for that reason had applied for Hawke to be "joined with him in the command," apparently because he was the one flag-officer immediately available. He proposed that Hawke should for the present occasion take his place, sail with a few ships named, and with them join the squadron, then at sea in charge of a captain. Anson demurred at first, on the ground of Hawke's juniority,—he was forty-two,—and Warren, while persisting in his request, shares the doubt; for he writes, "I observe what you say about the ships abroad being under so young an officer. I am, and have been uneasy about it, though I hope he will do well, *and*

*it could not then be avoided.*" Anson, however, was not fixed in his opposition; for Warren continued, "From your letter I have so little reason to doubt his being put under my command, that I have his instructions all ready; and he is prepared to go at a moment's notice." The instructions were issued the following day, August 8th, and on the 9th Hawke sailed. But while there was in this so much of luck, he was again to show that he was not one to let occasion slip. Admiral Farragut is reported to have said, "Every man has *one* chance." It depends upon himself whether he is by it made or marred. Burrish and Hawke toed the same line on the morning of February 22d, and they had had that day at least equal opportunity.

Hawke's adequacy to his present fortune betrayed itself again in a phrase to Warren, "I have nothing so much at heart as the faithful discharge of my duty, and in such manner as will give satisfaction both to the Lords of the Admiralty and yourself. This shall ever be my utmost ambition, and *no lucre of profit, or other views*, shall induce me to act otherwise." Not prize-money; but honor, through service. And this in fact not only ruled his thought but in the moment of decision inspired his act. Curiously enough, however, he was here at odds with the spirit of Anson and of Warren. The latter, in asking Hawke's employment, said the present cruise was less important than the one to succeed it, "for the galleons"—the Spanish treasure-ships—"make it a general rule to come home late in the fall or winter." Warren by prize-money and an American marriage was the richest commoner in

England, and Anson it was that had captured the great galleon five years before, to his own great increase; but it was Hawke who, acknowledging a letter from Warren, as this cruise was drawing to its triumphant close, wrote, "With respect to the galleons, as it is uncertain when they will come home and *likewise impossible for me to divide my force in the present necessitous condition of the ships under my command, I must lay aside all thoughts of them during this cruise.*" In this unhesitating subordination of pecuniary to military considerations we see again the temper of Nelson, between whom and Hawke there was much community of spirit, especially in their independence of ordinary motives and standards. "Not that I despise money," wrote Nelson near the end of a career in which he had never known ease of circumstances; "quite the contrary, I wish I had a hundred thousand pounds this moment;" but "I keep the frigates about me, for I know their value in the day of battle, and compared with that day, what signifies any prizes they might take?" Yet he had his legal share in every such prize.

The opening of October 14th, the eighth day after Hawke's letter to Warren just quoted, brought him the sight of his reward. At seven that morning, the fleet being then some four hundred miles west of La Rochelle in France, a number of sails were seen in the southeast. Chase was given at once, and within an hour it was evident, from the great crowd of vessels, that it was a large convoy outward-bound which could only be enemies. It was in fact a fleet of three hundred French merchantmen,

under the protection of eight ships-of-the-line and one of fifty guns, commanded by Commodore L'Etenduère. The force then with Hawke were twelve of-the-line and two of fifty guns. Frigates and lighter vessels of course accompanied both fleets. The average size and armament of the French vessels were considerably greater than those of the British; so that, although the latter had an undoubted superiority, it was far from as great as the relative numbers would indicate. Prominent British officers of that day claimed that a French sixty-gun ship was practically the equal of a British seventy-four. In this there may have been exaggeration; but they had good opportunity for judging, as many French ships were captured.

When L'Etenduère saw that he was in the presence of a superior enemy, he very manfully drew out his ships of war from the mass, and formed them in order of battle, covering the convoy, which he directed to make its escape accompanied by one of the smaller ships-of-the-line with the light cruisers. He contrived also to keep to windward of the approaching British. With so strong a force interposed, Hawke saw that no prize-money was easily to be had, but for that fortune his mind was already prepared. He first ordered his fleet to form order of battle; but finding time was thereby lost he changed the signal to that for a general chase, which freed the faster sailers to use their utmost speed and join action with the enemy, secure of support in due time by their consorts as they successively came up.

Half an hour before noon the leading British reached the

French rear, already under short canvas. The admiral then made signal to engage, and the battle began. As the ships under fire reduced sail, the others overtook them, passed by the unengaged side and successively attacked from rear to van. As Hawke himself drew near, Rodney's ship, the *Eagle*, having her wheel and much of her rigging shot away, was for the time unmanageable and fell twice on board the flag-ship, the *Devonshire*, driving her to leeward, and so preventing her from close action with the French flag-ship *Tonnant*, of eighty guns, a force far exceeding that of the *Devonshire*, which had but sixty-six. "This prevented our attacking *Le Monarque*, 74, and the *Tonnant*, within any distance to do execution. However we attempted both, especially the latter. While we were engaged with her, the breechings of all our lower-deck guns broke, and the guns flew fore and aft, which obliged us to shoot ahead, for our upper guns could not reach her." The breaking of the breechings—the heavy ropes which take the strain of the guns' recoil—was doubtless accelerated by the undue elevation necessitated by the extreme range. The collision with the *Eagle* was one of the incidents common to battle, but it doubtless marred the completeness of the victory. Of the eight French ships engaged, six were taken; two, the *Tonnant* and her next astern, escaped, though the former was badly mauled.

Despite the hindrance mentioned, Hawke's personal share in the affair was considerable, through the conspicuous activity of the flag-ship. Besides the skirmish at random shot with

the *Tonnant*, she engaged successively the *Trident*, 64, and the *Terrible*, 74, both which were among the prizes. He was entirely satisfied also with the conduct of all his captains,—save one. The freedom of action permitted to them by the general chase, with the inspiring example of the admiral himself, was nobly used. "Captain Harland of the *Tilbury*, 60, observing that the *Tonnant* fired single guns at us in order to dismast us, stood on the other tack, *between her and the Devonshire*, and gave her a very smart fire." It was no small gallantry for a 60 thus to pass close under the undiverted broadside of an 80,—nearly double her force,—and that without orders; and Hawke recognized the fact by this particular notice in the despatch. With similar initiative, as the *Tonnant* and *Intrépide* were seen to be escaping, Captain Saunders of the *Yarmouth*, 64, pursued them on his own motion, and was accompanied, at his suggestion, by the sixty-gun ships of *Rodney* and of *Saumarez*. A detached action of an hour followed, in which *Saumarez* fell. The enemy escaped, it is true; but that does not impeach the judgment, nor lessen the merits, of the officers concerned, for their ships were both much smaller and more injured than those they attacked. Harland and Saunders became distinguished admirals; of *Rodney* it is needless to say the same.

In his report of the business, Hawke used a quaint but very expressive phrase, "As the enemy's ships were large, *they took a great deal of drubbing*, and (consequently) lost all their masts, except two, who had their foremasts left. This has obliged me to

lay-to for these two days past, in order to put them into condition to be brought into port, as well as our own, which have suffered greatly." Ships large in tonnage were necessarily also ships large in scantling, heavy ribbed, thick-planked, in order to bear their artillery; hence also with sides not easy to be pierced by the weak ordnance of that time. They were in a degree armored ships, though from a cause differing from that of to-day; hence much "drubbing" was needed, and the prolongation of the drubbing entailed increase of incidental injury to spars and rigging, both their own and those of the enemy. Nor was the armor idea, directly, at all unrecognized even then; for we are told of the *Real Felipe* in Mathews's action, that, being so weakly built that she could carry only twenty-four-pounders on her lower deck, she had been "fortified in the most extraordinary surprising manner; her sides being lined four or five foot thick everywhere with junk or old cables to hinder the shot from piercing."

It has been said that the conduct of one captain fell under Hawke's displeasure. At a Council of War called by him after the battle, to establish the fitness of the fleet to pursue the convoy, the other captains objected to sitting with Captain Fox of the *Kent*, until he had cleared himself from the imputation of misbehavior in incidents they had noticed. Hawke was himself dissatisfied with Fox's failure to obey a signal, and concurred in the objection. On the subsequent trial, the Court expressly cleared the accused of cowardice, but found him guilty of certain errors of judgment, and specifically of leaving the *Tonnant* while

the signal for close action was flying. As the *Tonnant* escaped, the implication of accountability for that result naturally follows. For so serious a consequence the sentence only was that he be dismissed his ship, and, although never again employed, he was retired two years after as a rear-admiral. It was becoming increasingly evident that error of judgment is an elastic phrase which can be made to cover all degrees of faulty action, from the mistakes to which every man is liable and the most faithful cannot always escape, to conduct wholly incompatible with professional efficiency or even manly honor.

The case of Fox was one of many occurring at about this period, which, however differing in detail between themselves, showed that throughout the navy, both in active service before the enemy, and in the more deliberate criteria of opinion which influence Courts-Martial, there was a pronounced tendency to lowness of standard in measuring officer-like conduct and official responsibility for personal action; a misplaced leniency, which regarded failure to do the utmost with indulgence, if without approval. In the stringent and awful emergencies of war too much is at stake for such easy tolerance. Error of judgment is one thing; error of conduct is something very different, and with a difference usually recognizable. To style errors of conduct "errors of judgment" denies, practically, that there are standards of action external to the individual, and condones official misbehavior on the ground of personal incompetency. Military standards rest on demonstrable facts of experience,

and should find their sanction in clear professional opinion. So known, and so upheld, the unfortunate man who falls below them, in a rank where failure may work serious harm, has only himself to blame; for it is his business to reckon his own capacity before he accepts the dignity and honors of a position in which the interests of the nation are intrusted to his charge.

An uneasy consciousness of these truths, forced upon the Navy and the Government by widespread shortcomings in many quarters—of which Mathews's battle was only the most conspicuous instance—resulted in a very serious modification of the Articles of War, after the peace. Up to 1748 the articles dealing with misconduct before the enemy, which had been in force since the first half of the reign of Charles II., assigned upon conviction the punishment of "death, or other punishment, as the circumstances of the offence shall deserve and the Court-Martial shall judge fit." After the experiences of this war, the last clause was omitted. Discretion was taken away. Men were dissatisfied, whether justly or not, with the use of their discretion made by Courts-Martial, and deprived them of it. In the United States Navy, similarly, at the beginning of the Civil War, the Government was in constant struggle with Courts-Martial to impose sentences of severity adequate to the offence; leaving the question of remission, or of indulgence, to the executive. These facts are worthy of notice, for there is a facile popular impression that Courts-Martial err on the side of stringency. The writer, from a large experience of naval Courts, upon offenders of many

ranks, is able to affirm that it is not so. Marryat, in his day, midway between the two periods here specified, makes the same statement, in "Peter Simple." "There is an evident inclination towards the prisoner; every allowance and every favor granted him, and no legal quibbles attended to." It may be added that the inconvenience and expense of assembling Courts make the executive chary of this resort, which is rarely used except when the case against an accused is pretty clear,—a fact that easily gives rise to a not uncommon assertion, that Courts-Martial are organized to convict.

This is the antecedent history of Byng's trial and execution. There had been many examples of weak and inefficient action—of distinct errors of conduct—such as Byng was destined to illustrate in the highest rank and upon a large scale, entailing an unusual and conspicuous national disaster; and the offenders had escaped, with consequences to themselves more or less serious, but without any assurance to the nation that the punishment inflicted was raising professional standards, and so giving reasonable certainty that the like derelictions would not recur. Hence it came to pass, in 1749, not amid the agitations of war and defeats, but in profound peace, that the article was framed under which Byng suffered:

"Every person in the fleet, who through cowardice, negligence, or disaffection, shall in time of action, . . . not do his utmost to take or destroy every ship which it shall be his duty to engage; and to assist all and every of His Majesty's

ships, or those of His allies, which it shall be his duty to assist and relieve, ... being convicted thereof by sentence of a Court-Martial, shall suffer death."

Let it therefore be observed, as historically certain, that the execution of Byng in 1757 is directly traceable to the war of 1739-1747. It was not determined, as is perhaps generally imagined, by an obsolete statute revived for the purpose of a judicial murder; but by a recent Act, occasioned, if not justified, by circumstances of marked national humiliation and injury. The offences specified are those of which repeated instances had been recently given; and negligence is ranked with more positive faults, because in practice equally harmful and equally culpable. Every man in active life, whatever his business, knows this to be so.

At the time his battle with L'Etenduère was fought, Hawke was actually a commander-in-chief; for Warren, through his disorder increasing upon him, had resigned the command, and Hawke had been notified of the fact. Hence there did not obtain in his case the consideration, so absurdly advanced for limiting Nelson's reward after the Nile, that he was acting under the orders of a superior several hundred miles away. Nevertheless, Hawke, like Nelson later, was then a new man,—"a young officer;" and the honor he received, though certainly adequate for a victory over a force somewhat inferior, was not adequate when measured by that given to Anson, the First Lord of the Admiralty, for a much less notable achievement

six months before. Anson was raised to the peerage; Hawke was only given the Order of the Bath, the ribbon which Nelson coveted, because a public token, visible to all, that the wearer had done distinguished service. It was at that period a much greater distinction than it afterwards became, through the great extension in numbers and the division into classes. He was henceforth Sir Edward Hawke; and shortly after the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, signed April 30, 1748, another flag-promotion raised him to the rank of Vice-Admiral, of the Blue Squadron.

Such rank, accompanied by such recognized merit, insured that he should thenceforth always command in chief; and so it was, with a single brief interval due to a very special and exceptional cause to be hereafter related. During the years of peace, from 1748 to 1755, his employment was mainly on shore, in dockyard command, which carried with it incidentally a good deal of presiding over Courts-Martial. This duty, in his hands, could hardly fail to raise professional standards, with all the effect that precedents, established by the rulings and decisions of Courts, civil and military, exert upon practice. Such a period, however, affords but little for narration, either professional or personal, except when the particular occupations mentioned are the subject of special study. General interest they cannot be said to possess.

But while thus unmarked on the biographical side, historically these years were pregnant with momentous events, which not only affected the future of great nations then existing, but were

to determine for all time the extension or restriction of their social systems and political tendencies in vast distant regions yet unoccupied by civilized man, or still in unstable political tenure. The balance of world power, in short, was in question, and that not merely as every occurrence, large or small, contributes its something to a general result, but on a grand and decisive scale. The phrase "world politics," if not yet invented, characterizes the issues then eminently at stake, though they probably were not recognized by contemporaries, still blinded by the traditions which saw in Europe alone the centre of political interests.

To realize the conditions, and their bearing upon a future which has become our present, we should recall that in 1748 the British Empire, as we understand the term, did not exist; that Canada and Louisiana—meaning by the latter the whole undefined region west of the Mississippi—were politically and socially French; that between them the wide territory from the Alleghanies to the Mississippi was claimed by France, and the claim vigorously contested not only by Great Britain herself, but by the thirteen British colonies which became the United States of America; that in India the representatives of both mother countries were striving for mastery, not merely through influence in the councils of native rulers, but by actual territorial sway, and that the chances seemed on the whole to favor France.

In the great struggle for Anglo-Saxon predominance, which had begun under William III., but was now approaching its crisis and final decision in the Seven Years War, the determining factor

was to be the maritime strength of Great Britain. It is, therefore, the distinctive and distinguished significance of Hawke's career that during so critical a period he not only was the most illustrious and able officer of her navy—the exponent of her sea-power—but that by the force of his personality he chiefly shaped the naval outcome. He carried on the development of naval warfare, revolutionized ideas, raised professional standards, and thereby both affected the result in his own time, and perpetuated an influence, the effect of which was to be felt in the gigantic contests of later days. In this eminent particular, which involves real originality, no sea officer of the eighteenth century stands with him; in this respect only he and Nelson, who belongs rather to the nineteenth, are to be named together.

In the years of nominal peace, 1748-1755, the Navy of Great Britain was permitted by a politically cautious Government to decline much in power; but there was compensation in the fact that that of France drooped equally. In both countries there was then, as there has been ever since, a party opposed to over-sea enterprise. "The partisans of the Ministry," wrote Walpole in 1755, "d—n the Plantations [Colonies], and ask if we are to involve ourselves in a war for them." The French government underwent a like revulsion of feeling as regarded India, and in 1754 recalled Dupleix in mid-career, in order to quiet the remonstrances of Great Britain. It would be irrelevant, were it not signally instructive, to remark that both nations passed under the influence of the same ideas a hundred years later. In the

middle of the nineteenth century, the preponderant expression in England was that the colonies were unprofitable incumbrances, and, if occasion arose, should be encouraged to separate rather than urged to remain; while France, through whatever motive, at a critical moment abandoned the field in Egypt, by refusing joint action. It is, therefore, probably the result of a true national genius, asserting itself above temporary aberrations, that the close of the nineteenth century saw France wholly excluded, politically, from Egypt, as she had before been from India, and Great Britain involved in an expensive war, the aim of which was the preservation of the imperial system, in the interest not only of the mother country, but of the colonies as well.

And that it was in the interest of her colonies was precisely the all important part which differentiated the Seven Years War in its day, and the South African War in our day, from the struggle, so disastrous to the Empire, that is known as the American Revolution. "There is no repose for our thirteen colonies," wrote Franklin a hundred and fifty years ago, "so long as the French are masters of Canada." "There is no repose for British colonists in South Africa," was the virtual assertion of Natal and the Cape Colony, "so long as the Boer political methods are maintained in the Transvaal with the pledged support of the Orange Free State." Irreconcilable differences of political and social systems, when brought into close contact, involve irrepressible conflict, and admit of no lasting solution except the subjugation and consequent submersion of one or the other.

Such a final settlement was attained in North America and in India by the Seven Years War. The full results thereof even we of this day have not yet seen; for who can yet predict the effect upon the question of the Pacific and of China, that by this war was assured the dominance of the Anglo-Saxon political and legal tradition over the whole American continent north of the tropics, and that the same tradition shall, for a future yet indeterminate, decisively shape the course of India and the Philippines? The preceding war, 1739-1748, had been substantially inconclusive on the chief points at issue, because European questions intervening had diverted the attention of both France and Great Britain from America and from India; and the exhaustion of both had led to a perfunctory compact, in which the underlying contention was substantially ignored in order to reach formal agreement. That the French conquest of Madras, in India, was yielded in exchange for Louisburg and Cape Breton Island, which the American colonists had won for England, typifies concisely the *status quo* to which both parties were willing momentarily to revert, while they took breath before the inevitable renewal of the strife, with added fury, a few years later; but then upon its proper scene, the sea and the over-sea regions in dispute.

In this great arbitrament Hawke was at once called forth to play his part. In 1754 diplomatic contention had become acrimonious, and various events showed that the moment of open conflict was approaching. The squadron in India was then

considerably increased. In the beginning of 1755 Hawke was again afloat to command the Channel Fleet, the operations of which extended ordinarily from the Channel, over the Bay of Biscay, to Cape Finisterre. A naval force was collecting at the same time at Portsmouth, under Boscawen, to counteract the preparations the French were known to be making in North America. It sailed soon afterwards, with orders to intercept a squadron convoying reinforcements for Canada; and on the 8th of June two of these ships were captured off the mouth of the St. Lawrence, the remainder escaping under cover of a fog. In July Hawke went out, with instructions to take any French ships-of-the-line that he might meet; and in August he was further directed to send into port French ships of every kind, merchant and other, that he might encounter. Before the end of the year three hundred trading vessels, valued at \$6,000,000, had been thus seized. War had not yet been declared, but the captured vessels were held, as on other occasions before and after, as hostages to await the settlement of existing difficulties.

The French government protested of course, and recalled its ambassador, but it did not proceed to formal hostilities. A great stroke was in preparation at Toulon, which could be covered for a while by diplomatic correspondence, coupled with angry demonstrations on the Atlantic and Channel coasts. On the 10th of April, 1756, twelve French ships-of-the-line and fifteen thousand troops sailed for Minorca, then a British possession, and in the absence of a hostile fleet effected a landing without

opposition. The British cabinet having taken alarm too late, Admiral Byng had sailed from Portsmouth, with ten ships, only three days before the French left Toulon; when he arrived off Port Mahon, six weeks later, a practicable breach in the works had already been made. The French fleet was cruising outside in support of the siege, and Byng, whose force had been increased to thirteen ships, engaged it on May 20. The action was in itself indecisive; but, upon the opinion of a council of war that nothing more could be done, Byng retired to Gibraltar. The result to him personally is well known. Port Mahon surrendered on June 28. War had by this been declared; by Great Britain on the 17th of May, and by France June 20, 1756.

When the news of Byng's retreat was received in England, Hawke was sent out to supersede him. He went only personally, accompanied by a second in command, but with no fleet, and with sealed instructions. Opening these when he reached Gibraltar, he found orders to send home Byng and his second in command, and to institute an inquiry into the conduct of the captains, suspending any one found "not to have acted with due spirit and vigor." An investigation of this kind would enable him to form an opinion of Byng's own conduct even more exact and authentic than his other official opportunities for personal intercourse with the chief actors, but he must have refrained with much discretion from expressing his judgment on the affair in such way as to reach the public ear. It was stated in the "Gentleman's Magazine," in 1766, that an inquiry was provoked

in the House of Commons, shortly after these events, by Pitt, who took Byng's side; but that Hawke, being a member of the House, denied some of Pitt's allegations as to the inadequacy of Byng's fleet, on the strength of his own personal observation after taking over the command. Thereupon, so the account says, the categorical test question, the *argumentum ad hominem*, was put to him whether with Byng's means he could have beat the enemy; and the manner of the first Pitt, in thus dealing with an opponent in debate, can be imagined from what we know of him otherwise. Whether the story be true or not, Hawke was not a man to be so overborne, and the reply related is eminently characteristic, "By the grace of God, he would have given a good account of them." Whatever the reason, there seems little doubt that Pitt did not like Hawke; but the latter was at once too independent to care, and too necessary to be discarded.

He remained in the Mediterranean only six months, returning to England in January, 1757. His tenure of this command was marked by an incident which exemplifies the vigorous exercise of power frequent in naval commanders, in the days when neither steam nor telegraph existed to facilitate reference home for instructions; when men with their strong right arms redressed on the spot what they thought a wrong. A British ship carrying supplies to Gibraltar, where Hawke was then lying, was captured by a French privateer and taken into the Spanish port of Algeciras, on the opposite side of the bay. Her surrender was demanded from the governor of the port, Spain being then

neutral; but, being refused, the admiral sent the boats of the squadron and cut her out. This being resisted by the Spanish forts, a hundred British seamen were killed or wounded. On the admiral's return home, Pitt is reported to have told him that he thought he would himself have acted in the same way, but would have made some concession afterwards. Hawke replied that his duty, having the country's force in his hands, was to act as he had,—not to make concessions; but that the Ministry could deal with the case subsequently as it thought fit. In other words, as in joint operations with the army, later in the year, he took the ground that the land officers were the judges of their own business, but that he would see them put safe on shore, as a first step; so in a matter affecting national honor, as he conceived it, he would do the seaman's part and redress the injury, after which the civil authority could arrange with the other party. The known details of this transaction are not full enough to permit a decided opinion as to how far the admiral was justified in his action, judged even by the international law of the day. It was not necessarily a breach of neutrality to admit a belligerent with her prize; but it would have been, had the French ship gone out from Algeciras, seized her prey, and returned with it. Whatever the facts, however, the episode illustrates interestingly the spirit of Hawke himself, and of the service of that day, as well as his characteristic independence towards superiors when he felt himself right.

From this time forward Hawke's service was confined to the

Channel Fleet. This was, during that war, the post for the most capable of British officers; for, while the matter at stake was over-sea predominance and conquest, yet both these depended upon the communications of the French colonies and distant possessions with the mother country. The source of all their strength, the one base indispensable to their operations, was the coast of France; to close exit from this was therefore to strike at the root. This was much less true for the colonies of Great Britain, at least in America; their numbers, and resources in every way, were so far superior to those of Canada that they needed only to be preserved from interference by the navy of France,—an end also furthered by the close watch of the French ports. This blockade, as it is often, but erroneously, styled, Hawke was the first to maintain thoroughly and into the winter months; and in so doing he gave an extension to the practice of naval warfare, which amounted to a veritable revolution in naval strategy. The conception was one possible only to a thorough seaman, who knew exactly and practically what ships could do; one also in whom professional knowledge received the moral support of strong natural self-confidence,—power to initiate changes, to assume novel responsibility, through the inner assurance of full adequacy to bear it.

All this Hawke had. The method, therefore, the holding the sea, and the exposure of heavy ships to weather before thought impossible, was well within the range of his ability,—of his native and acquired faculties; but it is due to him to recognize

the intellectual force, the originality, which lifted him above the accepted tradition of his predecessors, and by example transmitted to the future a system of warfare that then, as well as in his own hands, was to exercise a decisive effect upon the course of history. It is also to be remembered that he took this weighty step with instruments relatively imperfect, and greatly so. The bottoms of ships were not yet coppered; in consequence they fouled very rapidly, the result of which was loss of speed. This meant that much greater power, press of canvas, was needed to force them through the water, and that they had to be sent frequently into port to be cleaned. Thus they were less able than ships of later days to overtake an enemy, or to keep off a lee shore, while more intricate administration and more ships were required to maintain the efficiency of the squadron by a system of reliefs. Hawke noted also another difficulty,—the fatigue of the crews in cleaning their ships' bottoms. It was even more important to success, he said, to restore the seaman, worn by cruising, by a few days quiet and sleep in port, than to clean thoroughly at the expense of exhausting them. "If the enemy should slip out and run," he writes, "we must follow as fast as we can." Details such as these, as well as the main idea, must be borne in mind, if due credit is to be given to Hawke for one of the most decisive advances ever made in the practice of naval campaigning.

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