

ALFRED THAYER MAHAN

The Influence of sea Power upon
the French Revolution and Empire
1793-1812, vol I

Alfred Thayer Mahan

**The Influence of sea Power
upon the French Revolution
and Empire 1793-1812, vol I**

«Public Domain»

Mahan A.

The Influence of sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire
1793-1812, vol I / A. Mahan — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

PREFACE	5
CHAPTER I	7
CHAPTER II	22
CHAPTER III	42
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	49

A. T. Mahan

The Influence of sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire 1793-1812, vol I

PREFACE

THE present work, like its predecessor, "The Influence of Sea Power upon History, 1660-1783," is wholly a result of the author's connection with the United States Naval War College as lecturer upon Naval History and Naval Tactics.

When first asked to undertake that duty, the question naturally arose how to impart to the subject of Naval History an aspect which, in this very utilitarian age, should not be open to the ready reproach of having merely archaeological interest, and possessing no practical value for men called upon to use the changed materials of modern naval war. "You won't have much to say about history," was then the somewhat discouraging comment of a senior officer of his own service.

In pondering this matter, it occurred to the author—whose acquaintance with naval history was at that time wholly superficial—that the part played by navies, and by maritime power generally, as a factor in the results of history, and as shaping the destinies of nations and of the world, had received little or no particular attention. If this were so, an analysis of the course of events through a series of years, directed to show the influence of Sea Power upon History, would at least serve to imbue his hearers with an exalted sense of the mission of their calling; and might also, by throwing light upon the political bearings of naval force, contribute to give the service and the country a more definite impression of the necessity to provide a fleet adequate to great undertakings, lest, if an occasion should arise for what he has ventured to call "statesmanship directing arms," we should be found unprepared, through having no sufficient armed force to direct.

In avowing this as the original, and, for a time at least, almost the sole motive of his work, the author practically confesses that he at the beginning had no scientific appreciation or reasoned knowledge of the naval history of the past. Upon giving this the attention required by his new duties, and collating the various incidents with the teachings of recognized authorities upon land warfare, he soon came to recognize that the principles which they claimed to be of general application in their own specialty received also ample and convincing illustration in naval annals; although the development of the Art of War at sea has been slower, and is now less advanced, than on shore. This backward result has been due, partly, to uncertainties peculiar to the sea, and partly to a contempt for the study of the past, and of its experience, as "not practical," from which the naval profession has not yet wholly rid itself.

Thus, in its course, the author's former work, without abandoning its first simple motive, expanded into an attempt to analyze the strategic conduct of the naval campaigns, as well as the tactical features of the various battles—all too few—in which any clear tactical purpose was shown by the commanders engaged. The cordial reception given to the work by his professional brethren, in Great Britain as well as at home, has been to him not only most gratifying, but wholly unexpected. Its chief significance is, however, not personal. The somewhat surprised satisfaction testified is virtually an admission that, in the race for material and mechanical development, sea-officers as a class have allowed their attention to be unduly diverted from the systematic study of the Conduct of War, which is their peculiar and main concern. For, if the commendation bestowed be at all deserved, it is to be ascribed simply to the fact that the author has been led to give to the most important part of the profession an attention which it is in the power of any other officer to bestow, but which too few actually do.

That the author has done so is due, wholly and exclusively, to the Naval War College, which was instituted to promote such studies. If further success attend his present venture, it is his hope that this avowal may help to assure the long uncertain fortunes of the College, to which,—and to its founder, Rear-Admiral Stephen B. Luce,—he gratefully acknowledges his indebtedness for guiding him into a path he would not himself have found.

The term of this work is fixed at the year 1812; a date signalized by Napoleon's invasion of Russia, which wrecked his empire,—or at least gave the outward and visible token of the wreck,—and also by the outbreak of war between Great Britain and the United States. To the latter, as a subject of particular national interest, the author hopes in the near future to devote a special study.

A. T. MAHAN.

October, 1892.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

Outline of Events in Europe, 1783-1793

THE ten years following the Peace of Versailles, September 3, 1783, coming between the two great wars of American Independence and of the French Revolution, seem like a time of stagnation. The muttering and heaving which foretold the oncome of the later struggle were indeed to be heard by those whose ears were open, long before 1793. The opening events and violences which marked the political revolution were of earlier date, and war with Austria and Prussia began even in 1792; but the year 1793 stands out with a peculiar prominence, marked as it is by the murder of the king and queen, the beginning of the Reign of Terror, and the outbreak of hostilities with the great Sea Power, whose stubborn, relentless purpose and mighty wealth were to exert the decisive influence upon the result of the war. Untiring in sustaining with her gold the poorer powers of the Continent against the common enemy, dogged in bearing up alone the burden of the war, when one by one her allies dropped away, the year in which Great Britain, with her fleets, her commerce, and her money, rose against the French republic, with its conquering armies, its ruined navy, and its bankrupt treasury, may well be taken as the beginning of that tremendous strife which ended at Waterloo.

To the citizen of the United States, the war whose results were summed up and sealed in the Treaty of Versailles is a landmark of history surpassing all others in interest and importance. His sympathies are stirred by the sufferings of the many, his pride animated by the noble constancy of the few whose names will be forever identified with the birth-throes of his country. Yet in a less degree this feeling may well be shared by a native of Western Europe, though he have not the same vivid impression of the strife, which, in so distant a land and on so small a scale, brought a new nation to life. This indeed was the *great* outcome of that war; but in its progress, Europe, India, and the Sea had been the scenes of deeds of arms far more dazzling and at times much nearer home than the obscure contest in America. In dramatic effect nothing has exceeded the three-years siege of Gibraltar, teeming as it did with exciting interest, fluctuating hopes and fears, triumphant expectation and bitter disappointment. England from her shores saw gathered in the Channel sixty-six French and Spanish ships-of-the-line,—a force larger than had ever threatened her since the days of the Great Armada, and before which her inferior numbers had to fly, for the first time, to the shelter of her ports. Rodney and Suffren had conducted sea campaigns, fought sea fights, and won sea victories which stirred beyond the common the hearts of men in their day, and which still stand conspicuous in the story of either navy. In one respect above all, this war was distinguished; in the development, on both sides, of naval power. Never since the days of De Ruyter and Tourville had so close a balance of strength been seen upon the seas. Never since the Peace of Versailles to our own day has there been such an approach to equality between the parties to a sea war.

The three maritime nations issued wearied from the strife, as did also America; but the latter, though with many difficulties still to meet, was vigorous in youth and unfettered by bad political traditions. The colonists of yesterday were thoroughly fitted to retrieve their own fortunes and those of their country; to use the boundless resources which Divine Providence had made ready to their hands. It was quite otherwise with France and Spain; while Great Britain, though untouched with the seeds of decay that tainted her rivals, was weighed down with a heavy feeling of overthrow, loss and humiliation, which for the moment hid from her eyes the glory and wealth yet within her reach.

Colonial ambition was still at its loftiest height among the nations of Europe, and she had lost her greatest, most powerful colony. Not only the king and the lords, but the mass of the people had set their hearts upon keeping America. Men of all classes had predicted ruin to the Empire if it parted with such a possession; and now they had lost it, wrung from them after a bitter struggle, in which their old enemies had overborne them on the field they called their own, the Sea. The Sea Power of Great Britain had been unequal to the task laid upon it, and so America was gone. A less resolute people might have lost hope.

If the triumph of France and Spain was proportionate to their rival's loss, this was no true measure of their gains, nor of the relative positions of the three in the years after the war. American Independence profited neither France nor Spain. The latter had indeed won back the Floridas and Minorca; but she had utterly failed before Gibraltar, and Jamaica had not even been attacked. Minorca, as Nelson afterwards said, was always England's when she wanted it. It belonged not to this power or that, but to the nation that controlled the sea; so England retook it in 1798, when her fleets again entered the Mediterranean. France had gained even less than Spain. Her trading posts in India had been restored; but they, even more than Minorca, were defenceless unless in free communication with and supported by the sea power of the mother-country. In the West Indies she returned to Great Britain more than the latter did to her. "France," says a French historian, "had accomplished the duties of her providential mission" (in freeing America); "her moral interests, the interests of her glory and of her ideas were satisfied. The interests of her material power had been badly defended by her government; the only solid advantage she had obtained was depriving England of Minorca, that curb on Toulon, far more dangerous to us when in their hands than is Gibraltar." ¹

Unfortunately at this moment France was far richer in ideas, moral and political, and in renown, than in solid power. The increasing embarrassment of the Treasury forced her to stay her hand, and to yield to her rival terms of peace utterly beyond what the seeming strength of either side justified. The French navy had reaped glory in the five years of war; not so much, nearly, as French writers claim for it, but still it had done well, and the long contest must have increased the efficiency of its officers along with their growing experience. A little more time only was wanted for France, allied to Spain, to gain lasting results as well as passing fame. This time poverty refused her.

Spain, as for centuries back, still depended for her income almost wholly upon her treasure ships from America. Always risked by war, this supply became more than doubtful when the undisputed control of the sea passed to an enemy. The policy of Spain, as to peace or war, was therefore tied fast to that of France, without whose navy her shipping lay at England's mercy; and, though the national pride clung obstinately to its claim for Gibraltar, it was forced to give way.

Great Britain alone, after all her losses, rested on a solid foundation of strength. The American contest by itself had cost her nearly £100,000,000, and rather more than that amount had during the war been added to the national debt; but two years later this had ceased to increase, and soon the income of the State was greater than the outgo. Before the end of 1783, the second William Pitt, then a young man of twenty-four, became prime minister. With genius and aims specially fitted to the restorative duties of a time of peace, the first of British finance ministers in the opinion of Mr. Gladstone, ² he bent his great powers to fostering the commerce and wealth of the British people. With firm but skilful hand he removed, as far as the prejudices of the day would permit and in the face of much opposition, the fetters, forged by a mistaken policy, that hampered the trade of the Empire. Promoting the exchange of goods with other nations, simplifying the collection of taxes and the revenue, he added at once to the wealth of the people and to the income of the State. Although very small in amount, as compared with the enormous figures of later years, the exports and imports of Great Britain increased over fifty per cent between the years 1784 and 1792. Even with the lately

¹ Martin, *Histoire de France*, vol. xix. p. 370.

² *Nineteenth Century Review*, June, 1887, p. 922.

severed colonies of North America the same rate of gain, as compared with the trade before the war, held good; while with the old enemy of his father and of England, with France, there was concluded in 1786 a treaty of commerce which was exceedingly liberal for those days, and will, it is said, bear a favorable comparison with any former or subsequent treaty between the two countries. "In the course of little more than three years from Mr. Pitt's acceptance of office as First Lord of the Treasury," says the eulogist of his distinguished rival, Fox, "great commercial and financial reforms had been effected.... The nation overcoming its difficulties, and rising buoyant from depression, began rapidly to increase its wealth, to revive its spirit, and renew its strength."³

Such was the home condition of the British people; but fully to appreciate the advantageous position to which it was rising, in preparation for the great conflict still unforeseen, it must be remembered that all things worked together to centre and retain the political executive power in the hands of Pitt. The feelings of the king, then a very real force in the nation; the confidence of the people, given to his father's son and fixed by the wisdom of his own conduct and the growth of the moneyed prosperity so dear to the British heart; the personal character of his only rival in ability, —all combined to commit the political guidance of the State to one man at the great crisis when such unity of action was essential to strength. Whether the great peace minister was equal to the wisest direction of war has been questioned, and has been denied. Certainly it was not the office he himself would have chosen; but it was a great gain for England that she was at this time able to give herself wholly to a single leader. He took office with a minority of one hundred in the House of Commons, held it for two months constantly out-voted, and then dissolving Parliament appealed to the country. The election gave him a majority of over a hundred,—a foretaste of the unwavering support he received from the representatives of the people during the early and critical years of the French Revolution, when the yet fluid opinions of the nation were gradually being cast and hardened into that set conviction and determination characteristic of the race.

How different the state of France is well known. The hopeless embarrassment of the finances, hopeless at least under the political and social conditions, the rapid succession of ministers, each sinking deeper in entanglements, the weak character of the king, the conflict of opinions, the lack of sympathy between classes, all tending to the assembling of the Notables in February, 1787, and the yet more pregnant meeting of the States General, May 4, 1789, which was the beginning of the end. France was moneyless and leaderless.

But while the Western countries of Europe were by these circumstances disposed or constrained to wish for the continuance of peace, restlessness showed itself in other quarters and in ways which, from the close relations of the European States, disquieted the political atmosphere. The Austrian Netherlands and Holland, Poland and Turkey, the Black Sea and the Baltic, became the scene of diplomatic intrigues and of conflicts, which, while they did not involve the great Western Powers in actual war, caused them anxiety and necessitated action.

The Empress-Queen of Austria and Hungary, Maria Theresa, had died in 1780. Her son, the Emperor Joseph II., came to the throne in the prime of life, and with his head full of schemes for changing and bettering the condition of his dominions. In 1781, the weakness of Holland being plainly shown by her conduct of the war with Great Britain, and the other countries having their hands too full to interfere, he demanded and received the surrender of the fortified towns in the Austrian Netherlands; which, under the name of the "barrier towns," had been held and garrisoned by Holland since the Peace of Utrecht in 1713, as a bridle upon the ambition of France. At the same time the circumstances of the great maritime contest, which during the American Revolution covered all the seas of Europe, impelled every neutral nation having a seaboard to compete for the carrying trade. Holland for a time had shared this profit with the nations of the North; but when Great Britain, rightly or wrongly, forced her into war, the trade which had been carried on through Holland and her great

³ Lord John Russell's Life of Fox, vol. ii. p. 137.

rivers reaching into the heart of Germany, being denied its natural channel, sought a new one through the Austrian Netherlands by the port of Ostend. The growth of the latter, like that of Nassau during the Civil War in the United States, was forced and unhealthy,—due not to natural advantages but to morbid conditions; but it fostered the already strong wish of the emperor for a sea power which no other part of his dominions could give.

This movement of Belgian commerce was accelerated by the disappearance of the British carrying trade. As in the days of Louis XIV., before he had laid up his ships-of-the-line, so in the American War the cruisers and privateers of the allies, supported by the action of the combined fleets occupying the British navy, preyed ravenously on British shipping. In the days of the elder Pitt it had been said that commerce was made to live and thrive by war; but then the French great fleets had left the sea, and British armed ships protected trade and oppressed the enemy's cruisers. Between 1778 and 1783 Great Britain was fully engaged on every sea, opposing the combined fleets and protecting as far as she could her colonies. "This untoward state of things reduced the English merchants to difficulties and distresses, with respect to the means of carrying on their trade, which they had never experienced in any other war. Foreign vessels were used for the conveyance of their goods, and the protection of a foreign flag for the first time sought by Englishmen." ⁴ The writer forgot the days of Jean Bart, Duguay-Trouin, and Forbin; we may profitably note that like conditions lead to like results.

Thus, while America was struggling for life, and the contests of England, France, and Spain were heard in all quarters of the world, Netherland ships showed abroad on every sea the flag of an inland empire, and Ostend grew merrily; but if the petty port and narrow limits thus thrived, how should the emperor bear to see the great city of Antwerp, with its noble river and its proud commercial record, shut up from the sea as it had been since the Treaty of Westphalia? His discontent was deep and instant; but it was the misfortune of this prince that he took in hand more than his own capacity and the extent of his estates would let him complete. His attention being for the moment diverted to southeastern Europe, where Austria and Russia were then acting in diplomatic concert against the Porte, the question of Antwerp was dropped. Before it could be resumed, the Peace of Versailles had left Great Britain, France, and Holland—all so vitally interested in whatever concerned Belgium—free, though loath, to enter into a new contention. Matters having been for the time arranged with Turkey, the emperor again in 1784 renewed his demands, alleging, after the manner of statesmen, several collateral grievances, but on the main issue saying roundly that "the entire and free navigation of the Scheldt from Antwerp to the sea was a *sine qua non*" to any agreement.

The arguments—commercial, political, or founded on treaty—which were in this instance urged for or against the natural claim of a country to use a river passing through its own territory, to the sea that washes its shores, are not here in question; but it is important to analyze the far-reaching interests at stake, to note the bearing of this dispute upon them and so upon the general diplomacy of Europe, and thereby trace its intimate connection with that Sea Power whose influence upon the course of history at this period it is our aim to weigh. Though modified in expression by passing events, and even at times superficially reversed, like natural currents checked and dammed by contrary winds, these underlying tendencies—being dependent upon permanent causes—did not cease to exist during the storm of the Revolution. Ever ready to resume their course when the momentary opposition was removed, the appreciation of them serves to explain apparent contradictions, produced by the conflicts between transient necessity and enduring interests.

From that great centre of the world's commerce where the Scheldt, the Meuse, the Rhine, and the Thames meet in the North Sea, near the Straits of Dover, there then parted two principal lines of trade passing through European waters,—through seas, that is, along whose shores were planted many different powers, foreign and possibly hostile to each other. Of these two lines, one ended in the Baltic; the other, after skirting the coasts of France and the Spanish peninsula and running the

⁴ Annual Register, vol. 27, p. 10.

gantlet of the Barbary corsairs, ended in the Levant or Turkish Seas. The great Empire of Russia, which only made itself felt in the sphere of European politics after the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, had since then been moving forward not only its centre, which bore upon the continent of Europe, but also both its wings; one of which touched and overshadowed the Baltic on the North, while the other, through a steady course of pressure and encroachment upon the Turks, had now reached the Black Sea. This advance had been aided by the fixedness with which France and England, through their ancient rivalry and their colonial ambitions, had kept their eyes set upon each other and beyond the Atlantic; but the Peace of Versailles forced the combatants to pause, and gave them time to see other interests, which had been overlooked through the long series of wars waged, between 1739 and 1783, over commerce and colonies. It was then realized that not only had Russia, in the past half-century, advanced her lines by the partition of Poland and by taking from Sweden several provinces on the Baltic, but also that she had so added to her influence upon the Black Sea and over the Turkish Empire by successive aggressions, wresting bits of territory and establishing claims of interference in behalf of Turkish subjects, as to make her practical supremacy in Eastern waters a possibility of the future.

The Western Question, as it may fitly be called, had been settled by the birth of a new nation, destined to greatness and preponderance in the western hemisphere; the Eastern Question, phrase now so familiar, soon loomed on the horizon. Was it to receive a like solution? Was a great nation, already close to the spot, to win a position of exceptional advantage for dominating in eastern waters as America must do in western? for it must be remembered that, although the Levant was then only the end of a European trade route, both the history of the past and the well understood possibilities of the future pointed to it as one of the greatest centres of commerce, and therefore of human interest and political influence, in the world. The Levant and Egypt had then, and still keep, the same interest that is now being felt in the Isthmus of Panama and the Caribbean; and it is hard to imagine a more threatening condition of naval power than the possession of the Black Sea and its impregnable entrance, by a vigorous nation, so close to the Eastern highway of the world. The position in 1783 was the more dangerous from the close alliance and respective abilities of the rulers of Austria and Russia; the cool-headed and experienced Catharine, through her influence on her weaker colleague, directing the resources of both empires in a path most favorable to Russia.

The tendency of Russian growth, and the historic events which marked its progress, were, of course, well enough known in England long before; but there is a difference between knowing facts and realizing their full meaning. Circumstances alter cases; and men's minds, when strongly bent one way, do not heed what is passing elsewhere. Hence, in 1785, we find the attitude of Great Britain toward Russia very different from that of fifteen years earlier, when the empress and the Porte were at war. In 1770, British officers commanded Russian fleets and ships, and a British admiral had leave to take a place in the Russian Admiralty, with the promise of his home rank being restored to him. The Czarina sent a fleet of twenty sail-of-the-line from the Baltic to the Levant. They stopped and refitted in Spithead; Russian soldiers were landed and camped ashore to refresh themselves; English sergeants of marines were employed to drill them; a Russian eighty-gun ship, flying the flag of an Anglo-Russian admiral, was docked in Portsmouth and cut down to improve her sailing qualities. Thus comforted and strengthened they sailed for the Mediterranean; and, receiving further damage from the poor seamanship of their crews, they were again fitted at Port Mahon,—then an English dockyard,—for action in the Levant.⁵ When, among the hard knocks of the two following years, the Russians destroyed a Turkish fleet of fifteen ships-of-the-line in a port of Asia Minor, British lieutenants commanded the fire-ships, and a British commodore the covering squadron.

To us now, with our remembrance of Kars and Silistria, of the Crimea and Hobart Pasha, of Cyprus and Besika Bay, these things seem like a dream; and the more so, that the Mediterranean powers of the earlier day viewed the Russian approach with ill-concealed mistrust, and laid severe

⁵ See Annual Register, 1769, pp. 2-4; 1770, pp. 27-41, 67, 71, 75.

restrictions upon the use of their ports. But Turkey then, though a good friend to Great Britain, was a yet better friend to France; the Turkish alliance had been useful to the latter country by making diversion in her wars with Austria, Great Britain's natural ally; the French were the favored nation by Turkish commercial treaties, and a naval war in eastern waters could not but be injurious to their commerce. Difficulties about trade might even bring about a collision between France and Russia, which at least could do no harm to Great Britain at a time when her rival was known to be steadily building up her navy with a view to revenge past defeats; just as now she is thought to be looking for a day of reckoning with Germany. The Baltic trade was also of immense value, and the friendship of Russia was necessary thereto. Altogether, in 1770, the Russian nation, notwithstanding the French leanings of the Czarina, was, upon the whole, the friend of Great Britain's friends, and the opponent of her enemies,—especially of the one traditional, or, as even generous Englishmen used to say, the *natural* enemy, France. Russia bore especially against Sweden, Poland, and Turkey; and these it was the consistent aim of the best school of French statesmen to court and strengthen.

But in 1785 a great change had taken place. The war of 1770 had planted Russia firmly on the Black Sea. The treaty of Kainardji in 1774 admitted her trade freely to the Mediterranean,—a privilege which other trading nations, in the narrow spirit of the day, considered their own loss. Russian frigates had entered the Dardanelles on their way to the Black Sea; and though the Porte, terrified at the consequences of its action, stopped them at Constantinople, the move was none the less significant. Then there had come, in 1774, the partition of Poland, universally condemned as unrighteous and dangerous to the balance of power, though submitted to by the other States. If Great Britain, though restless over this, saw still some compensation in the injury done to France by the weakening of her allies, and hugged herself with the belief that her insular position made the continental balance of less moment, she had had a severe reminder of Russia's growing strength and power to injure, in the Armed Neutrality of 1780. This unfriendly blow, aimed by a State she had looked upon as almost a natural ally, which she had so greatly helped but ten years before, and which had now chosen the moment of her direst straits to attack what she considered her maritime rights, probably completed the alienation, and opened the eyes of British statesmen to the new danger with which they were threatened by the position of Russia upon the Baltic and close to the Mediterranean.

France, also, had little less interest than England in this condition of things, and certainly felt no less. From the days of Henry IV. and Colbert, and even before, she had looked upon the Levant as peculiarly her own field, the home of a faithful ally, and the seat of a lucrative trade which was almost monopolized by her. Although so far foiled in India, she had not yet lost her hopes of overcoming and replacing the British hold upon that land of fabled wealth, and she understood the important bearing of the Levant and Egypt upon the security of tenure there. It need not then surprise us, in the great maritime war which we are approaching, to find Napoleon—for all his greatness, the child of his generation—amid all the glory and bewildering rush of his famous Italian campaign, planning conquest in Egypt and the East, and Nelson, that personification of the British sea power of his day, fighting his two most brilliant battles in the Levant and in the Baltic. Nor will we be unprepared to see an importance equal to that of Gibraltar and Mahon in former days, now attached to points like Malta, Corfu, Taranto, Brindisi, as well as to Sicily and Egypt, by the statesmen, generals, and admirals, whose counsels directed the military efforts of the belligerents. Many of these points had heretofore lain out of the field of action of the Western Powers, but the rising Eastern Question was bringing them forward.

Nor was it in the Levant alone that questions vitally affecting the rival States awaited solution. The trade interests of the Baltic, as the outlet through which great rivers and the products of immense regions found their way to the world beyond, made its control also an object of importance to both the chief parties in the coming struggle,—to Great Britain who strove to drive her enemy off the sea, and to France who wished to shut out hers from the land. But, besides its commercial importance, the secluded character of the sea, the difficulty of the approach,—aggravated by the severe climate,

—and the immense preponderance in strength of Russia over Sweden and Denmark, made always possible an armed combination such as that of 1780, which was in fact renewed in 1800, seriously threatening the naval supremacy of Great Britain. Such a coalition it was vital to the latter to prevent, and most desirable to her enemy to effect. If formed, it was a nucleus around which readily gathered all other malcontents, dissatisfied with the harsh and overbearing manner in which the great Sea Power enforced what she considered her rights over neutral ships.

The nearness of England to the Baltic made it unnecessary to have naval stations on the way for the repair or shelter of her shipping, but it was most undesirable that the ports and resources of Holland and Belgium, lying close on the flank of the route, and doubly strong in the formidable outworks of shoals and intricate navigation with which nature had protected them, should be under the control of a great hostile power. Jean Bart, and his fellow-privateersmen of a hundred years before, had shown the danger to British shipping from even the third-rate port of Dunkirk, so situated. Where Dunkirk sent squadrons of frigates, Antwerp could send fleets of ships-of-the-line. The appearance of Russia, therefore, and her predominance on the Baltic, made weightier still the interest in the political condition of the Low Countries which, for generations past, Great Britain had felt on account of her commercial relations with them, and through them with Germany; an interest hitherto aroused mainly by the ambition of France to control their policy, if not actually to possess herself of a large part of their territory. She had to fear that which was realized under Napoleon,—the conversion of Antwerp into a great naval station, with free access to the sea, and the control of its resources and those of the United Provinces by a strong and able enemy.

Great Britain, therefore, had in 1781 seen with just apprehension the aggressive attitude of Joseph II. toward the Dutch, and the fall of the "barrier towns." It is true that these fortresses had ceased to afford much protection to Holland, owing to her military decline, but the event emphasized her exposure to France; while the power of Austria to defend her own provinces, or the Dutch, was notoriously less than that of France to attack, owing to the relative distance of the two from the scene, and the danger to troops, on the march from Austria, of being assailed in flank from the French frontier. Now, again, in 1784, she was forced to look with anxiety—less on account of Austria than of France—upon this raising of the question of the Scheldt. There was little cause to fear Austria becoming a great sea power now, when she had held the Netherlands three fourths of a century without becoming such; but there was good reason to dread that the movements in progress might result in increasing her rival's sea power and influence—perhaps even her territory—in the Low Countries. All these things did come to pass, though not under the dying monarchy.

It may be presumed that the wise Catharine of Russia, without in the least foreseeing the approaching French convulsion which shook her plans as well as those of other European rulers, realized the true relations between her country and the Western powers, when she so heartily supported the emperor in his claim for the free navigation of the Scheldt. There was no likelihood then, as there is little likelihood now, that Great Britain and France would act together in the Eastern Question, then too new to outweigh former prejudices or to unite old enemies. If the contention of Austria were successful, Russia would secure a friendly port in a region naturally hostile to her pretensions. If unsuccessful, as things then looked, the result would probably be the extension of French influence in the Netherlands and in the United Provinces; and French gain there meant gain of sea power, with proportionate loss of the same to Great Britain. The empress could still reckon on their mutual antagonism; while the British navy, and the way in which it was used in war, were more serious dangers to Russia than the French armies. Whatever her reasoning, there is no doubt that at this time her policy was drawing closer to France. The French ministers in the East mediated between her and the Sultan in the unceasing disputes arising from the treaty of Kainardji. A commercial treaty on most favorable terms was concluded with France, while that with Great Britain was allowed to lapse, and its renewal was refused during many years.

Such were the ambitions and the weighty solitudes, well understood on all hands, which, during the eight years succeeding the emperor's demand for the opening of the Scheldt, underlay and guided the main tendencies of European policy, and continued so to do during the revolutionary wars. The separate events which group themselves round these leading outlines, up to the outbreak of war in 1793, can only be hastily sketched.

Notwithstanding the close family relationship between Louis XVI. and the emperor, the French government looked coldly upon the latter's action in the matter of the Scheldt. The long-standing struggle in the United Provinces between partisans of Great Britain and France was just now marked by the preponderance of the latter, and, consequently, of French influence. As Austria seemed resolved to enforce her claims by war, the king first offered his mediation, and, when that was unavailing, told the emperor he would interpose by arms. His troops were accordingly massed on the Belgian frontier. It was understood that the king of Prussia, who was brother-in-law to the stadtholder, would act with France. Russia, on the other hand, proclaimed her intention to support Austria. Sweden, as the enemy of Russia, began to put ships in commission and enlist soldiers; while from Constantinople came a report that, if war began, the sultan also would improve so good an opportunity of regaining what he had lately lost. While the quarrel about the Scheldt was thus causing complications in all quarters, an incident occurred upon the chief scene of trouble, which under such conditions might well have precipitated a general war. An Austrian brig was ordered to sail from Antwerp to the sea, to test the intentions of Holland. Upon passing the boundary she was fired upon and brought to by a Dutch armed ship. This happened on the 8th of October, 1784.

Yet after all war did not come, owing to Joseph's volatile attention being again drawn from the matter immediately in hand. He proposed to the elector of Bavaria to take the Netherlands in exchange for his electorate. This transfer, which by concentrating the possessions of Austria would greatly have increased her weight in the Empire, was resisted by the whole Germanic body with Frederic the Great at its head. It therefore came to naught; but the slackening of the emperor's interest in his Scheldt scheme promoted, under French auspices, a peaceful arrangement; which, while involving mutual concessions, left the real question substantially untouched. Its solution was not reached until the storm of the Revolution swept city and river into the arms of the French republic. This compromise was shortly followed by a treaty of the closest alliance between France and the United Provinces, engaging them to mutual support in case of war, fixing the amount of armed ships or men to be furnished, and promising the most intimate co-operation in their dealings with other States. This agreement, which, as far as compacts could, established French preponderance in the councils of Holland, was ratified on Christmas Day, 1785.

This treaty gave rise to serious and regretful consideration in Great Britain; but the growing financial embarrassment and internal disturbance of France were rapidly neutralizing her external exertions. The following years were marked by new combinations and alliances among States. In 1786 Frederic the Great's death took away an important element in European politics. The quarrel between the two factions in Holland had reached the verge of civil war, when an insult offered by the French party to the wife of the stadtholder, sister to the new king of Prussia, led to an armed interference by this sovereign. In October, 1787, Prussian troops occupied Amsterdam and restored to the stadtholder privileges that had been taken from him. Even France had strongly condemned the act of those who had arrested the princess, and advised ample satisfaction to be given; but, nevertheless, when the French party appealed for aid against the Prussian intervention, she prepared to give it and notified her purpose to Great Britain. The latter, glad again to assert her own influence, replied that she could not remain a quiet spectator, issued immediate orders for augmenting her forces by sea and land, and contracted with Hesse for the supply of twelve thousand troops upon demand. The rapid success of the Prussians prevented any collision; but Great Britain had the gratification, and France the mortification, of seeing re-established the party favorable to the former.

In February, 1787, the Assembly of Notables, which had not met since 1626, was opened by Louis XVI. at Versailles. But the most striking event of this year was the declaration of war against Russia by Turkey, which determined no longer to wait until its enemy was ready before engaging in an inevitable conflict. The Turkish manifesto was sent forth August 24; Russia replied on the 13th of September.

The emperor, as the ally of Russia, declared war against Turkey on the 10th of February, 1788. Operations were carried on by the Austrians around Belgrade and on the Danube. The Russians, bent on extending their power on the Black Sea, invested Oczakow at the mouth and on the right bank of the Dnieper,—Kinburn on the left side having already been ceded to them by the treaty of Kainardji. The czarina also decided to renew in the Mediterranean the diversion of 1770, again sending ships from the Baltic. When the distance and inconvenience of this operation, combined with the entire lack of any naval station in the Mediterranean, are considered in connection with the close proximity of Russia to that sea in mere miles, there will be felt most forcibly her tantalizing position with reference to commerce and sea power, to whose importance she has been keenly alive and to which she has ever aspired since the days of Peter the Great. It is difficult to understand how Russia can be quiet until she has secured an access to the sea not dependent upon the good-will of any other State.

Notwithstanding the many causes of displeasure she had given to Great Britain, Catharine went on with her arrangements as though assured of the good-will and help before received. Pilot boats were engaged to meet the ships in British waters, and take them to British dockyards. Under her orders, British merchants chartered eighteen large ships to convey artillery and stores after the fleet. All these arrangements were quietly frustrated by Pitt's ministry, which forbade seamen to serve in any foreign ships; and, upon the ground that the nation was to be strictly neutral, made the contractors renounce their engagements. Catharine then turned to Holland, which also refused aid, pleading the same purpose of neutrality. This concert of action between the two maritime States forced Russia to abandon so distant an expedition and illustrated the advantage she would have obtained from the emperor's claim to the Scheldt. It was at this time that the celebrated Paul Jones, who had distinguished himself by his desperate courage in the American Revolutionary War, took service in the Russian Navy and was given a high command; but his appointment so offended the British officers already serving in the fleet, whom their government had foreborne to recall, that they at once resigned. The Russians could not afford to lose so many capable men, and Jones was transferred from the Baltic to the Black Sea.

Soon a fourth State took part in the contest. On the 21st of June, 1788, Sweden advanced her troops into Russian Finland, and on the 30th war against her was declared by Russia. It now proved fortunate for the latter that she had not been able to get her fleet away from the Baltic. The fighting on land was there mainly confined to the north coast of the Gulf of Finland, while in the waters of the Gulf several very severe actions took place. These battles were fought not only between ships-of-the-line of the usual type, but by large flotillas of gunboats and galleys, and were attended with a loss of life unusual in naval actions.

War being now in full swing throughout the East, Great Britain and Prussia drew together in a defensive treaty, and were joined by Holland also, under the new lease of power of the stadtholder and British party. The quota of troops or ships to be furnished in case of need by each State was stipulated. The allies soon had occasion to act in favor of one of the belligerents. Denmark, the hereditary enemy of Sweden, and now in alliance with Russia, took this opportunity to invade the former country from Norway, then attached to the Danish crown. On September 24, 1788, twelve thousand Danish troops crossed the frontier and advanced upon Gottenburg, which was on the point of surrendering when the sudden and unexpected arrival of the king, in person and alone, prevented. There was not, however, force enough to save the town, had not Great Britain and Prussia interfered. The British minister at Copenhagen passed over hastily into Gottenburg, induced the Swedish king to accept the mediation of the two governments, and then notified the Danish commander that, if the invasion of Sweden was

not stopped, Denmark would be by them attacked. The peremptory tone held by the minister swept away the flimsy pretext that the Danish corps was only an auxiliary, furnished to Russia in accordance with existing treaty, and therefore really a Russian force. There was nothing left for Denmark but to recede; an armistice was signed at once and a month later her troops were withdrawn.

The true significance of the alliance between the two Western Powers, to which Holland was accessory, is markedly shown by this action, which, while ostensibly friendly to Sweden, was really hostile to Russia and a diversion in favor of the sultan. Great Britain and Prussia, in consequence of the growing strength and influence of Russia in the Baltic, the Black Sea, and the Continent, and to check her progress, followed what was then considered to be the natural policy of France, induced by ties and traditions long antedating the existing state of things in Europe. Sweden then, and Turkey later, traditional allies of France, and in so far in the opposite scale of the balance from Great Britain, were to be supported by the demonstration—and if need were by the employment—of force. This was done, not because France was as yet less dreaded, but because Russia had become so much more formidable. It was again the coming Eastern Question in which, from the very distance of the central scene of action from Western Europe, and from the character of the interests and of the strategic points involved, Sea Power, represented chiefly by the maritime strength and colonial expansion of Great Britain, was to play the leading and most decisive part. It was the dawning of the day, whose noon the nineteenth century has not yet seen, during which Nelson and Napoleon, Mohammed Ali and Ibrahim Pasha, the Sultan Mahmoud and the Czar Nicholas, Napier, Stopford, and Lalande in 1840, the heroes of Kars, Silistria, and the Crimea, and of the Russo-Turkish war of 1877, were to play their parts upon the scene.

But in the years after the Peace of Versailles this was a new question, upon which opinions were unformed. It was true that, to quote from a contemporary writer, "England had had full leisure to ruminate upon, and sufficient cause to reprobate, that absurd and blind policy, under the influence of which she had drawn an uncertain ally, and an ever-to-be-suspected friend, from the bottom of the Bothnic Gulf to establish a new naval empire in the Mediterranean and Archipelago." ⁶ These meditations had not been fruitless, as was seen by the consistent attitude of Pitt's ministry at this time; but on the other hand, when it was proposed in 1791 to increase the naval force in commission, in order "to add weight to the representations" ⁷ being made by the allies to the belligerents,—in order, in other words, to support Turkey by an armed demonstration,—Fox, the leader of the Whigs, said that "an alliance with Russia appeared to him the most natural and advantageous that we could possibly form;" ⁸ while Burke, than whom no man had a juster reputation for political wisdom, observed that "the considering the Turkish Empire as any part of the balance of power in Europe was new. The principles of alliance and the doctrines drawn from thence were entirely new. Russia was our natural ally and the most useful ally we had in a commercial sense." ⁹ That these distinguished members of the opposition represented the feelings of many supporters of the ministry was shown by a diminished majority, 93, in the vote that followed. The opposition, thus encouraged, then introduced a series of resolutions, the gist of which lay in these words: "The interests of Great Britain are not likely to be affected by the progress of the Russian arms on the borders of the Black Sea." ¹⁰ In the vote on this, the minister's majority again fell to eighty, despite the arguments of those who asserted that "the possession of Oczakow by the empress would facilitate not only the acquisition of Constantinople, but of all lower Egypt and Alexandria; which would give to Russia the supremacy in the Mediterranean, and render her a formidable rival to us both as a maritime and commercial power." After making

⁶ Annual Register, 1788, p. 59.

⁷ King's Message, March 29, 1781.

⁸ Fox's Speeches (London, 1815), vol. iv. p. 178.

⁹ Parl. Hist., vol. xxix. pp. 75-79.

¹⁰ Annual Register, 1791, p. 102.

every allowance for party spirit, it is evident that British feeling was only slowly turning into the channels in which it has since run so strongly.

France, under the pressure of her inward troubles, was debarred from taking part with her old allies in the East, and withdrew more and more from all outward action. On the 8th of August, 1788, the king fixed the 1st of May, 1789, as the day for the meeting of the States General; and in November the Notables met for the second time, to consider the constitution and mode of procedure in that body, the representation in it of the Third Estate, and the vote by orders. They were adjourned after a month's session; and the court, contrary to the judgment of the majority among them, proclaimed on the 27th of December, 1788, that the representatives of the Third Estate should equal in number those of the two others combined. No decision was given as to whether the votes should be individual, or by orders.

Oczakow was taken by the Russians on the 17th of December, 1788, and during the following year the Eastern war raged violently both in the Baltic and in southeastern Europe. Turkey was everywhere worsted. Belgrade was taken on the 8th of October by the Austrians, who afterwards occupied Bucharest and advanced as far as Orsova. The Russians reduced Galatz, Bender, and other places. Besides losing territory, the Turks were defeated in several pitched battles. The conduct of the war on their part was much affected by the death of the reigning sultan.

The Swedish war was in its results unimportant, except as a diversion in favor of Turkey. To keep it up as such, subsidies were sent from Constantinople to Stockholm. Great Britain and Prussia were obliged again to threaten Denmark, in 1789, to keep her from aiding Russia. The British minister, speaking for both States, expressed their fixed determination to maintain the balance of power in the North. A defensive alliance was then formed between Russia and Austria on the one hand, and France and Spain on the other. The Bourbon kingdoms pledged themselves to a strict neutrality in the Eastern War as it then existed; but if Russia or Austria were attacked by any other State, they were to be helped,—Austria, by an army of sixty thousand men; Russia, by a fleet of sixteen ships-of-the-line and twelve frigates. The latter provision shows both the kind of attack feared by Russia and the direction of her ambition.

On the 4th of May of this year, 1789, the States General met at Versailles, and the French Revolution thenceforth went on apace. The Bastille was stormed July 14th. In October the royal family were brought forcibly from Versailles to Paris by the mob. The earlier events of the Revolution will hereafter be summarily related by themselves, before going on with the war to which they led. It will here be enough to say that the voice of France was now silent outside her own borders.

In 1790 the Eastern War was practically brought to an end. On the 31st of January a very close treaty of alliance was made between Prussia and the Porte,—the king binding himself to declare war at a set time against both Russia and Austria. The emperor died in February, and was succeeded by his brother Leopold, who was disposed to peace. A convention was soon after held, at which sat ministers of Austria, Prussia, Great Britain, and the United Provinces; the two latter acting as mediators because Prussia had taken such a pronounced attitude of hostility to Austria. A treaty was signed July 27, by which the emperor renounced his alliance with Russia. On September 20, he agreed to an armistice with Turkey; which, after long negotiation, was followed by a definitive peace, concluded August 4, 1791.

The Russian conflict with Turkey languished during the summer of 1790. Active operations began in October, and continued during a season whose severities the Russian could bear better than the Turk. The final blow of the campaign and of the war was the taking of Ismail by Suwarrow, a deed of arms so tremendous and full of horrors that a brief account of its circumstances is allowable even to our subject.

The town, which was looked on as the key of the lower Danube, was surrounded by three lines of wall, each with its proper ditch, and contained a garrison of thirteen thousand. Its population, besides the troops, was about thirty thousand. Owing to the season, December, Suwarrow determined

not to attempt a regular siege, but to carry the place by assault, at any cost of life. Batteries were consequently put up in every available place, and as rapidly as possible, in order to prepare for and cover the attack. At five o'clock Christmas morning they all opened together, and, after a furious cannonade of two hours, the Russians moved forward in eight columns. After a three hours struggle the assailants were forced back; but Suwarrow, whose influence over his soldiers was unbounded, ran to the front, and, planting a Russian flag on one of the enemy's works, asked his men if they would leave it behind them. Through his efforts and those of the officers, the troops returned to the charge. The conflict, which must have resolved itself into a multitude of hand-to-hand encounters, lasted till midnight, when, after an eighteen hours fight, the third line of defence was carried and resistance ceased, though bloodshed continued through the night. It was computed at the time that thirty thousand Turks, including women and children, and some twenty thousand Russian soldiers died violent deaths during that Christmas day of 1790. Warlike operations continued during the spring, but preliminaries of peace between Russia and Turkey were signed at Galatz on the 11th of August, 1791.

This put an end to hostilities throughout the East, peace having been made between Russia and Sweden a year before, on August 11, 1790. The time of attack had been well chosen by the Swedish king, and had public opinion in Great Britain approached unanimity, a powerful lever would have been put in her hands to break down the Russian attack on Turkey by supporting the diversion in the North. The Russian and Swedish fleets were so evenly balanced that a small British division would have turned the scale, controlled the Baltic, and kept open the Swedish communications from Finland to their own coast. So far, however, was the nation from being of one mind that, as we have seen, the minister's majority steadily fell, and he probably knew that among those who voted straight, many were far from hearty in his support. Prussia also did not back Sweden as she should have done, after definitely embracing that policy, though she was both disconcerted and angered at the peace for which she had not looked. This irresolution on the part of the allied States limited their action to interposing between Sweden and Denmark, and prevented the results which might reasonably have been expected in the north, and yet more in the east of Europe; but it does not take from the significance of their attitude, nor hide the revolution in British statesmanship which marks the ten years now being treated.

The tendency thus indicated was suddenly, though only temporarily, checked by the Revolution in France. The troubles that had been so long fomenting in that country had, after a short and delusive period of seeming repose, begun again at nearly the very moment that the Eastern War was ending. This will be seen by bringing together the dates at which were happening these weighty events in the East and West.

It was on the 6th of October, 1789, that the king and royal family were brought from Versailles to Paris, unwilling but constrained. After this outbreak of popular feeling, comparative quiet continued through the last months of 1789 and all of 1790, during which were fought in the East the most important battles of the war, both in the Baltic and on the Danube, including the bloody assault of Ismail. During this time, however, Louis XVI. underwent many bitter mortifications, either intended as such, or else unavoidably humiliating to his sense of position. In June, 1791, he fled with his family from Paris to put himself in the care of part of the army stationed in eastern France under the Marquis de Bouillé and believed to be thoroughly trustworthy. Before reaching his destination he was recognized, and brought back to Paris a prisoner. The greeting of the royal family was significant of the change that had passed over the people within a few years, and which their unsuccessful flight had intensified. They were met by perfect silence, while some distance ahead of them rode an officer commanding the bystanders not to uncover. Despite the distrust it felt, the Constituent Assembly went on with the work of framing a constitution in which the king still had a recognized position, and which he formally accepted on the 14th of September, 1791. During that summer, peace was signed between Russia and Turkey, and a meeting was had at Pilnitz between the emperor and the king of Prussia, after which they put out their joint declaration that the situation in which the king of France

found himself was an object of common concern to all the rulers of Europe; that "they hoped this common concern would lead them to employ, in conjunction with the two declaring sovereigns, the most efficacious means, relative to their forces, in order to enable the king of France to consolidate in the most perfect liberty, the basis of a monarchical government equally suitable to the rights of sovereigns and the welfare of the French nation." The two princes ended by stating their own readiness to join in such united action with the force necessary to obtain the common end proposed, and that they would, meanwhile, give orders to their troops to be ready to put themselves in a state of activity.

The close coincidence in date of the Declaration of Pilnitz, August 27, 1791, with the Peace of Galatz, signed August 11, is curious enough for passing remark; the one formally opening the new channel of European interest and action, while the other marked the close of the old. The Declaration, however, was in the same line of effort that the new emperor had for some time been following. It met with a somewhat hesitating response. Russia and Sweden agreed to raise an army, which Spain was to subsidize; but Great Britain, under Pitt, declined to meddle in the internal affairs of another state.

The first National or, as it is conveniently called, Constituent Assembly, dissolved after framing a Constitution; and the following day, October 1, 1791, the second Assembly, known as the Legislative, came together. The Declaration of Pilnitz had strongly moved the French people and increased, perhaps unjustly, their distrust of the king. This change of temper was reflected in the Assembly. Strong representations and arguments were exchanged between the ministers of foreign affairs in Austria and France, through the ambassadors at either court; but in truth there was no common ground of opinion on which the new republic and the old empires could meet. The movements on either side were viewed with studied suspicion, and war was finally declared by France against Austria, April 20, 1792. The first unimportant encounters were unfavorable to the French; but more serious danger than that which threatened from without was arising within France itself. The king and the Assembly came into collision through the use by the former of his constitutional power of Veto. The agitation spread to the streets. On the 20th of June a deputation from the mob of Paris appeared before the Assembly, and asked permission for the citizens outside to defile before it, as a demonstration of their support. The extraordinary request was granted; and an immense crowd pressed forward, of people of all ages, armed with weapons of every kind, among which appeared a pike carrying the heart of a bull labelled an "Aristocrat's heart." From the Assembly the crowd went to the Louvre, and thence forced their way through the palace gates into the king's presence. The unhappy Louis bore himself with calm courage, to which perhaps he, at the moment, owed his life; but he submitted to put on the symbolic red cap, and to drink to the nation from a bottle handed him by a drunken rioter.

Little was left in life for a king thus humbled, and his final humiliation was close at hand. Prussia had not long delayed to act in concert with the emperor, after France declared war. On July 26, a month after the strange scene in the Tuileries, was issued an exposition of her reasons for taking arms; and at the same time the Duke of Brunswick, commander-in-chief of the allied armies, put forth a proclamation to the French framed in such violent terms as to stir to the utmost the angry passions of a frantic and excitable race. On the 10th of August the Paris mob again stormed the Tuileries, the king and royal family fled for safety to the hall of the Legislature, the Swiss Guards were killed and the palace gutted. The Assembly then decreed the suspension of the king; and on the 13th of August the royal family was removed to the Temple, the last home on earth for several of them.

On the 2d of September occurred the butcheries known as the September Massacres. To this date and this act is to be referred the great change in British feeling toward the Revolution. On the 20th the battle of Valmy, by some thought decisive of the fate of the Revolution, was won by the French. Though being otherwise far from a battle of the first importance, it led to the retreat of the allied forces and destroyed for a time the hopes of the royalists. Two days after Valmy met the third Assembly, the National Convention of terrible memory. Its first act was to decree the abolition of royalty in France; but the power that swayed the country was passing more and more to the mob of

Paris, expressing itself through the clubs of which the Jacobin is the best known. The violence and fanaticism of the extreme republicans and of the most brutal elements of the populace found ever louder voice. On the 19th of November the Convention passed a decree declaring, "in the name of the French nation, that they will grant fraternity and assistance to all people who wish to recover their liberty; and they charge the executive power to send the necessary orders to the generals to give assistance to such people, and to defend those citizens who have suffered, or may suffer, in the cause of liberty." It was denied by the French diplomatists that there was any intention of favoring insurrections or exciting disturbances in any friendly country; but such intention is nevertheless fairly deducible from the words, and when a motion was made to explain that they were not so meant, the Convention refused to consider it. Mr. Fox, the ardent champion of the Revolution in Parliament, spoke of this edict as an insult to the British people.

Meantime the battle of Valmy had been followed by that of Jemappes, fought November 6. On the 14th the French army entered Brussels, and the Austrian Netherlands were rapidly occupied. This was instantly succeeded by a decree, dated November 16, opening the Scheldt, upon the express ground of natural right; the boisterous young republic cutting at one blow the knot which had refused to be untied by the weak hands of Joseph II. Decided action followed, a French squadron entering the river from the sea and forcing its way up, despite the protests of the Dutch officers, in order to take part in the siege of Antwerp. This was a new offence to the British Sea Power, which was yet further angered by a decree of December 15, extending the French system to all countries occupied by their armies. The words of this proclamation were so sweeping that they could scarcely but seem, to those untouched with the fiery passion of the Revolution, to threaten the destruction of all existing social order. The British ministry on the last day of the year 1792 declared that "this government will never see with indifference that France shall make herself, directly or indirectly, sovereign of the Low Countries, or general arbitress of the rights and liberties of Europe."¹¹

While the Revolution was thus justifying the fears and accusations of those who foretold that it could not confine itself to the overturn of domestic institutions, but would seek to thrust its beliefs and principles forcibly upon other nations, the leaders were hurrying on the destruction of the king. Arraigned on the 11th of December, 1792, Louis XVI. was brought to trial on the 26th, sentenced to death January 16, and executed January 21, 1793. This deed brought to a decided issue the relations between France and Great Britain, which, from an uncertain and unsatisfactory condition, had become more and more embittered by the course of events ever since the November decree of fraternity. As far back as August 10, when the king was suspended, the British government had recalled its ambassador, who was not replaced; and had persisted in attributing to the French minister in London an ambiguous character, recognizing him only as accredited by the king who had actually ceased to reign—by a government which in fact no longer existed. Points of form were raised with exasperating, yet civil, insolence, as to the position which M. Chauvelin, the minister in question, actually occupied; and his office was not made more pleasant by the failure of his own government to send him new credentials. Papers written by him were returned by Lord Grenville, the foreign minister, because his claim to represent the French republic was not recognized; or, if accepted, they were only received as unofficial.

The letters thus exchanged, under forms so unsatisfactory, were filled with mutual accusations, and arguments marked by the brisk vivacity of the one nation and the cool aggressiveness of the other; but starting as they did from the differing bases of natural rights on the one hand, and established institutions on the other, no agreement was approached. The questions of the Scheldt, of the decree of fraternity, and of that extending the French system to countries occupied by their armies, were thus disputed back and forth; and to them were added the complaints of France against an Alien Act, passed by Parliament, January 4, 1793, laying vexatious restrictions upon the movements of foreigners

¹¹ Annual Register, 1793; State Papers, p. 118.[12][66]

arriving in Great Britain, or wishing to change their abode if already resident. This act M. Chauvelin rightly believed to be specially aimed at Frenchmen. It sprang from the growing apprehension and change of feeling in England; a change emphasized by a break in the Parliamentary Opposition, a large number of whom, in this same month of January, 1793, definitively took the step in which their great associate, Edmund Burke, had preceded them, broke their party ties, and passed over to the support of Pitt. The latter would seem to have become convinced that war was inevitable; that the question was no longer whether a nation should exercise a right of changing its institutions, but whether a plague should be stamped out before it had passed its borders and infected yet healthy peoples.

Things had come to this state when news reached London of the death sentence of the French king. M. Chauvelin had just received and presented credentials from the republican government. On January 20, the minister informed him that the king, under present circumstances, did not think fit to receive them, adding the irritating words: "As minister of the Most Christian King, you would have enjoyed all the exemptions which the law grants to public ministers, recognized as such; but as a private person you cannot but return to the general mass of foreigners resident in England."¹² On the 24th of January, the execution of Louis XVI. being now known, Lord Grenville wrote to him: "The King can no longer, after such an event, permit your residence here. His Majesty has thought fit to order that you should retire from the kingdom within the space of eight days, and I herewith transmit to you a copy of the order which His Majesty has given me to that effect."¹³

On the 1st of February, 1793, the French republic declared war against Great Britain and Holland. It was already at war with Austria, Prussia and Sardinia; while Russia and Sweden were avowedly unfriendly, and Spain almost openly hostile.

¹² Annual Register, 1793; State Papers, pp. 127, 128.

¹³ Annual Register, 1793; State Papers, pp. 127, 128.

CHAPTER II

The Condition of the Navies in 1793—and especially of the French Navy

BEFORE following the narrative of directly warlike action, or discussing the influence of the naval factor upon the military and political events, it is proper to examine the relative position, strength, and resources, of the rival nations, particularly in the matter of Sea Power,—to weigh the chances of the struggle, as it were, beforehand, from the known conditions,—to analyze and point out certain reasons why the sea war took the turn it did, in order that the experience of the past may be turned to the profit of the future.

First of all, it must be recognized that the problem to be thus resolved is by no means so simple as in most wars. It is not here a mere question of the extent, population, and geographical position of a country; of the number of its seamen, the tonnage of its shipping, the strength of its armed fleet; nor yet again, chiefly of the wealth and vigor of its colonies, the possession of good and well-placed maritime bases in different parts of the world; not even, at first hand, of the policy and character of its government, although it is undoubtedly true that in the action of French governments is to be found the chief reason for the utter disaster and overthrow which awaited the Sea Power of France. It was because the government so faithfully and necessarily reflected the social disorder, the crude and wild habits of thought which it was powerless to check, that it was incapable of dealing with the naval necessities of the day. The seamen and the navy of France were swept away by the same current of thought and feeling which was carrying before it the whole nation; and the government, tossed to and fro by every wave of popular emotion, was at once too weak and too ignorant of the needs of the service to repress principles and to amend defects which were fatal to its healthy life.

It is particularly instructive to dwell upon this phase of the revolutionary convulsions of France, because the result in this comparatively small, but still most important, part of the body politic was so different from that which was found elsewhere. Whatever the mistakes, the violence, the excesses of every kind, into which this popular rising was betrayed, they were symptomatic of strength, not of weakness,—deplorable accompaniments of a movement which, with all its drawbacks, was marked by overwhelming force.

It was the inability to realize the might in this outburst of popular feeling, long pent up, that caused the mistaken forecasts of many statesmen of the day; who judged of the power and reach of the movement by indications—such as the finances, the condition of the army, the quality of the known leaders—ordinarily fairly accurate tests of a country's endurance, but which utterly misled those who looked to them only and did not take into account the mighty impulse of a whole nation stirred to its depths. Why, then, was the result so different in the navy? Why was it so weak, not merely nor chiefly in quantity, but in quality? and that, too, in days so nearly succeeding the prosperous naval era of Louis XVI. Why should the same throes which brought forth the magnificent armies of Napoleon have caused the utter weakness of the sister service, not only amid the disorders of the Republic, but also under the powerful organization of the Empire?

The immediate reason was that, to a service of a very special character, involving special exigencies, calling for special aptitudes, and consequently demanding special knowledge of its requirements in order to deal wisely with it, were applied the theories of men wholly ignorant of those requirements,—men who did not even believe that they existed. Entirely without experimental knowledge, or any other kind of knowledge, of the conditions of sea life, they were unable to realize the obstacles to those processes by which they would build up their navy, and according to which they proposed to handle it. This was true not only of the wild experiments of the early days of the

Republic; the reproach may fairly be addressed to the great emperor himself, that he had scarcely any appreciation of the factors conditioning efficiency at sea; nor did he seemingly ever reach any such sense of them as would enable him to understand why the French navy failed. "Disdaining," says Jean Bon Saint-André, the Revolutionary commissioner whose influence on naval organization was unbounded, "*disdaining*, through calculation and reflection, *skilful evolutions*, perhaps our seamen will think it more fitting and useful to try those boarding actions in which the Frenchman was always conqueror, and thus astonish Europe by new prodigies of valor." ¹⁴ "Courage and audacity," says Captain Chevalier, "had become in his eyes the only qualities necessary to our officers." "The English," said Napoleon, "will become very small when France shall have two or three admirals willing to die." ¹⁵ So commented, with pathetic yet submissive irony, the ill-fated admiral, Villeneuve, upon whom fell the weight of the emperor's discontent with his navy: "Since his Majesty thinks that nothing but audacity and resolve are needed to succeed in the naval officer's calling, I shall leave nothing to be desired." ¹⁶

It is well to trace in detail the steps by which a fine military service was broken down, as well as the results thus reached, for, while the circumstances under which the process began were undoubtedly exceptional, the general lesson remains good. To disregard the teachings of experience, to cut loose wholly from the traditions of the past, to revolutionize rather than to reform, to launch out boldly on new and untried paths, blind to or ignoring the difficulties to be met,—such a tendency, such a school of thought exists in every generation. At times it gets the mastery. Certainly at the present day it has unusual strength, which is not to be wondered at in view of the change and development of naval weapons. Yet if the campaigns of Cæsar and Hannibal are still useful studies in the days of firearms, it is rash to affirm that the days of sail have no lessons for the days of steam. Here, however, are to be considered questions of discipline and organization; of the adaptation of means to ends; of the recognition, not only of the possibilities, but also of the limitations, imposed upon a calling, upon a military organization, by the nature of the case, by the element in which it moves, by the force to which it owes its motion, by the skill or lack of skill with which its powers are used and its deficiencies compensated.

It is indeed only by considering the limitations as well as the possibilities of any form of warlike activity, whether it be a general plan of action,—as for instance commerce-destroying,—or whether it be the use of a particular weapon,—such as the ram,—that correct conclusions can be reached as to the kind of men, in natural capacities, in acquired skill, in habits of thought and action, who are needed to use such weapon. The possibilities of the ram, for instance, are to be found in the consequences of a successful thrust; its limitations, in the difficulties imposed by any lack of handiness, speed, or steering qualities in the ship carrying it, in the skill of the opponent in managing his vessel and the weapons with which he is provided for counter-offence. If these limitations are carefully considered, there will be little doubt how to answer the question as to the chance of a man picked up at hazard, untrained for such encounter except by years of ordinary sea-going, reaching his aim if pitted against another who has at least given thought and had some professional training directed to the special end.

Now the one sea-weapon of the period of the French Revolution was the gun; the cold steel, the hand-to-hand fight, commonly came into play only toward the end of an action, if at all. In naming the gun, however, it can by no means be separated from its carriage; using this word not merely in its narrow technical sense, but as belonging rightly to the whole ship which bore the gun alongside the enemy, and upon whose skilful handling depended placing it in those positions of advantage that involved most danger to the opponent and the least to one's self. This was the part of the commander; once there, the skill of the gunner came into play, to work his piece with rapidity and accuracy

¹⁴ Chevalier, Mar. Fran. sous la République, p. 49.

¹⁵ Nap. to Decrès, Aug. 29, 1805.

¹⁶ Troude, Batailles Nav., vol. iii. p. 370.

despite the obstacles raised by the motion of the sea, the rapid shifting of the enemy, the difficulty of catching sight of him through the narrow ports. Thus the skill of the military seaman and the skill of the trained gunner, the gun and the ship, the piece and its carriage, supplemented each other. The ship and its guns together formed one weapon, a moving battery which needed quick and delicate handling and accurate direction in all its parts. It was wielded by a living organism, knit also into one by the dependence of all the parts upon the head, and thus acting by a common impulse, sharing a common tradition, and having a common life, which, like all other life, is not found fully ripened without having had a beginning and a growth.

It would be foolish, because untrue, to say that these things were easy to see. They were easy to men of the profession; they were not at all easy to outsiders, apt to ignore difficulties of which they have neither experience nor conception. The contempt for skilful manœuvres was not confined to Jean Bon Saint-André, though he was unusually open in avowing it. But the difficulties none the less existed; neither is the captain without the gunner, nor the gunner without the captain, and both must be specially trained men. It was not to be expected that the man newly taken from the merchant vessel, whose concern with other ships was confined to keeping out of their way, should at once be fitted to manœuvre skilfully around an antagonist actively engaged in injuring him, nor yet be ready to step at once from the command of a handful of men shipped for a short cruise, to that of a numerous body which he was to animate with a common spirit, train to act together for a common purpose, and subject to a common rigorous discipline to which he himself was, by previous habit, a stranger. The yoke of military service sits hard on those who do not always bear it. Yet the efficiency of the military sea-officer depended upon his fitness to do these things well because they had been so wrought into his own personal habit as to become a second nature.

This was true, abundantly true, of the single ship in fight: but when it came to the question of combining the force of a great many guns, mounted on perhaps twenty-five or thirty heavy ships, possessing unequal qualities, but which must nevertheless keep close to one another, in certain specified positions, on dark nights, in bad weather, above all when before the enemy; when these ships were called upon to perform evolutions all together, or in succession, to concentrate upon a part of the enemy, to frustrate by well combined and well executed movements attacks upon themselves, to remedy the inconveniences arising from loss of sails and masts and consequent loss of motive power, to provide against the disorders caused by sudden changes of wind and the various chances of the sea,—under these conditions, even one not having the knowledge of experience begins to see that such demands can only be met by a body of men of special aptitudes and training, such as in fact has very rarely, if ever, been found in perfection, in even the most highly organized fleets of any navy in the world.

To these things the French National Assembly was blind, but not because it was not warned of them. In truth men's understandings, as well as their *morale* and beliefs, were in a chaotic state. In the navy, as in society, the *morale* suffered first. Insubordination and mutiny, insult and murder, preceded the blundering measures which in the end destroyed the fine *personnel* that the monarchy bequeathed to the French republic. This insubordination broke out very soon after the affairs of the Bastille and the forcing of the palace at Versailles; that is, very soon after the powerlessness of the executive was felt. Singularly, yet appropriately, the first victim was the most distinguished flag-officer of the French navy.

During the latter half of 1789 disturbances occurred in all the seaport towns; in Havre, in Cherbourg, in Brest, in Rochefort, in Toulon. Everywhere the town authorities meddled with the concerns of the navy yards and of the fleet; discontented seamen and soldiers, idle or punished, rushed to the town halls with complaints against their officers. The latter, receiving no support from Paris, yielded continually, and things naturally went from bad to worse.

In Toulon, however, matters were worst of all. The naval commander-in-chief in that port was Commodore D'Albert de Rions, a member of the French nobility, as were all the officers of the navy.

He was thought the most able flag-officer in the fleet; he was also known and beloved in Toulon for his personal integrity and charitable life. After working his way with partial success through the earlier disorders, by dint of tact, concession, and his own personal reputation, he found himself compelled to send on shore from the fleet two subordinate officers who had excited mutiny. The men went at once to the town hall, where they were received with open arms, and a story before prevalent was again started that the city was mined and would be attacked the day or two following. Excitement spread, and the next day a number of people assembled round the arsenal, demanding to speak with De Rions. He went out with a few of his officers. The crowd closed round and forced him away from the gates. He went toward his house, apparently his official residence, the mob hustling, insulting, and even laying hands on his person. Having reached his home, the mayor and another city official came to him and asked forgiveness for the two culprits. He refused for a long time, but at length yielded against his judgment,—saying truly enough that such an act of weakness, wrung from him by the commune on the plea of re-establishing order, in other words of appeasing and so quieting the rabble, would but encourage new disorders and do irreparable wrong to discipline and the state.

It proved also insufficient to arrest the present tumult. An officer coming to the door was insulted and attacked. A rioter rushed at another, who was leaning over a terrace attached to the house, and cut his head open with a sabre. Then the windows were broken. The national guard, or, as we might say, the city militia, were paraded, but did no service. An officer leaving the house was attacked, knocked down with stones and the butts of muskets, and would have lost his life had not De Rions sallied out with thirty others and carried him off.

The national guard now surrounded the house, forbidding entry or withdrawal, and soon after demanded the surrender of an officer whom they accused of having ordered some seamen-gunners to fire on the mob. To De Rions's explanations and denials they replied that he was a liar, and that the officers were a lot of aristocrats who wished to assassinate the people. The commodore refusing to give up his subordinate, the guards prepared to attack them; thereupon all drew their swords, but the officer himself, to save his comrades, stepped quickly out and put himself in the hands of his enemies.

Meanwhile, the city authorities, as is too usual, made no effective interference. Part of their own forces, the national guards, were foremost in the riot. Soon after, De Rions was required to give up another officer. He again refused, and laid orders upon this one not to yield himself as the former had done. "If you want another victim," said he, stepping forward, "here am I; but if you want one of my officers, you must first pass over me." His manliness caused only irritation. A rush was made, his sword snatched from him, and he himself dragged out of the house amid the hoots and jeers of the mob. The national guards formed two parties,—one to kill, the other to save him. Pricked with bayonets, clubbed with muskets, and even ignominiously kicked, this gallant old seaman, the companion of De Grasse and Suffren, was dragged through the streets amid cries of "Hang him! Cut off his head!" and thrust into the common prison. Bad as all this was, there was yet worse. Any age and any country may suffer from a riot, but De Rions could get from the national authority no admission of his wrongs. The assembly ordered an investigation, and six weeks later made this declaration: "The National Assembly, taking a favorable view of the motives which animated M. D'Albert de Rions, the other naval officers implicated in the affair, *the municipal officers, and the National Guard*, declares that there is no ground to blame any one." ¹⁷ De Rions told his wrongs in words equally pathetic and dignified: "The volunteers," said he, "have outraged the decrees of the National Assembly in all that concerns the rights of the man and of the citizen. Let us not here be considered, if you will, as officers, and I myself as the head of a respectable corps; see in us only quiet and well-behaved citizens, and every honest man cannot but be revolted at the unjust and odious treatment we have undergone." ¹⁸ His words were not heeded.

¹⁷ Moniteur, Jan. 19, 1790, p. 82.

¹⁸ Chevalier, Mar. Fran. sous la République, p. 11.

The Toulon affair was the signal for the spread of mutiny among the crews and the breaking-up of the corps of commissioned sea-officers. Similar incidents occurred often and everywhere. The successor of De Rions was also hauled by the mob to prison, where he remained several days. The second in command to him, a little later, was dragged to a gallows, whence he was only accidentally delivered. In Brest, a captain who had been ordered to command a ship on foreign service was assaulted as an aristocrat by a mob of three thousand people and only saved by being taken to prison, where he remained with nineteen others similarly detained. Orders to release them and prosecute the offenders were issued in vain by the cabinet and the king. "It was evident," says Chevalier, "that the naval officers could no longer depend upon the support of local authorities, nor upon that of the government; they were outlaws." ¹⁹ "Thenceforth," says another French naval historian, "if some naval officers were found sanguine enough and patriotic enough to be willing to remain at their post, they but came, on account of their origin and without further inquiry, to the prison and to the scaffold." ²⁰

In the fleets, insubordination soon developed into anarchy. In the spring of 1790 a quarrel arose between Spain and Great Britain, on account of the establishment of trading-posts, by British subjects, at Nootka Sound, on the north-west coast of America. These posts, with the vessels at them, were seized by Spanish cruisers. Upon news of the affair both nations made conflicting claims, and both began to arm their fleets. Spain claimed the help of France, in virtue of the still existing Bourbon Family Compact. The king sent a message to the Assembly, which voted to arm forty-five ships-of-the-line. D'Albert de Rions was ordered to command the fleet at Brest, where he was coldly received by the city authorities. The seamen at the time were discontented at certain new regulations. De Rions, seeing the danger of the situation, recommended to the Assembly some modifications, which it refused to make, yet, at the same time, took no vigorous steps to ensure order. On the same day that it confirmed its first decree, September 15, 1790, a seaman from a ship called the "Léopard," visiting on board another, the "Patriote," used mutinous language and insulted one of the principal officers. The man was drunk. The case being reported to the admiral, he ordered him sent on board the flag-ship. This measure, though certainly very mild, called forth great indignation among the seamen of the "Patriote." De Rions, hearing that mutiny was beginning, summoned before him a petty officer, a coxswain, who was actively stirring up the crew. He quietly explained to this man that the first offender had not even been punished. The coxswain, being insolent, was sent back, saying, as he went, "that it belonged to the strongest to make the law; that he was the strongest, and that the man should not be punished."

The next morning the admiral went to the "Patriote," mustered the crew, told them that the first offender had not been punished, but that the conduct of the coxswain had been so bad that he must be put in confinement. The crew kept silent so far, but now broke out into cries of "He shall not go." De Rions, having tried in vain to re-establish order, took his boat to go ashore and consult with the commandant of the arsenal. As he pulled away, several seamen cried out to her coxswain, "Upset the boat!"

Meanwhile a riot had broken out in the town against the second in command at the dockyard, based upon a report that he had said he would soon bring the San Domingo rebels to order, if he were sent against them. This officer, named Marigny, one of a distinguished naval family, only escaped death by being out of his house; a gallows was put up before it. These various outrages moved the National Assembly for a moment, but its positive action went no further than praying the king to order a prosecution according to legal forms, and ordering that the crew of the *Léopard*, which ship had been the focus of sedition, should be sent to their homes. D'Albert de Rions, seeing that he could not enforce obedience, asked for and obtained his relief. On the 15th of October this distinguished officer took his final leave of the navy and left the country. He had served at Grenada, at Yorktown,

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

²⁰ Guérin, *Histoire de la Marine*, vol. iii. p. 156 (1st ed.).

and against Rodney, and when the great Suffren, bending under the burden of cares in his Indian campaign, sought for a second upon whom the charge might fitly fall, he wrote thus to the minister of the day: "If my death, or my health, should leave the command vacant, who would take my place? ... I know only one person who has all the qualities that can be desired; who is very brave, very accomplished, full of ardor and zeal, disinterested, a good seaman. That is D'Albert de Rions, and should he be in America even, send a frigate for him. I shall be good for more if I have him, for he will help me; and if I die, you will be assured that the service will not suffer. If you had given me him when I asked you, we should now be masters of India." ²¹

It was a significant, though accidental, coincidence that the approaching humiliation of the French navy should thus be prefigured, both ashore and afloat, both north and south, on the Mediterranean and on the Atlantic, in the person of its most distinguished representative. The incidents, however, though conspicuous, were but samples of what was going on everywhere. In the West India colonies the revolutionary impulse transmitted from the mother-country had taken on a heat and violence of its own, characteristic alike of the climate and of the undisciplined temper of the colonists. Commotions amounting to civil war broke out, and both parties tried to command the support of the navy, even at the price of inciting mutiny. Here the *Léopard*, afterwards the centre of the Brest mutiny, first inhaled the germs of disorder. In July, 1790, the crew revolted, and deprived the captain of the command, to assume which, however, only one commissioned officer was found willing. The commandant of the naval station at the Isle of France, Captain McNamara, after once escaping threatened death, was enticed ashore under promise of protection, and then murdered in the streets by the colonial troops themselves. In the peninsula of India, Great Britain, being then at war with Tippoo Saib, undertook to search neutral vessels off the coast. The French commodore sent a frigate to convoy two merchant ships, and the attempt of the British to search them led to a collision, in which the French vessel hauled down her colors after losing twelve killed and fifty-six wounded. The significance, however, of this affair lies in the fact that when the commandant of the division announced that another such aggression would be not only resisted, but followed by reprisals, the crews of two ships told him they would not fight unless attacked. The officer, being thus unable to maintain what he thought the honor of the flag demanded, found it necessary to abandon the station.

Things abroad thus went on from bad to worse. Ships-of-war arriving in San Domingo, the most magnificent of the French colonies in size and fruitfulness, were at once boarded by the members of the party uppermost in the port. Flattered and seduced, given money and entertainment, filled with liquor, the crews were easily persuaded to mutiny. Here and there an officer gifted with tact and popularity, or perhaps an adept in that deft cajoling with words which so takes with the French people, and of which the emperor afterwards was so great a master, induced rather than ordered his ship's company to do their duty up to a certain point. As usual the tragedy of the situation had a comical side. Three ships, one of the line, anchored in San Domingo. The seamen as usual were worked upon; but in addition two of the commanders, with several officers, were arrested on shore and, after being threatened with death, were deprived of their commands by the local assembly. The next day the crew of the ship-of-the-line sent ashore to protest against the deprivation, which, they observed, "was null and void, as to them alone (the crew) belonged the right to take cognizance of and judge the motives of their officers." ²² An admiral on the United States coast was ordered by the French chargé d'affaires to take his ships, two of-the-line and two frigates, and seize the little islands of St. Pierre and Miquelon near Newfoundland. A few days after sailing, the crews said the orders were nonsense and forced the officers to go to France ²³ No captain knew how long he would be in his nominal position, or receive the obedience it claimed. "It was not so easy," says a French historian, speaking

²¹ Troude, *Batailles Nav. de la France*, vol. ii. p. 201.

²² Guérin, *Hist. Mar.*, vol. iii. p. 195 (1st ed.).

²³ Troude, *Bat. Nav.*, vol. 2, p. 320.

of the one who most successfully kept his dizzy height, "it was not so easy for Grimouard to leave Port-au-Prince with his flag-ship; he had to get the consent of a crew which was incessantly told that its own will was the only orders it should follow. In fifteen months Grimouard had not taken a night's rest; always active, always on deck, reasoning with one, coaxing another, appealing to the honor of this, to the generosity of that, to the patriotism of all, he had kept up on board a quasi-discipline truly phenomenal for the times." ²⁴ Later on, this same man lost his life by the guillotine. Nothing more disastrous to the French colonies could have happened than this weakening of the military authority, both ashore and afloat, for which the colonists were mainly answerable. The strife of parties,—at first confined to the whites, a very small minority of the population,—spread to the mixed bloods and the negroes, and a scene of desolation followed over all the islands, finding however its most frightful miseries and excesses in San Domingo, whence the whites were finally exterminated.

Such was the condition of anarchy in which the fleet was as early as 1790 and 1791, and to which the whole social order was unmistakably drifting. In the military services, and above all in the navy, where submission to constituted authority is the breath of life, the disappearance of that submission anticipated, but only anticipated, the period of ruin and terror which awaited all France. The weakness which prevented the executive and legislature from enforcing obedience in the fleet was hurrying them, along with the whole people, to the abysses of confusion; the more highly organized and fragile parts of the state first fell to pieces under the shaking of the whole fabric. After what has been said, little surprise will be felt that naval officers in increasing numbers refused to serve and left the country; but it is a mistake to say on the one hand that they did so from pure motives of opposition to the new order of things, or on the other that they were forced by the acts of the first, or Constituent, Assembly. Both mistakes have been made. Emigration of the nobility and of princes of the blood began indeed soon after the storming of the Bastille, but large numbers of officers remained attending to their duties. The Brest mutiny was fourteen months later, and complaints are not then found of the lack of officers.

After that event their departure went on with increasing rapidity. The successor of De Rions held his office but one week, and then gave it up. He was followed by a distinguished officer, De Bougainville. Aided by a temporary return to sober ideas on the part of the government and the town authorities, this flag-officer for a moment, by strong measures, restored discipline; but mutiny soon reappeared, and, from the complaints made by him later on, there can be little doubt that he must have asked for his detachment had not the fleet been disarmed in consequence of the ending of the Anglo-Spanish dispute. In the following March, 1791, Mirabeau died, and with him the hopes which the court party and moderate men had based upon his genius. In April the Assembly passed a bill re-organizing the navy, the terms of which could not have been acceptable to the officers; although, candidly read, it cannot be considered to have ignored the just claims of those actually in service. In June occurred the king's unsuccessful attempt at flight. On the first of July a return made of officers of the navy showed that more than three-fourths of the old corps had disappeared. ²⁵ The result was due partly to royalist feeling and prejudice shocked; partly, perhaps, to distaste for the new organization: but those familiar with the feelings of officers will attribute it with more likelihood to the utter subversion of discipline, destructive to their professional pride and personal self-respect, and for which the weakness and military ignorance of the Constituent Assembly are mainly responsible.

It is now time to consider the plans upon which that Assembly proposed to re-create the navy, in accordance with the views popular at that day.

During the War of the American Revolution, the corps of naval officers had been found too small for the needs of the service; there was a deficiency of lieutenants and junior officers to take charge of the watches and gun-divisions. A systematic attempt was made to remedy this trouble in

²⁴ Guérin, vol. iii. p. 213.

²⁵ Guérin, vol. iii. p. 153.

the future. By a royal decree, dated January 1, 1786, the navy was re-organized, and two sources of supply for officers were opened. The first was drawn wholly from the nobles, the youths composing it having to show satisfactory proofs of nobility before being admitted to the position of *élèves*, as they were called. These received a practical and rigorous training especially directed to the navy; and, so far as education went, there is reason to believe they would have made a most efficient body of men. The second source from which the royal navy was to be supplied with officers was a class called volunteers. Admission to this was also restricted, though extended to a wider circle. There could be borne upon its rolls only the sons of noblemen, or of sub-lieutenants serving either afloat or in the dockyards, of wholesale merchants, shipowners, captains, and of people living "nobly." These, though required to pass certain examinations and to have seen certain sea-service, were only admitted to the grade of sub-lieutenant, and could be promoted no further except for distinguished and exceptional acts.²⁶

Such was the organization with which, in 1791, a popular assembly was about to deal. The invidious privilege by which the naval career, except in the lower ranks, was closed to all but a single, and not specially deserving, class, was of course done away without question. There still remained to decide whether the privilege should in the future be confined to a single class, which should deserve it by giving all its life and energies to the career—whether the navy should be recognized as a special calling requiring like others a special training—or whether there was so little difference between it and the merchant service that men could pass from one to the other without injuring either. These two views each found upholders, but the latter prevailed even in the first Assembly; those who wished a wholly military service only succeeded in modifying the original scheme presented by the committee.

The new organization was established by two successive acts, passed on the 22d and 28th of April, 1790.²⁷ Like the old, it provided two sources of supply; the one from men specially trained in youth, the other from the merchant service. The former began in a class called *Aspirants*, three hundred of whom were in pay on board ships of war; they were not then officers, but simply youths between fifteen and twenty learning their business. The lowest grade of officer was the *Enseigne*; they were of two kinds, paid²⁸ and unpaid, the former being actually in the navy. The latter were in the merchant service, but susceptible of employment in the fleet, and, when so engaged, took rank with other *enseignes* according to the length of time afloat in national ships. Admission to the grade of paid, or naval, *enseigne* could be had between eighteen and thirty, by passing the required examination and proving four years service at sea, no distinction being then made in favor of those who had begun as *aspirants* or had served in the navy. Those passing for *enseigne* and wishing to enter the navy had a more severe and more mathematical examination, while, on the other hand, those who returned to the merchant service had to have two years longer service, six in all, one of which on board a ship of war. All *enseignes* twenty-four years old, and only they, could command ships in the foreign trade and certain parts of the home, or coasting, trade. By the age of forty, a definitive choice had to be made between the two services. Up to that time *enseignes* could pass for lieutenant, and there seems to have been no inducement to follow one branch of the sea service rather than the other, except this: that five-sixths of the lieutenant vacancies at any one time were to be given to those who had most service as *enseignes* on board ships of war. To pass for lieutenant at the mature age of forty, only two years of military sea service were absolutely required. Thenceforth the officer was devoted to the military navy.

²⁶ See Chevalier, *Mar. Fran. sous la République*, pp. 20-23.

²⁷ The decree of April 22 is in the *Moniteur* of the 23d. That of the 28th is not; but it will be found in the "Collection Générale des Décrets rendus par l'Ass. Nat." for April, 1791.

²⁸ The word *entretenu*, here rendered "paid," is difficult to translate. The dictionary of the French Academy explains it to mean an officer kept on pay, without necessarily being employed. Littré says that an officer "non entretenu" is one not having a commission. The word carries the idea of permanence. By the decree of April 28, "enseignes non entretenus" had no pay nor military authority, except when on military service; nor could they wear the uniform, except when so employed.

The essential spirit and tendency of the new legislation is summed up in the requirements for the lieutenancy. Up to the age of forty, that is, during the formative years of a man's life, it was left to the choice, interest, or caprice of the individual, how he would pass his time between the two services. The inducements to stick to the navy were too slight to weigh against the passing inclinations of young or restless men. If the navy is the specialty that has been before asserted, there can be no doubt that this scheme was radically vicious. A period of commercial prosperity would have robbed it of its best men during their best years.

It is due to the Constituent Assembly to say that, while thus establishing the navy of the future on foundations that reason and experience have both condemned, it did not, as has sometimes been said, reject or drive away the able officers still in France; that is, by direct legislative act. Although the decree of April 22 abolished the existing corps of the navy, it provided also that the new organization should be constituted, "for this time only," by a selection made from the officers of the old service then available; from whom the higher grades, including lieutenants, were to be, as far as possible, filled. Those who were not so selected were to be retired with at least two-thirds of their present pay; and with the next higher grade, if they had served over ten years in the one they then held. Whatever dislike these officers may rightly have felt for the new organization, they personally lost little by it, unless not selected; but the failure on the part of the Assembly to realize the irreparable loss with which the country was threatened,—the unique value of a body of men already, and alone, fitted for the performance of very delicate duties,—and the consequent neglect to uphold and protect them, were as fatal in their results as though they had been legislated out of existence.

The second, or Legislative, Assembly during its year of existence made no radical changes in the organization it found; but the increasing want of officers led inevitably to lowering the qualifications exacted for the different grades, which was done by several acts. The National Convention went still farther in the same direction. January 13, 1793, immediately before the war with Great Britain, it decreed that rear-admirals might be taken from any captains whose commission dated back the month before. Merchant captains who had commanded privateers or ships in the foreign trade for five years, could be at once made post-captains. To be made lieutenant were needed only five years' sea-service, either in the navy or on board merchant ships. Decree now followed decree, all in the same direction, winding up on July 28 by authorizing the minister of marine, until otherwise ordered, to fill the places of flag and other officers from any grade and without regard to existing laws. Most of these measures were probably justified by stern and pressing necessity.²⁹

The reign of terror was now at hand. The scourge fell upon the naval officers who had not fled the country as well as upon others. Grimouard, whose activity in the West Indies has been noted; Philippe d'Orléans, admiral of France, who had commanded the van at Ushant; Vice-Admiral Kersaint, who had stood in the foremost rank of revolutionists till the murder of the king; D'Estaing, also admiral of France, who had held high command with distinguished courage, if not with equal ability, in the war of American Independence,—perished on the scaffold. The companions of their glory had for the most died before the evil days. D'Orvilliers, De Grasse, Guichen, the first Latouche-Tréville, Suffren, La Motte Piquet, passed away before the meeting of the States-General.

Besides the judicial and other murders, the effect of the general suspiciousness was felt by the navy in new legislation of a yet more disastrous kind. By a decree of October 7, 1793, the minister of marine was to lay before the naval committee of the Assembly a list of all officers and *aspirants* whose ability or *civisme*,—*i. e.*, fidelity to the new order of things,—was suspected. This may have been well enough; but, in addition, lists of all officers and *aspirants* were to be posted in different places, and all people were invited to send in denunciations of those whom they believed to be lacking in ability or fidelity. These denunciations were to be passed upon by an assembly, made up of the general council of the Commune and all the seamen of the district. The decision was reached by

²⁹ Troude, *Bat. Nav.*, vol. ii. p. 260.

majority of votes and forwarded to the minister, who was obliged to dismiss those against whom the charges were thus sustained.³⁰

The navy being in this way purged, the vacancies were to be filled on a similar principle. The naval officers, merchant captains and other seamen of each district, who had qualified for *enseignes*, were to meet and name three candidates for each of the different vacancies. In the great want of officers then prevailing, some such system of nomination might have been very useful in lightening the immense burden resting on the minister; but it is obvious that the assemblies thus constituted were too numerous, too popular, too little fitted to carry on formal discussion, and too destitute of special technical knowledge, to be good judges. There was found here the same essential defect that underlay all the conceptions of the different assemblies of the early republic; ignorant of, and therefore undervaluing, the high and special requirements of the naval profession, they were willing to entrust its interests and the selection of its officers to hands that could not be competent.

The result was depicted in a letter of Admiral Villaret Joyeuse, who was at once an officer of the old service, and yet had entered it from the auxiliary navy, having been captain of fireship; who, therefore, stood as nearly as possible between the two extremes of opinion. As a subordinate he had won the admiration of Suffren in the East Indies, and as admiral he commanded with honor the fleets of the Republic. He wrote: "The popular societies have been called on to point out the men having both seamanship and patriotism. The societies believed that it was enough for a man to have been long at sea to be a seaman, if he was besides a patriot. They did not reflect that patriotism alone cannot handle a ship. The grades consequently have been given to men without merit beyond that of having been much at sea, not remembering that such a man often is in a ship just as a bale is. It must be frankly said it is not always the man at once most skilful and patriotic that has had the suffrages of the societies, but often the most intriguing and the falsest,—he, who by effrontery and talk has been able to impose upon the majority."³¹ In another letter he says: "You doubtless know that the best seamen of the different commercial ports kept behind the curtain in the beginning of the Revolution; and that on the other hand there came forward a crowd who, not being able to find employment in commerce, because they had no other talent than the phraseology of patriotism, by means of which they misled the popular societies of which they were members, got the first appointments. Experienced captains, who might have served the republic efficiently by their talents and skill, have since then steadily refused to go to sea, and with inexcusable self-love still prefer service in the National Guard (ashore) to going to sea, where they say they would have to be under captains to whom they have often refused the charge of a watch. Hence the frequent accidents met with by the ships of the republic. Since justice and consequently talents are now (1795) the order of the day, and all France is now convinced that patriotism, doubtless one of the most necessary virtues in an officer of the government, is yet not the only one required to command armies and fleets, as was once claimed, you are quite right," etc.³²

Enough has been said to show the different causes that destroyed the corps of French naval officers. Some of these were exceptional in their character and not likely to recur; but it is plain that even their operation was hastened by the false notions prevalent in the government as to the character and value of professional training, while the same false notions underlay the attempts both to fill the vacant places and to provide a new basis for the official staff of the future. The results of these mistaken ideas will be seen in the narrative; but it may be useful to give here the professional antecedents (taken from a French naval historian) of the admirals and captains in the first great battle of this war, June 1, 1794, by which time the full effect of the various changes had been reached. These three admirals and twenty-six captains of 1794 held in 1791 the following positions: the commander-in-chief, Villaret Joyeuse, was a lieutenant; the two other flag-officers, one a lieutenant, the other a

³⁰ Troude, *Bat. Nav.*, vol. ii. pp. 261, 262.

³¹ Troude, *Bat. Nav.*, vol. ii. p. 397.

³² Troude, *Bat. Nav.*, vol. ii. p. 396.

sub-lieutenant; of the captains, three were lieutenants, eleven sub-lieutenants, nine captains or mates of merchant ships, one a seaman in the navy, one a boatswain, one not given.³³

The action of the Assemblies with regard to the enlisted men of the fleet was as unreasonable and revolutionary as that touching the officers. For twenty years before the meeting of the States-General the navy had contained nine divisions of trained seamen-gunners, numbering some ten thousand men, and commanded, as in all services, by naval officers. It is scarcely possible to over-rate the value, in *esprit-de-corps* as well as in fighting effect, of such a body of trained men. In 1792 these were replaced by a force of marine artillerists, commanded by artillery officers. The precise relation of these to the sea-officers is not stated; but from the change must have sprung jealousies harmful to discipline, as well as injury to the military spirit of the naval officer. In 1794, these marine artillerists, and also the marine infantry, were suppressed on motion of Jean Bon Saint-André, so well known in connection with the French navy of the day. In his opinion, endorsed by the vote of the National Convention, it savored of aristocracy that any body of men should have an exclusive right to fight at sea. "The essential basis of our social institutions," said he, "is equality; to this touchstone you must bring all parts of the government, both military and civil. In the navy there exists an abuse, the destruction of which is demanded by the Committee of Public Safety by my mouth. There are in the navy troops which bear the name of 'marine regiments.' Is this because these troops have the *exclusive privilege* of defending the republic upon the sea? Are we not *all* called upon to fight for liberty? Why could not the victors of Landau, of Toulon, go upon our fleets to show their courage to Pitt, and lower the flag of George? This right cannot be denied them; they themselves would claim it, were not their arms serving the country elsewhere. Since they cannot now enjoy it, we must at least give them the prospect of using it."³⁴

"Thus," says a French writer, "a marine artillerist, a soldier trained in the difficult art of pointing a gun at sea and especially devoted to that service, became a kind of aristocrat."³⁵ None the less did the Convention, in those days of the Terror, vote the change. "Take care," wrote Admiral Kerguelen, "you need trained gunners to serve guns at sea. Those on shore stand on a steady platform and aim at fixed objects; those at sea, on the contrary, are on a moving platform, and fire always, so to speak, on the wing. The experience of the late actions should teach you that our gunners are inferior to those of the enemy."³⁶ The words of common sense could get no hearing in those days of flighty ideas and excited imaginations. "How," asks La Gravière, "could these prudent words draw the attention of republicans, more touched by the recollections of Greece and Rome than by the glorious traditions of our ancestors? Those were the days in which presumptuous innovators seriously thought to restore to the oar its importance, and to throw flying bridges on the decks of English ships of the line, as the Romans did on board the galleys of Carthage; candid visionaries, who with simplicity summed up the titles of their mission in words such as these, preserved among the archives of the Navy: 'Legislators, here are the outpourings of an ingenuous patriot, who has for guide no other principle than that of nature and a heart truly French.'"³⁷

The effects of this legislation were soon seen in the fighting at sea. The British seventy-four, *Alexander*, fought three French ships of her own size for two hours; the average loss of each of the latter equalled that of the one enemy. In June, 1795, twelve French ships-of-the-line found themselves in presence of five British. There was bad management in more ways than one, but five of the French had three of the enemy under their fire for several hours; only thirteen Englishmen were hurt, and no ship so crippled as to be taken. A few days later the same French fleet fell in with a British of

³³ Guérin, *Hist. de la Mar.*, vol. iii. p. 411 (note). (Ed. 1848.)

³⁴ Chevalier, *Mar. Fran. sous la Rép.*, p. 126.

³⁵ Chevalier, *Mar. Fran. sous la Rép.*, p. 126.

³⁶ Jurien de la Gravière, *Guerres Mar.*, vol. i. p. 138 (1st ed.).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. i. p. 139 (1st ed.).

somewhat superior force. Owing to light airs and other causes, only a partial engagement followed, in which eight British and twelve French took part. The whole British loss was one hundred and forty-four killed and wounded. Three French ships struck, with a loss of six hundred and seventy; and the nine others, which had been partially engaged, had a total of two hundred and twenty-two killed and wounded. In December, 1796, the British frigate *Terpsichore* met the French *Vestale*, of equal force. The latter surrendered after a sharp action of two hours, in which she lost sixty-eight killed and wounded against the enemy's twenty-two. This a French writer speaks of as a simple artillery duel, unmarked by any manœuvres. These are not instances chosen to prove a case, but illustrations of the general fact, well known to contemporaries, that the French gunnery was extremely bad. "In comparing this war with the American," says Sir Howard Douglas, "it is seen that, in the latter, the loss of English ships in action with French of equal force, was much more considerable. In the time of Napoleon, whole batteries of ships-of-the-line were fired without doing more harm than two pieces, well directed."

Nor was it only by direct legislation that the Assemblies destroyed the efficiency of the crews. The neglect of discipline and its bad results have before been mentioned. The same causes kept working for many years, and the spirit of insubordination, which sprang from revolutionary excess, doubtless grew stronger as the crews found themselves more and more under incapable officers, through the emigration of their old leaders. As they threw off wholesome restraint, they lost unavoidably in self-respect; and the class of men to whom the confusion of an ill-ordered ship was intolerable, as it becomes even to the humblest seaman who has been used to regularity, doubtless did as the merchant officers of whom Villaret Joyeuse wrote. They withdrew, under cover of the confusion of the times, from the naval service. "The tone of the seamen is wholly ruined," wrote Admiral Morard de Galles, on March 22, 1793, a month after the declaration of war with England: "if it does not change we can expect nothing but reverses in action, even though we be superior in force. The boasted ardor attributed to them" (by themselves and national representatives) "stands only in the words 'patriot,' 'patriotism,' which they are ever repeating, and in shouts of 'Vive la nation! Vive la République!' when they have been well flattered. No idea of doing right or attending to their duties." The government thought best not to interfere, for fear of alienating the seamen. Morard de Galles's flag-ship, having carried away her head-sails in a storm, tried unsuccessfully to wear. "If I had had a crew such as we formerly had," wrote the admiral to the minister, "I would have used means which would have succeeded; but, despite exhortations and threats, I could not get thirty seamen on deck. The army gunners and greater part of the marine troops behaved better. They did what they were told; but the seamen, even the petty officers, did not show themselves."³⁸

In May, it being then open war, a mutiny broke out when the Brest squadron was ordered to get under way. To obtain obedience, the naval authorities had to call in the city government and the Society of Friends of Liberty and Equality. In June De Galles wrote again: "I have sailed in the most numerous squadrons, but never in a year did I see so many collisions as in the month this squadron has been together." He kept the sea until toward the end of August, when the fleet anchored in Quiberon Bay, seventy-five miles south-east of Brest. The Navy Department, which was only the mouthpiece of the Committee of Public Safety, directed that the fleet should keep the sea till further orders. On the 13th of September, news reached it of the insurrection of Toulon and the reception there of the English fleet. Deputations from different ships came to the admiral, headed by two midshipmen, who demanded, with great insolence of manner, that he should return to Brest, despite his orders. This he firmly refused. The propositions of one of the midshipmen were such that the admiral lost his temper. "I called them," says he, "cowards, traitors, foes to the Revolution; and, as they said they *would* get under way, I replied (and at the instant I believed) that there were twenty faithful ships which would fire on them if they undertook any movements without my orders." The admiral was

³⁸ Chevalier, *Mar. Fran. sous la Rép.*, pp. 51, 52.

mistaken as to the temper of the crews. Next morning seven ships mast-headed their top-sails in readiness to sail. He in person went on board, trying to bring them back to obedience, but in vain. To mask his defeat under a form of discipline, if discipline it could be called, he consented to call a council of war, made up of one officer and one seaman from each ship, to debate the question of going back to Brest. This council decided to send deputies to the representatives of the Convention, then on mission in the department, and meanwhile to await further orders from the government. This formality did not hide the fact that power had passed from the commander-in-chief appointed by the State to a council representing a military mob.³⁹

The deputies from the ships found the commissioners of the Convention, one of whom came to the fleet. Upon consultation with the admiral, it appeared that twelve ships out of twenty-one were in open mutiny, and four of the other nine in doubt. As the fleet needed repairs, the commissioner ordered its return to Brest. The mob thus got its way, but the spirit of the government had changed. In June the extreme revolutionary party had gained the upper hand in the State, and was no longer willing to allow the anarchy which had hitherto played its game. The Convention, under the rule of the Mountain, showed extreme displeasure at the action of the fleet; and though its anger fell upon the admirals and captains, many of whom were deprived and some executed, decrees were issued showing that rank insubordination would no longer be tolerated. The government now felt strong.

The cruise of Morard de Galles is an instance, on a large scale, of the state to which the navy had come in the three years that had passed since mutiny had driven De Rions from the service; but it by no means stood alone. In the great Mediterranean naval port, Toulon, things were quite as bad. "The new officers," says Chevalier, "obtained no more obedience than the old; the crews became what they had been made; they now knew only one thing, to rise against authority. Duty and honor had become to them empty words." It would be wearisome to multiply instances and details. Out of their own country such men were a terror rather to allies than foes. An evidently friendly writer, speaking of the Mediterranean fleet when anchored at Ajaccio in Corsica, says, under date of December 31, 1792: "The temper of the fleet and of the troops is excellent; only, it might be said, there is not enough discipline. They came near hanging one day a man who, the following day, was recognized as very innocent of the charge made against him by the agitators. The lesson, however, has not been lost on the seamen, who, seeing the mis-steps into which these hangmen by profession lead them, have denounced one of them."⁴⁰ Grave disorders all the same took place, and two Corsican National Guards were hanged by a mob of seamen and soldiers from the fleet; but how extraordinary must have been the feelings of the time when a critic could speak so gingerly of, not to say praise, the temper that showed itself in this way.

While the tone and the military efficiency of officers and crew were thus lowered, the material condition of both ships and men was wretched. Incompetency and disorder directed everywhere. There was lack of provisions, clothing, timber, rigging, sails. In De Galles's fleet, though they had just sailed, most of the ships needed repairs. The crews counted very many sick, and they were besides destitute of clothing. Although scurvy was raging, the men, almost in sight of their own coast, were confined to salt food. Of the Toulon squadron somewhat later, in 1795, we are told almost all the seamen deserted. "Badly fed, scarcely clothed, discouraged by constant lack of success, they had but one thought, to fly the naval service. In September, ten thousand men would have been needed to fill the complements of the Toulon fleet."⁴¹ The country was ransacked for seamen, who dodged the maritime conscription as the British sailor of the day hid from the press-gang.

After the action called by the British the Battle of L'Orient, and by the French that of the Île de Groix, in 1795, the French fleet took refuge in L'Orient, where they remained two months. So great

³⁹ Chevalier, *Mar. Fran. sous la Rép.*, pp. 97-101.

⁴⁰ Chevalier, p. 42.

⁴¹ Chevalier, *Rép.* p. 219.

was the lack of provisions that the crews were given leave. When the ships were again ready for sea "it was not an easy thing to make the seamen come back; a decree was necessary to recall them to the colors. Even so only a very small number returned, and it was decided to send out singly, or at most by divisions, the ships which were in the port. When they reached Brest the crews were sent round to L'Orient by land to man other ships. In this way the fleet sailed at different dates in three divisions."

⁴² In the Irish expedition of 1796, part of the failure in handling the ships is laid to the men being benumbed with cold, because without enough clothes. Pay was constantly in arrears. The seamen, whatever might be their patriotism, could not be tempted back to the discomforts and hardships of such a service. Promises, threats, edicts, were all of no avail. This state of things lasted for years. The civil commissioner of the navy in Toulon wrote in 1798, concerning the preparations for Bonaparte's expedition to Egypt: "Despite the difficulties concerning supplies, they were but a secondary object of my anxiety. To bring seamen into the service fixed it entirely. I gave the commissioners of the maritime inscription the most pressing orders; I invited the municipalities, the commissioners of the Directory, the commanders of the army, to second them; and to assure the success of this general measure, I sent with my despatches money to pay each seaman raised a month's advance and conduct money. The inveterate insubordination of seamen in most of the western ports, their pronounced aversion to the service, making almost null the effects of the maritime commissioners, I sent a special officer from the port, firm and energetic," to second their efforts; "at length after using every lawful means, part of the western seamen have repaired to this port. There are still many stragglers that are being pursued unremittingly." ⁴³

The chief causes for this trouble were the hardships and the irregularity of pay, with the consequent sufferings to their families. As late as 1801, Admiral Ganteaume drew a moving picture of the state of the officers and men under his command. "I once more call your attention to the frightful state in which are left the seamen, unpaid for fifteen months, naked or covered with rags, badly fed, discouraged; in a word, sunk under the weight of the deepest and most humiliating wretchedness. It would be horrible to make them undertake, in this state, a long and doubtless painful winter cruise."

⁴⁴ Yet it was in this condition he had come from Brest to Toulon in mid-winter. At the same time the admiral said that the officers, receiving neither pay nor table money, lived in circumstances that lowered them in their own eyes and deprived them of the respect of the crews. It was at about this time that the commander of a corvette, taken by a British frigate, made in his defence before the usual court-martial the following statement: "Three fourths of the crew were sea-sick from the time of leaving Cape Sepet until reaching Mahon. Add to this, ill-will, and a panic terror which seized my crew at the sight of the frigate. Almost all thought it a ship-of-the-line. Add to this again, that they had been wet through by the sea for twenty-four hours without having a change of clothes, as I had only been able to get ten spare suits for the whole ship's company." ⁴⁵ The quality of the crews, the conditions of their life, and the reason why good seamen kept clear of the service, sufficiently appear from these accounts. In the year of Trafalgar, even, neither bedding nor clothing was regularly issued to the crews. ⁴⁶

Surprise will not be felt, when human beings were thus neglected, that the needs of the inanimate ships were not met. In the early part of the war it is not easy to say whether the frequent accidents were due to bad handling or bad outfit. In 1793, the escape of six sail-of-the-line, under Admiral Van Stabel, from Lord Howe's fleet, is attributed to superior sailing qualities of the hulls and

⁴² Tronde, *Bat. Nav.*, vol. ii. p. 423.

⁴³ Letter of the Ordonnateur de la Marine, Najac; Jurien de la Gravière, *Guerres Mar.* (4th ed. App.).

⁴⁴ Chevalier, *Mar. Fran. sous le Consulat*, p. 47.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴⁶ Tronde, *Bat. Nav.*, vol. iii. p. 337.

the better staying of the masts.⁴⁷ The next year, however, the commissioner of the Convention who accompanied the great ocean fleet, Jean Bon Saint-André, tried to account for the many accidents which happened in good weather by charging the past reign with a deliberate purpose of destroying the French navy. "This neglect," wrote he, "like so many more, belonged to the system of ruining the navy by carelessness and neglect of all the parts composing it."⁴⁸ It was well known that Louis XVI. had given special care to the material and development of the service; nor is it necessary to seek any deeper cause for the deterioration of such perishable materials than the disorders of the five years since he practically ceased to reign. From this time complaints multiply, and the indications of the entire want of naval stores cannot be mistaken. To this, rather than to the neglect of the dockyard officials in Brest, was due the wretched condition of the fleet sent in December, 1794, by the obstinacy of the Committee of Public Safety, to make a mid-winter cruise in the Bay of Biscay, the story of whose disasters is elsewhere told.⁴⁹

The expedition to Ireland in 1796 was similarly ill-prepared; and indeed, with the British preponderance at sea hampering trade, the embarrassment could scarcely fail to grow greater. Spars carried away, rigging parted, sails tore. Some ships had no spare sails. This, too, was a mid-winter expedition, the squadron having sailed in December. In 1798 the preparation of Bonaparte's Egyptian expedition at Toulon met with the greatest difficulty. The naval commissioner showed much zeal and activity, and was fearless in taking upon himself responsibility; but the fleet sailed for an unknown destination almost without spare spars and rigging, and three of the thirteen were not fit for sea. Two had been condemned the year before, and on one they did not dare to put her regular battery. In January, 1801, a squadron of seven sail-of-the-line left Brest under Admiral Ganteaume, having the all-important mission of carrying a reinforcement of five thousand troops to the army in Egypt. Becoming discouraged, whether rightly or wrongly, after entering the Mediterranean, the admiral bore up for Toulon, where he anchored after being at sea twenty-six days. Here is his report of his fleet during and after this short cruise: "The 'Indivisible' had lost two topmasts and had no spare one left. The trestle-trees of the mainmast were sprung and could not support the new topmast. The 'Desaix' had sprung her bowsprit. The 'Constitution' and the 'Jean-Bart' were in the same condition as the 'Indivisible,' neither having a spare main-topmast after carrying away the others. Both the 'Formidable' and the 'Indomptable,' on the night we got under way, had an anchor break adrift. They had to cut the cable; but both had their sides stove in at the water-line, and could not be repaired at sea. Finally, all the ships, without exception, were short of rope to a disquieting extent, not having had, on leaving Brest, a single spare coil; and the rigging in place was all bad, and in a state to risk every moment the speed and safety of the ships."⁵⁰ It will be unnecessary to quote more of these mishaps, in which lack of skill and bad equipment each bore its part; nor need we try to disentangle the one cause from the other.

Enough has now been said to show the general state of the French navy in the last ten years of the eighteenth century. The time and space thus used have not been wasted, for these conditions, which continued under the empire, were as surely the chief cause of the continuous and overwhelming overthrow of that navy, as the ruin of the French and Spanish sea-power, culminating at Trafalgar, was a principal factor in the final result sealed at Waterloo. Great Britain will be seen to enter the war allied with many of the nations of Europe against France. One by one the allies drop away, until the island kingdom, with two-fifths the population of France and a disaffected Ireland, stands alone face to face with the mighty onset of the Revolution. Again and again she knits the coalitions, which are as often cut asunder by the victorious sword of the French army. Still she stands alone on the defensive,

⁴⁷ La Gravière, *Guerres Mar.*, p. 51.

⁴⁸ Chevalier, *Rép.*, p. 132.

⁴⁹ See [Chapter VI](#).

⁵⁰ Chevalier, *Mar. Fran. sous le Consulat*, p. 43.

until the destruction of the combined fleets at Trafalgar, and the ascendancy of her own navy, due to the immense physical loss and yet more to the moral annihilation of that of the enemy, enable her to assume the offensive in the peninsula after the Spanish uprising,—an offensive based absolutely upon her control of the sea. Her presence in Portugal and Spain keeps festering that Spanish ulcer which drained the strength of Napoleon's empire. As often before, France, contending with Germany, had Spain again upon her back.

There still remains to consider briefly the state of the other navies which bore a part in the great struggle; and after that, the strategic conditions of the sea war, in its length and breadth, at the time it began.

The British navy was far from being in perfect condition; and it had no such administrative prescription upon which to fall back as France always had in the regulations and practice of Colbert and his son. In the admiralty and the dockyards, at home and abroad, there was confusion and waste, if not fraud. As is usual in representative governments, the military establishments had drooped during ten years of peace. But, although administration lacked system, and agents were neglectful or dishonest, the navy itself, though costing more than it should, remained vigorous; the possessor of actual, and yet more of reserved, strength in the genius and pursuits of the people,—in a continuous tradition, which struck its roots far back in a great past,—and above all, in a body of officers, veterans of the last, and some of yet earlier wars, still in the prime of life for the purposes of command, and steeped to the core in those professional habits and feelings which, when so found in the chief, transmit themselves quickly to the juniors. As the eye of the student familiar with naval history glances down the lists of admirals and captains in 1793, it recognizes at once the names of those who fought under Keppel, Rodney, and Howe, linked with those who were yet to win fame as the companions of Hood, Jervis, Nelson, and Collingwood.

To this corps of officers is to be added, doubtless, a large number of trained seamen, who, by choice, remained in the navy under the reduced peace complement; a nucleus round which could be rapidly gathered and organized all the sea-faring population fit for active service. The strength of Great Britain, however, lay in her great body of merchant seamen; and the absence of so many of these on distant voyages was always a source of embarrassment when manning a fleet in the beginning of a war. The naval service was also generally unpopular with the sailor; to whom, as to his officer, the rigid yoke of discipline was hard to bear until the neck was used to it. Hence, in the lack of any system similar to the French maritime inscription, Great Britain resorted to the press; a method which, though legally authorized, was stained in execution by a lawlessness and violence strange in a people that so loved both law and freedom. Even so, with both press-gang and free enlistment, the navy, as a whole, was always shorthanded in a great war, so that men of all nations were received and welcomed; much very bad native material was also accepted. "Consider," wrote Collingwood, "with such a fleet as we have now, how large a proportion of the crews of the ships are miscreants of every description, and capable of every crime. And when those predominate what evils may we not dread from the demoniac councils and influence of such a mass of mischief." ⁵¹

The condition of the seamen on board left much to be desired. The pay had not been increased since the days of Charles II., although the prices of all the necessaries of life had risen thirty per cent. The exigencies of the service, combined with the fear of desertion, led to very close enforced confinement to the ship, even in home ports; men were long unable to see their families. The discipline, depending upon the character of the captain, too little defined and limited by law, varied greatly in different ships; while some were disorganized by undue leniency, in others punishment was harsh and tyrannical. On the other hand, there was a large and growing class of officers, both among the sterner and the laxer disciplinarians, who looked upon the health and well-being of the crew as the first of their duties and interests; and better sanitary results have perhaps never been reached,

⁵¹ Collingwood's Correspondence, p. 48. (First American from fourth London edition.)

certainly never in proportion to the science of the day, than under Jervis, Nelson, Collingwood, and their contemporaries, in fleets engaged in the hardest, most continuous service, under conditions of monotony and isolation generally unfavorable to health. Nelson, during a cruise in which he passed two years without leaving his ship even for another, often speaks with pride, almost with exultation, of the health of his crews. After his pursuit of Villeneuve's fleet to the West Indies, he writes: "We have lost neither officer nor man by sickness since we left the Mediterranean," a period of ten weeks. The number of men in his ships must have been near seven thousand. Both French and Spaniards of the fleet he pursued were very sickly. "They landed a thousand sick at Martinique, and buried full that number during their stay." ⁵² Collingwood writes: "I have not let go an anchor for fifteen months, and on the first day of the year had not a sick-list in the ship—not one man." ⁵³ And again a year later: "Yet, with all this sea-work, never getting fresh beef nor a vegetable, I have not one sick man in my ship. Tell that to Doctor –." "His flag-ship had usually eight hundred men; was, on one occasion, more than a year and a half without going into port, and during the whole of that time never had more than six, and generally only four, on her sick-list." ⁵⁴ Such results show beyond dispute that the crews were well clothed, well fed, and well cared for.

Amid ship's companies of such mixed character, and suffering during the early years of the war from real and severe grievances, it was to be expected that acts of mutiny should occur. Such there were, rivalling, if not surpassing, in extent, those which have been told of the French navy. They also received intelligent guidance at the hands of a class of men, of higher educational acquirements than the average seaman, who, through drunkenness, crime, or simple good-for-nothingness, had found their way on board ship. The feature which distinguished these revolts from those of the French was the spirit of reasonableness and respect for law which at the first marked their proceedings; and which showed how deeply the English feeling for law, duty and discipline, had taken hold of the naval seamen. Their complaints, unheeded when made submissively, were at once allowed to be fair when mutiny drew attention to them. The forms of discipline were maintained by men who refused to go to sea before their demands were allowed, unless "the enemy's fleet should put to sea;" ⁵⁵ and respect to officers was enjoined, though some who were obnoxious for severity were sent ashore. One very signal instance is given of military sympathy with obedience to orders, though at their own expense. A lieutenant, having shot one of several mutineers, was seized by the others, who made ready to hang him, and he stood actually under the yard-arm with the halter round his neck; but upon the admiral saying he himself was responsible, having given orders to the officer in accordance with his own from the Admiralty, the seamen stopped, asked to see the orders, and, having satisfied themselves of their terms, abandoned their purpose.

Captain Brenton, the naval historian, was watch-officer on board a ship that for many days was in the hands of mutineers. He says, "The seamen, generally speaking, throughout the mutiny conducted themselves with a degree of humanity highly creditable, not only to themselves, but to the national character. They certainly tarred and feathered the surgeon of a ship at the Nore, but he had been five weeks drunk in his cabin and had neglected the care of his patients; this was therefore an act which Lord Bacon would have called 'wild justice.' The delegates of the 'Agamemnon'" (his own ship) "showed respect to every officer but the captain; him, after the first day, they never insulted but rather treated with neglect; they asked permission of the lieutenants to punish a seaman, who, from carelessness or design, had taken a dish of meat belonging to the ward-room and left his own, which was honestly and civilly offered in compensation." ⁵⁶ Still, though begun under great provocation

⁵² Nelson's Dispatches, vol. vi. p. 480.

⁵³ Collingwood's Correspondence, pp. 265, 266.

⁵⁴ Collingwood's Correspondence, p. 208.

⁵⁵ Brenton's Naval History, vol. i. p. 415. (Ed. 1823.)

⁵⁶ Brenton's Naval History, vol. i. p. 455.

and marked at first by such orderly procedure, the fatal effects of insubordination once indulged long remained, as in a horse that has once felt his strength; while the self-control and reasonableness of demand which distinguished the earlier movements lost their sway. The later mutinies seriously endangered the State, and the mutinous spirit survived after the causes which palliated it had been removed.

In meeting the needs of so great and widely scattered a naval force, even with the best administration and economy, there could not but be great deficiencies; and the exigencies of the war would not permit ships to be recalled and refitted as often as the hard cruising properly required. Still, by care and foresight, the equipment of the fleet was maintained in sufficient and serviceable condition. In the year 1783 a plan was adopted "of setting apart for every sea-going ship a large proportion of her furniture and stores, as well as of stocking the magazines at the several dockyards with imperishable stores."⁵⁷ The readiness thus sought was tested, and also bettered, by the two partial armaments of 1790 against Spain and of 1791 against Russia; so that, when orders to arm were received in 1793, in a very few weeks the ships-of-the-line in commission were increased from twenty-six to fifty-four, and the whole number of ships of all sizes from one hundred and thirty-six to over two hundred. The same care and foresight was continued into the war. It was as much an object with Great Britain to hinder the carriage of naval stores from the Baltic to France as to get them herself, and there was reason to fear that her seizure of ships so laden and bound to France would, as before, bring on trouble with the northern States. "In 1796 the quantity of naval stores remaining on hand was too small to afford a hope of their lasting to the end of the war; but the government, foreseeing that a rupture must ensue, provided an abundant supply of materials for naval equipment; ship timber was imported from the Adriatic, masts and hemp from North America, and large importations were made from the Baltic. The number of British ships which passed the Sound in one year was forty-five hundred, chiefly laden with naval stores, corn, tallow, hides, hemp, and iron. At the same time the most rigid economy was enforced in the dockyards and on board ships of war."⁵⁸

A bare sufficiency—to be eked out with the utmost care, turning everything to account, working old stuff up into new forms—was the economic condition of the British cruiser of the day. Under such conditions the knack of the captain and officers made a large part of the efficiency of the ship. "Some," wrote Collingwood, "who have the foresight to discern what our first difficulty will be, support and provide their ships as by enchantment; while others, less provident, would exhaust a dockyard and still be in want." Of one he said: "He should never sail without a storeship in company;" while of Troubridge Nelson wrote that "he was as full of resources as his old 'Culloden' was of defects." A lieutenant of the day mentions feelingly the anxieties felt on dark nights and in heavy weather off the enemy's coast, "doubting this brace or that tack," upon which the safety of the ship might depend. The correspondence of Nelson often mentions this dearth of stores.

The condition of the two navies in these various respects being as described, their comparative strength in mere numbers is given by the British naval historian James, whose statement bears every mark of careful study and accuracy. After making every deduction, the British had one hundred and fifteen ships-of-the-line, and the French seventy-six, when war was declared. The number of guns carried by these ships was respectively 8718 and 6002; but the author claims that, in consequence of the heavier metal of the French guns, the aggregate weight of broadside, undoubtedly the fairest method of comparison, of the line-of-battle in the two navies was 88,957 pounds against 73,957,—a preponderance of one sixth in favor of Great Britain.⁵⁹ This statement is explicitly accepted by

⁵⁷ James' Nav. Hist. vol. i. p. 53 (ed. 1878). This system had been adopted in France a century before by Colbert (*Revue Mar. et Coloniale*, September, 1887, p. 567).

⁵⁸ Brenton's Nav. Hist., vol. ii. p. 105.

⁵⁹ James' Nav. Hist., vol. i. pp. 57, 58.

the French admiral, La Gravière, ⁶⁰ and does not differ materially from other French accounts of the numerical strength of that navy at the fall of the monarchy.

The navy of Spain then contained seventy-six ships-of-the-line, of which fifty-six were in good condition. ⁶¹ Particular and detailed accounts are wanting, but it may safely be inferred from many indications scattered along the paths of naval records that the valid strength fell very, very far below this imposing array of ships. The officers as a body were inexpert and ignorant; the administration of the dockyards partook of the general shiftlessness of the decaying kingdom; the crews contained few good seamen and were largely swept out of the streets, if not out of the jails. "The Spaniards at this time," says La Gravière, "were no longer substantial enemies. At the battle of St. Vincent there were scarcely sixty to eighty seamen in each ship-of-the-line. The rest of the crews were made up of men wholly new to the sea, picked up a few months before in the country or in the jails, and who, by the acknowledgment of even English historians, when ordered to go aloft, fell on their knees, crying that they would rather be killed on the spot than meet certain death in trying so perilous a service." ⁶²

"The Dons," wrote Nelson in 1793, after a visit to Cadiz, "may make fine ships,—they cannot, however, make men. They have four first-rates in commission at Cadiz, and very fine ships, but shockingly manned. I am certain if our six barges' crews, who are picked men, had got on board of one of them, they would have taken her." "If the twenty-one ships-of-the-line which we are to join off Barcelona are no better manned than those at Cadiz, much service cannot be expected of them, although, as to ships, I never saw finer men-of-war." ⁶³ A few weeks later he fell in with the twenty-one. "The Dons did not, after several hours' trial, form anything that could be called a line-of-battle ahead. However, the Spanish admiral sent down two frigates, acquainting Lord Hood that, as his fleet was sickly nineteen hundred men, he was going to Cartagena. The captain of the frigate said 'it was no wonder they were sickly *for they had been sixty days at sea.*' This speech appeared to us ridiculous, for, from the circumstance of our having been longer than that time at sea do we attribute our getting healthy. It has stamped with me the measure of their nautical abilities; long may they remain in their present state." ⁶⁴ In 1795, when Spain had made peace with France, he wrote, "I know the French long since offered Spain peace for fourteen ships-of-the-line fully stored. I take for granted not manned, as that would be the readiest way to lose them again." "Their fleet is ill-manned and worse officered, I believe; and besides they are slow." "From the event of Spain making peace much may be looked for,—perhaps a war with that country; if so, their fleet (if no better than when our allies) will be soon done for." ⁶⁵

Captain Jahleel Brenton, a distinguished British officer of that day, being in Cadiz on duty before the war, sought and obtained permission to return to England in a Spanish ship-of-the-line, the "St. Elmo," with the express object of seeing the system of their service. He says, "This ship had been selected as one in the best state of discipline in the Spanish navy to be sent to England. She was commanded by Don Lorenzo Goycochea, a gallant seaman who had commanded one of the junto ships destroyed before Gibraltar in 1782. I had, during this voyage, an opportunity of appreciating Spanish management at sea. When the ship was brought under double-reefed topsails, it was considered superfluous to lay the cloth for dinner; I was told by the captain that not one officer would be able to sit at table, all being sea-sick, but that he had ordered dinner to be got ready in his own cabin for himself and me. It was the custom in the Spanish navy for the captain and officers to mess together in the ward-room. We had thenceforth a very comfortable meal together whenever the

⁶⁰ Guerres Mar., vol. i. p. 49 (1st ed.).

⁶¹ James, vol. i. p. 55.

⁶² Guerres Mar., vol. i. p. 164 (note).

⁶³ Nels. Disp. i. 309-311.

⁶⁴ Nels. Disp., i. p. 312.

⁶⁵ Ibid., ii. pp. 70, 77, 241.

weather prevented a general meeting. As the safe arrival of this ship was deemed of great importance (she carried the Nootka Sound indemnity money), she had on board an English pilot to enable her to approach the coast of England in safety. A few nights before our arrival at Falmouth, the ship, having whole sails and topping sails, was taken aback in a heavy squall from the north-east, and I was awoken by the English pilot knocking at my cabin door, calling out, 'Mr. Brenton! Mr. Brenton! rouse out, sir; here is the ship running away with these Spaniards!' When I got on deck I found this literally the case. She was 'running away' at the rate of twelve knots, and everything in confusion; she was indeed, to use the ludicrous expression of a naval captain 'all adrift, like a French post-chaise.' It required some hours to get things to rights." ⁶⁶

Napoleon, in 1805, ordered Admiral Villeneuve to count two Spanish ships as equal to one French; and the latter certainly were not equal, ship for ship, to the British. It is only fair to add that he said of the Spanish crews, speaking of Calder's action, that they fought like lions.

Holland, first the ally and afterwards the enemy of Great Britain in the war, had forty-nine ships-of-the-line, but, owing to the shoalness of her waters, they were mostly of light burden; many would not have found a place in a British line-of-battle. The frigates were also of small force. The condition of the ships being, besides, bad, the Dutch navy was not an important factor on either side.⁶⁷

Portugal and Naples had, the one six, the other four, ships-of-the-line, which, during the early years of the war, offered a respectable support to the British Mediterranean fleet;⁶⁸ but the advance of the French under Bonaparte into the two peninsulas reduced these States to neutrality before the end of the century.

The fleets of the Baltic powers and of Turkey played no part in the war which would, at this time, require a particular consideration of their strength.

⁶⁶ Life of Sir Jahleel Brenton.

⁶⁷ James' Nav. Hist., vol. i. p. 54. (Ed. 1878).

⁶⁸ James' Nav. Hist., vol. i. p. 54. (Ed. 1878).

CHAPTER III

The General Political and Strategic Conditions, and the Events of 1793

THE declaration of war against Great Britain was followed, on the part of the National Convention, by an equally formal pronouncement against Spain, on the 7th of March, 1793. Thus was completed the chain of enemies which, except on the mountain frontier of Switzerland, surrounded the French republic by land and sea.

It is necessary to summarize the political and military condition, to take account of the strategic situation at this moment when general hostilities were opening, in order to follow intelligently the historical narrative of their course, and to appreciate critically the action of the nations engaged, both separately and, also,—in the case of the allies,—regarded as a combined whole.

The enemies of France were organized governments, with constitutions of varying strength and efficiency, but all, except that of Great Britain, were part of an order of things that was decaying and ready to vanish away. They belonged to, and throughout the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars were hampered by, a past whose traditions of government, of social order, and of military administration, were violently antagonized by the measures into which France had been led by pushing to extremes the philosophical principles of the eighteenth century. But while thus at one in abhorring, as rulers, a movement whose contagion they feared, they were not otherwise in harmony. The two most powerful on the continent, Austria and Prussia, had alternately, in a not remote past, sided with France as her ally; each in turn had sustained open and prolonged hostilities with the other, and they were still jealous rivals for preponderance in Germany. They entered the present war as formal allies; but were unable, from mutual distrust and their military traditions, to act in concert, or to take advantage of the disorganized condition into which France had fallen, and from which the despotism of the Convention had not yet raised her. Divergent lines of operations were imposed upon them, not by military expediency, but by the want of any unifying motive which could overcome their divergent ambitions. The smaller States of Germany followed the two great powers, seeking each from day to day its own safety and its own advantage in the troubled times through which Europe was passing. Several of them had associations with France as a powerful neighbor, who in the past had supported them against the overbearing pretensions of the great German monarchies. With the Convention and its social levelling they could have no sympathy, but when a settled government succeeded the throes of the Revolution the old political bias asserted itself against the more recent social prejudice, and these weaker bodies again fell naturally under French control.

Spain under good government has, and at that crisis still more had, a military situation singularly fitted to give her weight in the councils of Europe. Compact and symmetrical in shape, with an extensive seaboard not deficient in good harbors, her physical conformation and remoteness from the rest of the Continent combined to indicate that her true strength was to be found in a powerful navy, for which also her vast colonial system imperiously called. Her maritime advantages were indeed diminished by the jog which Portugal takes out of her territory and coast line, and by the loss of Gibraltar. Lisbon, in the hands of an enemy, interposes between the arsenals of Ferrol and Cadiz, as Gibraltar does between the latter and Cartagena. But there was great compensation in the extent of her territory, in her peninsular formation, and in the difficult character of her only continental frontier, the Pyrenees. Her position is defensively very strong; and whenever events make France the centre of European interest, as they did in 1793, and as the genius of that extraordinary country continually tends to make her, the external action of Spain becomes doubly interesting. So far as natural advantages go, her military situation at the opening of the French revolution may be defined

by saying that she controlled the Mediterranean, and menaced the flank and rear of France by land. Despite Gibraltar, her action was to determine whether the British navy should or should not enter the Mediterranean—whether the wheat of Barbary and Sicily should reach the hungry people of southern France—whether the French fleet should leave Toulon—whether the French army could advance against the Germans and Piedmont, feeling secure as to the country behind it, then seething with revolt. The political condition of Italy, divided like Germany into many petty States, but unlike Germany in having no powerful centres around which to gather, left to Spain, potentially, the control of the Mediterranean. These advantages were all thrown away by bad government and inefficient military institutions. The navy of Spain was the laughing-stock of Europe; her finances depended upon the colonies, and consequently upon control of the sea, which she had not; while, between an embarrassed treasury and poor military administration, her army, though at first under respectable leadership, made little impression upon the yet unorganized levies of France, and an abject peace soon closed an ignominious war.

The path of Great Britain, as soon as she had determined to enter the war, was comparatively clear, being indicated alike by the character of her military strength and by her history during the past century. Since the days of Charles II. she had been at times the ally, at times the enemy, of Austria, of Prussia, and of Holland; she had, in her frequent wars, found Spain at times neutral, at times hostile, in neither case a very powerful factor; but, under all circumstances, France had been her enemy, sometimes secret, usually open. Steeped in this traditional hostility, both the British government and nation with single eye fastened upon France as the great danger, and were not diverted from this attitude of concentrated purpose by any jealousy of the more powerful among their allies. Spain alone might have been an unwelcome rival, as well as a powerful support, upon the watery plain which Great Britain claimed as her own dominion. Spanish ships of war were numerous; but the admiralty soon saw that the Spanish navy, from the poor quality of its officers and men, could not seriously menace British preponderance upon the ocean, although at times it might be an awkward embarrassment, and even more so as a suspicious ally than as an open foe. The co-operation of the two navies, however, at the opening of the war effectually secured for the time the control of the Mediterranean and of the approaches to southern France.

Russia, although declaring openly against the French Revolution, took no active part in the early military operations, except by a convention made with Great Britain on the 25th of March, 1793, to interdict the trade of France with the Baltic in grain and naval stores, as a means of forcing her to peace. Russia was then busily engaged with her projects against Poland, and a few days later, on the 9th of April, 1793, an imperial ukase was issued incorporating parts of that kingdom with the empire. This, with the Prussian decree of March 25, consummated the second partition of Poland,—the result of a series of aggressions by the two powers that had extended over the past two years, and the intermediate step to the final partition in 1795.

The smaller European States trimmed their course as best they could in the great convulsion which, far beyond most wars, left little room for neutrality. Sweden and Denmark strove hard to keep out of the turmoil and to retain the commercial advantages reaped by neutral flags in maritime wars. Their distance from the scene of the earlier strifes, and the peninsular position of Sweden, enabled them long to avoid actual hostilities; but the concurrence of Russia with Great Britain, in the latter's traditional unwillingness to concede neutral claims, deprived the smaller Baltic powers of the force necessary to maintain their contentions. Holland, as of old, was divided between French and British parties; but the latter, under the headship of the House of Orange, in 1793, held the reins of government and directed the policy of the State in accordance with the treaty of defensive alliance made with Great Britain in 1788. The ultimate policy of the United Provinces depended upon the fortune of the war. As France or her enemies triumphed, so would the party in the State favorable to the victor be retained in, or restored to, power. Neutrality was impossible to an open continental country, lying so near such a great conflagration; but, not to speak of the immediate

dangers threatened by the attitude of the French Convention and its decrees of November 19 and December 15, Holland, with her vast colonial system, had more to fear from the navy of Great Britain, which had no rival, than from the armies of France which, in 1793, were confronted by the most powerful military States in Europe. At this time the United Provinces held, besides Java and other possessions in the far East, various colonies in the West Indies and South America, the island of Ceylon and the Cape of Good Hope. The last two alone Great Britain has finally retained; but all of them, as years went by, passed by conquest into her hands after Holland, in 1795, became the dependent of France.

Portugal retained her traditional alliance with Great Britain, and so became a point of supreme importance when the secession of Spain to France compelled the British navy to leave the Mediterranean. The formal connection between the two countries was for a short time severed by the genius and power of Napoleon; but, at the uprising of Spain in 1808, the old sentiment, unbroken, resumed its sway, and Portugal became the base of the British army, as in an earlier day she had been the secure haven of the British fleet.

In northern Italy the extent of Piedmont and its contiguity to the Austrian duchies of Milan and Mantua gave the means of forming a powerful focus of resistance to their common enemy, the French republic, around which the smaller Italian States might feel secure to rally; but the sluggishness and jealousies of the two governments prevented the vigorous, combined action which alone could cope with the energy impressed by the Convention upon its men. In the centre of the peninsula, the Pope inevitably threw his immense spiritual influence, as well as such temporal power as he could exercise, against the revolution; while, in the south, the Bourbon kingdom of the Two Sicilies, with its capital at Naples, was chiefly controlled by the queen, herself a sister of Marie Antoinette. The military strength of this kingdom, like that of Spain, was rendered contemptible by miserable administration, and was further neutralized by its remoteness from the seats of actual war; but the bias of the monarchy was undoubted. Like all weak and corrupt governments, it shuffled and equivocated under pressure and was false when the pressure was removed; but, so far as it could, it favored the allied cause and was a useful base to the British fleet in the Mediterranean.

In the eastern Mediterranean, the Turkish empire was not then the element of recognized critical hazard to the whole European system which it has since become; but its territorial limits were far wider than they now are. Extending on the north to the Save and the Danube, Turkey held also beyond the river Wallachia and Moldavia to the banks of the Dniester, and, on the south, the present kingdom of Greece. The islands of the Archipelago, with Crete and Cyprus, also belonged to her. Syria and Egypt likewise acknowledged the authority of the Porte, but in both the submission yielded was only nominal; the former, under Djezzar Pasha, and the latter, under the Mamelukes, were practically independent countries. At the outbreak of the French Revolution Turkey had sunk to the lowest pitch of disorganization and impotence; and her rulers, keenly feeling her condition and her danger from Russia, sought to avoid entanglement in the troubles of western Europe, from which their great enemy kept itself free. In this they were successful until Bonaparte, by his attack upon Egypt, forced them from their security and aroused Great Britain and Europe to their common interest in the East.

The islands of the western Mediterranean had not only the importance common to all members of that geographical family in naval wars, nor yet only that due to their intrinsic values. In so narrow a sheet of water each possessed an added strategic weight due to its nearness, either to some part of the mainland or to some one of the maritime routes traversing the sea. The influence thus exerted would fall naturally into the hands of the nation which, by controlling the water, controlled the communications of the island; but this statement, though generally true, is subject to limitations. The narrowness of the belts of water, or, to use the military phrase, the shortness of the communications from land to land, made evasion comparatively easy. No navy, however powerful, can with certainty stop an intercourse requiring only a night's run, and which, therefore, can be carried on by very many

small vessels, instead of having to be concentrated into a few large ones; and this was doubly true in the days of sail, when the smaller could have recourse to the oar while the larger lay becalmed. Thus the British found it impossible to prevent French partisans from passing into Corsica in 1796, when the victories of Bonaparte had placed the French army in Leghorn; and at a later day the emperor succeeded, though with infinite trouble, in sending re-enforcements and supplies from southern Italy to his garrison in Corfu, upon which his far-reaching genius hoped, in a distant future, to base a yet further extension of power in the East. These instances, however, were but the exception, and on the small scale demanded by the other conditions; for the garrison of Corfu was few in number, and the French found the Corsicans friendly. As the communications lengthened, the influence of Sea-Power asserted itself. It was found impossible to relieve Malta, or even to extricate the large vessels blockaded there; and the French army in Egypt remained isolated until forced to surrender, despite the efforts, the uncontrolled power, and the strong personal interest of Bonaparte in the success of an occupation for which he was primarily responsible. So also the narrow strip which separates Sicily from Italy withstood the French arms; not because it was impossible to send many detachments across, but because, to support them in a hostile country, with such insecure communications, was an undertaking more hazardous than was justified by the possible advantages.

The political distribution in 1793 of the islands of the western Mediterranean was as follows. The most eastern, known as the Ionian islands, extending southward from the entrance of the Adriatic along the coast of Greece, from Corfu to Cerigo, were in possession of Venice. When the ancient republic fell before the policy of Bonaparte, in 1797, the islands passed to France and began that circulation from owner to owner which ended in 1863 with their union to Greece. Sicily formed part of the kingdom of the Two Sicilies. It became the refuge of that monarchy from the arms of France, and, by its fertility and the use of its ports, was a resource to Great Britain throughout the Napoleonic period. Malta was still in the hands of the Knights of St. John. Of immense military importance, from its geographical position and intrinsic strength, its transfer, through the medium of France, into the hands of the greatest of naval powers was due to Bonaparte. It is, perhaps, the greatest of Mediterranean strategic positions, Egypt being rather interoceanic than Mediterranean; but, being of scant resources, its utility is measured by the power of the fleet which it subserves. Its fate when in the hands of France, the history of Port Mahon in the hands of Great Britain, nay, even the glorious and successful resistance of Gibraltar, give warning that the fleet depends less upon Malta than Malta upon the fleet.

Sardinia gave its name to the kingdom of which Piedmont, forming the Italian frontier of France, was the actual seat, and Turin the capital. Amid the convulsions of the period, the royal family, driven from the mainland, found an obscure refuge in this large but backward island. France could not touch it; Great Britain needed nothing but the hospitality of its harbors. In Maddalena Bay, at its northern extremity, Nelson found an anchorage strategically well-placed for watching the Toulon fleet, and possessing that great desideratum for a naval position, two exits, one or other of which was available in any wind. The Balearic islands were in the hands of Spain. The maritime importance of the other members of the group was dwarfed by that of Minorca, which contained the harbor, exceptionally good for the Mediterranean, of Port Mahon. Like Malta, though not to the same extent, the fate of Port Mahon depends ultimately upon the sea. The British took possession of the island in 1798, but restored it at the peace of Amiens. In the later hostilities with Spain, from 1804 to 1808, they appear not to have coveted it. Maddalena Bay, though a less agreeable and convenient anchorage than Mahon, is far better fitted for prompt military movement, the prime requisite in the clear and sound judgment of Nelson.

Of the greater islands there remains to give account only of Corsica. This was a recent acquisition of France, received from Genoa in 1769, somewhat contrary to the wish of the people, who would have preferred independence. They were certainly not yet assimilated to the French, and there existed among them a party traditionally well-inclined to Great Britain. The preponderance

of this or of the other national preference would be decisive of the final political connection; for if the British navy did control the surrounding sea, it was unable, as before said, entirely to isolate the island and so to compel an unwilling submission. On the other hand, France could not introduce any considerable body of troops, in the face of the hostile ships; and her standard, if raised, would depend for support upon the natives. In 1793, there was at the head of affairs the old leader of the struggle for independence, Paoli, who had passed many years in exile in England and had been recalled to the island by the National Assembly; but the excesses of the later days had shaken his allegiance to France, and the commissioners sent by the Convention into Corsica made themselves obnoxious to him and to the people. Denounced by the republicans of Toulon, Paoli was summoned to the bar of the Convention in April, 1793. The Revolutionary Tribunal had then been constituted, the Reign of Terror was begun; and Paoli, instead of complying, summoned the deputies from all the cities and communes of Corsica. These met in May and sustained him in his opposition; the revolt spread through the island, and the Commissioners with their handful of adherents were shut up in a few of the coast towns.

Amid these surroundings stood, in the spring of 1793, the terrible and awe-inspiring figure of the French Revolution. The Corsican revolt against the Convention reflected but faintly the passions agitating that body itself, and which were rapidly dividing all France into hostile camps. The four months following the execution of the king were one long strife between the party of the Gironde and the Jacobins; but the revolutionary fury demanded an expression more vigorous and more concentrated than could be had from a contest of parties in a popular assembly. The Girondists, men of lofty sentiment rather than of energetic action, steadily lost ground in the capital and in the legislative body, though retaining the allegiance of the provinces, with which they were identified. Embittered words and feelings took material shape in acts as violent as themselves. On the 9th of March was decreed the Revolutionary Tribunal, the great instrument of the Terror, from whose decisions there was no appeal. On the 13th of the same month, La Vendée rose for its long and bloody struggle in the royal cause. On the 18th, the Army of the North, which only four weeks before had invaded Holland, was signally defeated at Neerwinden, and its general, Dumouriez, the victor of Valmy and Jemappes, the most successful leader the war had yet produced, was forced to retreat upon France. On the 30th, he evacuated the Austrian Netherlands, the prize of the last campaign, and his army took positions within the frontiers, upon which the enemy advanced. On the 1st of April, Dumouriez, long since violently dissatisfied with the course of the Convention, arrested the four commissioners and the minister of war that had been sent to his headquarters. The next day he delivered them to the Austrians; and on the 4th, finding that the blind attachment of his army could no longer be depended upon, he completed his treason by flying to the enemy.

While disorganization, treason, and fear were spreading throughout France, from the capital to the frontiers, and seemed about to culminate in universal anarchy, an important measure was adopted, destined eventually to restore discipline and order, though at the expense of much suffering. On the 6th of April the Committee of Public Safety was reconstituted. Composed previously of twenty-five members who met in open session, it was now reduced to nine, a more manageable body, who sat in secret. To it was given authority over the ministers, and it was empowered to take all measures necessary for the general defence. The republic was thus provided with an efficient, though despotic, executive power which it had before lacked. The creature of the Convention, it was destined soon to become its master; being, as a French historian has aptly termed it, "a dictatorship with nine heads."

Time was still needed for the new authority to make itself felt, and the strife between the parties waxed more and more bitter. On the 15th of April the city of Lyon demanded permission to investigate the conduct of the municipality appointed by the Jacobin commissioners. The request, being denied, became the signal for civil war. On the 26th of May the "sections" of the city rose against the mayor. At the same time the scenes in Paris and in the Convention were becoming more and more tumultuous, and on the 31st the sections of the capital also rose, but against the Girondists. After two

days of strife in the streets and in the legislative halls, the Convention decreed the arrest, at their own houses, of thirty-two members of the party. Thus, on the 2d of June, 1793, fell the Girondists, but their fall was followed by the revolt of their partisans throughout France. Marseille, Toulon, Bordeaux and Lyon all declared against the Convention; and movements in the same direction were manifested in Normandy and Brittany. In the western provinces, however, the attempts at resistance were chilled among the republicans by the proximity of the royalist insurrection in La Vendée. They were forced to reflect that armed opposition to the Convention, even as mutilated by the events of June 2, was a virtual alliance with royalism. In Bordeaux, likewise, the movement, though prolonged for some weeks, did not take shape in vigorous action. Words, not arms, were the weapons used; and the Girondist representatives were forced to fly the very department from which they took their name.

In the east and south conditions were far more threatening. The rising of the sections in Lyon had been followed by fighting in the streets on the 29th of May, and the triumphant party, after the events of June 2, refused to acknowledge the Convention. The latter sought to gain over the city peaceably; but its overtures were rejected, a departmental army was formed, and the leading member of the Jacobin party formally tried and executed. The Lyonnese also stopped supplies being carried to the Army of the Alps. On the 12th of July a decree was issued to reduce the place by force. The troops of the Convention appeared before it in the latter part of the month; but resistance was firm and well organized, and the siege dragged, while at the same time the departments of the south in general rejected the authority of the central government. The two seaboard cities, Marseille and Toulon, entered into correspondence with Lord Hood, commanding the British fleet, who arrived off the coast of Provence in the middle of August, 1793. The party of the Convention, favored by that want of vigor which characterized most of the measures of their opponents, got possession of Marseille before the treason was consummated; but in Toulon, which had long suffered from the violence of a Jacobin municipality, the reaction swung to the opposite extreme. A movement, beginning in honest disgust with the proceedings in Paris and with the conduct of the dominant party in their own city, insensibly carried its promoters further than they had intended; until a point was reached from which, before the savage spirit of the capital, it became dangerous to recede. Long identified with the royal navy, as one of the chief arsenals of the kingdom, there could not but exist among a large class a feeling of loyalty to the monarchy. Submissive to the course of events so long as France had a show of government, now, in the dissolution of civil order, it seemed allowable to choose their own path.

With such dispositions, a decree of the Convention declaring the city outlawed enabled the royalists to guide the movement in the direction they desired. The leading naval officers do not appear to have co-operated willingly with the advances made to the British admiral; but for years they had seen their authority undermined by the course of the national legislature, and had become accustomed to yield to the popular control of the moment. The news of the approach of the Conventional army, accompanied by the rush into the place of terror-stricken fugitives from Marseille, precipitated Toulon into the arms of Great Britain. The sections declared that the city adopted the monarchical government as organized by the Constituent Assembly of 1789; proclaimed Louis XVII. king; ordered the disarmament of the French fleet in the port, and placed in the hands of the British admiral the works commanding the harbor. Lord Hood undertook that the forts and ships should be restored unharmed to France, when peace was made. On the 27th, the British and Spanish fleets anchored in the outer harbor of Toulon, and the city ran up the white flag of the Bourbons. There were in the port at the time of its delivery to the British admiral thirty ships-of-the-line of seventy-four guns and upward, being rather more than one third the line-of-battle force of the French navy. Of these, seventeen were in the outer harbor ready for sea. There were, besides, twenty-odd frigates or smaller vessels.

While one of the principal naval arsenals of France, and the only one she possessed on the Mediterranean, was thus passing into the hands of the enemy, disasters were accumulating on her eastern borders. On the 12th of July, the fortified town of Condé, on the Belgian frontier, surrendered.

This was followed on the 28th by the capitulation of the first-class fortress of Valenciennes in the same locality, after six weeks of open trenches. These two prizes fell to the allied Austrians, British and Dutch, and their submission was followed by an advance of the combined armies and retreat of the French. Shortly before, on the 22d of July, Mayence, a position of the utmost importance on the Rhine, had yielded to the Prussians; and here also the enemy advanced into the Vosges mountains and toward the upper Rhine, the French receding gradually before them. The great inland city of Lyon was at the same time holding out against the central government with a firmness which as yet needed not the support of despair. In its resistance, and in the scarce smothered discontent of the southern provinces, lay the chief significance and utility of the British hold on Toulon. As a point upon which insurrection could repose, by which it could be supported from without, Toulon was invaluable; but with rebellion put down, surrounded by a hostile army and shut up to itself, the city would become a useless burden, unbearable from the demands for men which its extended lines would make. Had La Vendée rested upon a Toulon, the task of the republic would have been well-nigh hopeless.

Among these multiplied disasters, with the Sardinians also operating on the Alpine frontier and the Spaniards entering their country by the eastern Pyrenees, France was confronted in every quarter by disciplined armies to which she could as yet oppose only raw and ragged levies. She found her safety in the stern energy of a legislature which silenced faction by terror, in her central position, which of itself separated from one another many of the centres of disturbance, and in the military policy of the allies, which increased instead of seeking to diminish the dissemination of force which was to some extent unavoidable. The Spaniards could not combine with the Sardinians, Toulon could not help Lyon, La Vendée had to stand apart from all the others; but in the east it was possible for the Austrians, Prussians and British to direct against the forces standing between them and Paris a combination of effort which, in the then condition of the French army, might have been irresistible. Instead of so doing, the Austrians and British on the northeastern frontier decided, early in August, to cease their advance and to separate; the Austrians sitting down before Le Quesnoy, and the British undertaking to besiege the seaport of Dunkirk. On the Rhine, the mutual jealousies of Austria and Prussia, and the sluggish movements of routine generals, caused a similar failure to support each other, and a similar dilatory action.

The opportunities thus lost by the allies, and the time conceded to the French, were improved to the full by the Committee of Public Safety and by the commissioners sent from the Convention to the headquarters of every army. Men, for the most part, without pity as without fear, their administration, stained as it was with blood, was effectual to the salvation of France. From the minister in the cabinet to the general in the field, and down to the raw recruit forced from his home, each man felt his life to depend upon his submission and his activity. In the imminent danger of the country and the hot haste of men who worked not only under urgent pressure, but often with a zeal as blindly ignorant as it was patriotic, many blunders and injustices were committed; but they attained the desired end of impressing the resistless energy of the Convention upon each unit of the masses it was wielding. If ever, for good or ill, men had the single eye, it was to be found in the French soldiers of 1793, as they starved and bled and died that the country might live. Given time,—and the allies gave it,—units animated by such a spirit, and driven forward by such an impetus as the Committee knew how to impart, were soon knit into an overpowering organism, as superior in temper as they were in numbers to the trained machines before them.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.