ALFRED THAYER MAHAN

LESSONS OF THE WAR WITH SPAIN AND OTHER ARTICLES

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Содержание

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PREFACE

The original intention, with which the leading articles of the present collection were undertaken, was to elicit some of the lessons derivable from the war between the United States and Spain; but in the process of conception and of treatment there was imparted to them the further purpose of presenting, in a form as little technical and as much popular as is consistent with seriousness of treatment, some of the elementary conceptions of warfare in general and of naval warfare in particular. The importance of popular understanding in such matters is twofold. It promotes interest and induces intelligent pressure upon the representatives of the people, to provide during peace the organization of force demanded by the conditions of the nation; and it also tends to avert the unintelligent pressure which, when war exists, is apt to assume the form of unreasoning and unreasonable panic. As a British admiral said two hundred years ago, "It is better to be alarmed now, as I am, than next summer when the French fleet may be in the Channel." Indifference in

times of quiet leads directly to perturbation in emergency; for when emergency comes, indifference is found to have resulted in ignorance, and fear is never so overpowering as when, through want of comprehension, there is no check upon the luxuriance of the imagination.

It is, of course, vain to expect that the great majority of men should attain even an elementary knowledge of what constitutes the strength or weakness of a military situation; but it does not seem extravagant to hope that the individuals, who will interest themselves thus far, may be numerous enough, and so distributed throughout a country, as to constitute rallying points for the establishment of a sound public opinion, and thus, in critical moments, to liberate the responsible authorities from demands which, however unreasonable, no representative government can wholly withstand.

The articles do not in any sense constitute a series. Written for various occasions, at various times, there is in them no sequence of treatment, or even of conception. Except the last, however, they all have had a common origin in the war with Spain. This may seem somewhat questionable as regards the one on the Peace Conference; but, without assuming to divine all the motives which led to the call for that assembly, the writer is persuaded that between it and the war there was the direct sequence of a corollary to its proposition. The hostilities with Spain brought doubtless the usual train of sufferings, but these were not on such a scale as in themselves to provoke an outcry for universal

peace. The political consequences, on the other hand, were much in excess of those commonly resultant from war,—even from maritime war. The quiet, superficially peaceful progress with which Russia was successfully advancing her boundaries in Asia, adding gain to gain, unrestrained and apparently irrestrainable, was suddenly confronted with the appearance of the United States in the Philippines, under conditions which made inevitable both a continuance of occupancy and a great increase of military and naval strength. This intrusion, into a sphere hitherto alien to it, of a new military power, capable of becoming one of the first force, if it so willed, was momentous in itself; but it was attended further with circumstances which caused Great Britain, and Great Britain alone among the nations of the earth, to appear the friend of the United States in the latter's conflict. How this friendliness was emphasized in the Philippines is a matter of common report.

Coincident with all this, though also partly preceding it, has been the growing recognition by the western nations, and by Japan, of the imminence of great political issues at stake in the near future of China. Whether regarded as a field for commerce, or for the exercise of the varied activities by which the waste places of the earth are redeemed and developed, it is evidently a matter of economical—and therefore of political—importance to civilized nations to prevent the too preponderant control there of any one of their number, lest the energies of their own citizens be debarred from a fair opportunity to

share in these advantages. The present conditions, and the recent manifestations of antagonism and rivalry, are too well known for repetition. The general situation is sufficiently understood, yet it is doubtful whether the completeness and rapidity of the revolution which has taken place in men's thoughts about the Pacific are duly appreciated. They are shown not only by overt aggressive demands of various European states, or by the extraordinary change of sentiment on the subject of expansion that has swept over America, but very emphatically by the fact, little noted yet well assured, that leading statesmen of Japan—which only three years ago warned the United States Government that even the annexation of Hawaii could not by her be seen with indifference—now welcome our presence in the Philippines.

This altered attitude, on the part of a people of such keen intelligence, has a justification which should not be ignored, and a significance which should not be overlooked. It bears vivid testimony to the rate at which events, as well as their appreciation of events and of conditions, have been advancing. It is one of the symptoms of a gathering accord of conviction upon a momentous subject. At such a time, and on such a scene, the sympathetic drawing together of the two great English-speaking nations, intensely commercial and enterprising, yet also intensely warlike when aroused, and which exceed all others in their possibilities of maritime greatness, gave reason for reflection far exceeding that which springs from imaginative calculations of the future devastations of war. It was a direct result of the war with Spain,

inevitably suggesting a probable drift towards concurrent action upon the greatest question of the immediate future, in which the influence of force will be none the less real because sedulously kept in the background of controversies. If, however, the organic development of military strength could be temporarily arrested by general agreement, or by the prevalence of an opinion that war is practically a thing of the past, the odds would be in favor of the state which at the moment of such arrest enjoys the most advantageous conditions of position, and of power already created.

In reproducing these articles, the writer has done a little editing, of which it is needless to speak except in one respect. His views on the utility of coast fortification have met with pronounced adverse criticism in some quarters in England. Of this he has neither cause nor wish to complain; but he is somewhat surprised that his opinions on the subject here expressed are thought to be essentially opposed to those he has previously avowed in his books,—the Influence of Sea-Power upon History, and upon the French Revolution. While wholly convinced of the primacy of the navy in maritime warfare, and maintaining the subordination to it of the elements of power which rest mainly upon land positions, he has always clearly recognized, and incidentally stated, not only the importance of the latter, but the general necessity of affording them the security of fortification, which enables a weaker force to hold its own against sudden attack, and until relief can be

given. Fortifications, like natural accidents of ground, serve to counterbalance superiority of numbers, or other disparity of means; both in land and sea warfare, therefore, and in both strategy and tactics, they are valuable adjuncts to a defence, for they constitute a passive reinforcement of strength, which liberates an active equivalent, in troops or in ships, for offensive operations. Nor was it anticipated that when coast defence by fortification was affirmed to be a nearly constant element, the word "constant" would be understood to mean the same for all countries, or under varying conditions of popular panic, instead of applying to the deliberate conclusions of competent experts dealing with a particular military problem.

Of the needs of Great Britain, British officers should be the best judge, although even there there is divergence of opinion; but to his own countrymen the author would say that our experience has shown that adequate protection of a frontier, by permanent works judiciously planned, conduces to the energetic prosecution of offensive war. The fears for Washington in the Civil War, and for our chief seaports in the war with Spain, alike illustrate the injurious effects of insufficient home defence upon movements of the armies in the field, or of the navies in campaign. In both instances dispositions of the mobile forces, vicious from a purely military standpoint, were imposed by fears for stationary positions believed, whether rightly or wrongly, to be in peril.

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to thank the proprietors of the several periodicals in which they first appeared. The names of these, and the dates, are given, together with the title of each article, in the Table of Contents.

INTRODUCTORY
Comprehension of Military and Naval Matters possible to the People, and important to the Nation

It is somewhat of a commonplace among writers upon the Art of War, that with it, as with Art in general, the leading principles remain unimpaired from age to age. When recognized and truly mastered, not held by a passive acquiescence in the statements of another, but really appropriated, so as to enter decisively into a man's habit of thought, forming in that direction the fibre of his mind, they not only illuminate conditions apparently novel, by revealing the essential analogies between them and the past, but they supply the clue by which the intricacies of the present can best be threaded. Nothing could be more utterly superficial, for instance, than the remark of a popular writer that "the days of tacks and sheets"—of sailing ships, that is—"have no value as lessons for the days of steam and armor." Contrast with such an utterance the saying of the great master of the art,—Napoleon: "If a man will surprise the secrets of warfare, let him study the campaigns of Hannibal and of Cæsar, as well as those of Frederick the Great and my own."

Comprehension of warfare, therefore, consists, first, in the

apprehension and acceptance—the mental grasp—of a few simple general principles, elucidated and formulated by admitted authorities upon the subject, and, second, in copious illustration of these principles by the application of them to numerous specific instances, drawn from actual experiences of war—from history. Such illustration, adequately developed by exposition of facts and of principles in the several cases, pointing out, where necessary, substantial identity underlying superficial diversity, establishes gradually a body of precedents, which reinforce, by all the weight of cumulative authority, the principle that they illuminate. Thus is laid the substantial foundation upon which the Art of War securely rests. It is perhaps advisable—though it should be needless—to say that, when a student has achieved such comprehension, when his mind has mastered the principles, and his memory is richly stored with well-ordered precedents, he is, in war, as in all other active pursuits of life, but at the beginning of his labors. He has girded on his armor, but he has not yet proved it,—far less is qualified to boast as one about to put it off after a good life's fight. It remains yet to be seen whether he has the gifts and the manhood to use that which he has laboriously acquired, or whether, as happens with many other men apparently well qualified, and actually well furnished with the raw material of knowledge in various professions, he will be unable to turn power into success. This question trial alone can decide in each individual case; but while experience thus forces all to realize that knowledge does not necessarily

imply capacity to use it, that there may be foundation upon which no superstructure will be raised, few—and those not the wisest—are inclined to dispute that antecedent training, well-ordered equipment, where other things are equal, does give a distinct advantage to the man who has received it. The blaze of glory and of success which, after forty years of patient waiting, crowned the last six months of Havelock's life, raising him from obscurity to a place among the immortals, attests the rapidity with which the perfect flower of achievement can bud and fully bloom, when, and only when, good seed has been sown in ground fitly prepared.

There are two principal methods of imparting the illustrations that, in their entirety, compose the body of precedents, by which the primary teachings of the Art of War are at once elucidated and established. By the first, the several principles may be separately stated, more or less at large, each being followed closely by the appropriate illustrations, drawn, as these in such a treatment most suitably may, from different periods and from conditions which on the surface appear most divergent. Or, on the other hand, the consecutive narrative of a particular series of operations may be given, in such detail as is necessary, accompanied by a running commentary or criticism, in which the successive occurrences are brought to the test of recognized standards; inference being drawn, or judgment passed, accordingly. The former is the more formal and methodical; it serves better, perhaps, for starting upon his

career the beginner who proposes to make war the profession of his life; for it provides him, in a compact and systematic manner, with certain brief rules, by the use of which he can most readily apply, to his subsequent reading of military history, criteria drawn from the experience of centuries. He is thus supplied, in short, with digested knowledge. But digestion by other minds can in no wise take the place of assimilation performed by one's own mental processes. The cut and dried information of the lecture room, and of the treatise, must in every profession be supplemented by the hard work of personal practice; and failing the experience of the campaign,—of actual warfare,—the one school of progress for the soldier or seaman is to be found in the study of military and naval history, which embodies the experience of others. To such study the second method contributes; it bears to the first the relation of an advanced course.

Nor let it be supposed that the experience of others, thus imparted, is a poor substitute for that acquired by the actual hard work of the field, or of the ocean. By the process, the fruit possibly may not be fully matured; but it arrives at that perfection of form which requires but a few suns to ripen. This, moreover, if not the only way by which experience in the art of directing operations of war—of command-in-chief—can be stored, is by far the most comprehensive and thorough; for while utility cannot be denied to annual manœuvres, and to the practice of the sham battle, it must be remembered that these, dealing

with circumstances limited both in time and place, give a very narrow range of observation; and, still more important, as was remarked by the late General Sherman, the moral elements of danger and uncertainty, which count for so much in real warfare, cannot be adequately reproduced in mimic. The field of military history, on the other hand, has no limit short of the military experience of the race; it records the effect of moral influences of every kind, as well as of the most diverse material conditions; the personal observation of even the greatest of captains is in comparison but narrow. "What experience of command," says one of the most eminent, "can a general have, before he is called to command? and the experience of what one commander, even after years of warfare, can cover all cases?" Therefore he prescribes study; and as a help thereto tells the story of one of his most successful campaigns, accompanying it with a commentary in which he by no means spares himself. Napoleon abounds in the same sense. "On the field of battle the happiest inspiration is often but a recollection,"—not necessarily of one's own past; and he admitted in after years that no finer work had been done by him than in his first campaign, to which he came—a genius indeed, but—with the acquisitions chiefly of a student, deep-steeped in reading and reflection upon the history of warfare.

The utility of such study of military history to the intending warrior is established, not only by a few such eminent authorities, but by a consensus among the leading soldiers and seamen of our own day, whether they personally have, or have not, had the

opportunity of command in war. It may be asserted to be a matter of contemporary professional agreement, as much as any other current opinion that now obtains. In such study, native individual capacity and individual temperament will largely affect inference and opinion; not only causing them to differ more or less, but resulting frequently in direct opposition of conclusion. It cannot be otherwise; for, like all other callings of active life, war is a matter, not merely of knowledge and of general principles, but of sound judgment, without which both information and rules, being wrongly applied, become useless. Opinions, even of the most eminent, while accorded the respect due to their reputation, should therefore be brought to the test of personal reflection.

The study of the Art and History of War is pre-eminently necessary to men of the profession, but there are reasons which commend it also, suitably presented, to all citizens of our country. Questions connected with war—when resort to war is justifiable, preparation for war, the conduct of war—are questions of national moment, in which each voter—nay, each talker—has an influence for intelligent and adequate action, by the formation of sound public opinion; and public opinion, in operation, constitutes national policy. Hence it is greatly to be desired that there should be more diffused interest in the critical study of warfare in its broader lines. Knowledge of technical details is not necessary to the apprehension of the greater general principles, nor to an understanding of the application of those principles to particular cases, when made by individual students,

—officers or others. The remark is sometimes heard, "When military or naval officers agree, Congress—or the people—may be expected to act." The same idea applied to other professions —waiting for universal agreement—would bring the world to a standstill. Better must be accepted without waiting for best. Better is more worth having to-day than best is the day after the need has come and gone. Hesitation and inaction, continued till the doctors agree, may result in the death of the patient; yet such hesitation is almost inevitable where there is no formed public opinion, and quite inevitable where there is no public interest antecedent to the emergency arising.

It may be due to the bias of personal or professional inclination that the present writer believes that military history,—including therein naval,—simply and clearly presented in its leading outlines, divested of superfluous and merely technical details, would be found to possess an interest far exceeding that which is commonly imagined. The logical coherence of any series of events, as of any process of Nature, possesses an innate attraction for the inquisitive element of which few intelligent minds are devoid. Unfortunately, technical men are prone to delight in their technicalities, and to depreciate, with the adjective "popular," attempts to bring their specialties within the comprehension of the general public, or to make them pleasing and attractive to it. However it may be with other specialties, the utility of which is more willingly admitted, the navy and army in our country cannot afford to take such an attitude. The brilliant,

but vague, excitement and glory of war, in its more stirring phases, touches readily the popular imagination, as does intense action of every description. It has all the charm of the dramatic, heightened by the splendor of the heroic. But where there is no appeal beyond the imagination to the intellect, such impressions lack distinctness, and leave no really useful results. While there is a certain exaltation in sharing, through vivid narrative, the emotions of those who have borne a part in some deed of conspicuous daring, the fascination does not equal that wrought upon the intellect, as it traces for the first time the long-drawn sequence by which successive occurrences are seen to issue in their necessary results, or causes apparently remote to converge upon a common end, and understanding succeeds to the previous sense of bewilderment, which is produced by military events as too commonly treated.

There is, moreover, no science—or art—which lends itself to such exposition more readily than does the Art of War. Its principles are clear, and not numerous. Outlines of operations, presented in skeleton, as they usually may be, are in most instances surprisingly clear; and, these once grasped, the details fall into place with a readiness and a precision that convey an ever increasing intellectual enjoyment. The writer has more than once been witness of the pleasure thus occasioned to men wholly strangers to military matters; a pleasure partly of novelty, but which possesses the elements of endurance because the stimulus is one that renews itself continually, opening field after field for

the exercise of the mind.

If such pleasure were the sole result, however, there might be well-founded diffidence in recommending the study. The advantage conferred upon the nation by a more wide-spread and intelligent understanding of military matters, as a factor in national life that must exist for some ages to come, and one which recent events, so far from lessening, have rendered more conspicuous and more necessary, affords a sounder ground for insisting that it is an obligation of each citizen to understand something of the principles of warfare, and of the national needs in respect of preparation, as well as thrill with patriotic emotion over an heroic episode or a brilliant victory.

It is with the object of contributing to such intelligent comprehension that the following critical narrative, which first appeared in one of our popular monthlies, is again submitted to the public in its present form. It professes no more than to be an attempt, by a student of military as well as naval warfare, to present a reasoned outline of a part of the operations of the war, interspersed with such reflections upon naval warfare, in its generals and its particulars, as have arisen naturally in the course of the story. The method adopted, consequently, is the second of those mentioned in the beginning of these remarks; a consecutive narrative, utilized as a medium for illustrating the principles of war. The application of those principles in this discussion represents the views of one man, believed by him to be in accordance with a considerable body of professional

thought, although for this he has no commission to speak; but to some of them also there is, in other quarters, a certain distinct professional opposition.

The aim of the author here, as in all his writings, has been so to present his theme as to invest it with the rational interest attaching to a clear exposition of causes and effects, as shown in a series of events. Where he may have failed, the failure is in himself, not in his subject. The recent Spanish-American War, while possessing, as every war does, characteristics of its own, differentiating it from others, nevertheless, in its broad analogies, falls into line with its predecessors, evidencing that unity of teaching which pervades the art from its beginnings unto this day. It has, moreover, the special value of illustrating the reciprocal needs and offices of the army and the navy, than which no lesson is more valuable to a nation situated as ours is. Protected from any serious attempt at invasion by our isolated position, and by our vast intrinsic strength, we are nevertheless vulnerable in an extensive seaboard, greater, relatively to our population and wealth—great as they are—than that of any other state. Upon this, moreover, rests an immense coasting trade, the importance of which to our internal commercial system is now scarcely realized, but will be keenly felt if we ever are unable to insure its freedom of movement.

We also are committed, inevitably and irrevocably, to an over-sea policy, to the successful maintenance of which will be needed, not only lofty political conceptions of right and of honor,

but also the power to support, and if need be to enforce, the course of action which such conceptions shall from time to time demand. Such maintenance will depend primarily upon the navy, but not upon it alone; there will be needed besides an adequate and extremely mobile army, and an efficient correlation of the one with the other, based upon an accurate conception of their respective functions. The true corrective to the natural tendency of each to exaggerate its own importance to the common end is to be found only in some general understanding of the subject diffused throughout the body of the people, who are the ultimate arbiters of national policy.

In short, the people of the United States will need to understand, not only what righteousness dictates, but what power, military and naval, requires, in order duly to assert itself. The disappointment and impatience, now being manifested in too many quarters, over the inevitable protraction of the military situation in the Philippines, indicates a lack of such understanding; for, did it exist, men would not need to be told that even out of the best material, of which we have an abundance, a soldier is not made in a day, nor an army in a season; that when these, the necessary tools, are wanting, or are insufficient in number, the work cannot but lag until they are supplied; in short, that in war, as in every calling, he who wills the end must also understand and will the means. It was the same with the wide-spread panic that swept along our seaboard at the beginning of the late war. So far as it was excusable, it was due to the want

of previous preparation; so far as it was unreasonable, it was due to ignorance; but both the want of preparation and the ignorance were the result of the preceding general indifference of the nation to military and naval affairs, an indifference which necessarily had found its reflection in the halting and inadequate provisions made by Congress.

Although changes and additions have been introduced where it has seemed expedient, the author has decided to allow these articles to stand, in the main, substantially as written immediately after the close of hostilities. The opening paragraphs, while less applicable, in their immediate purport, to the present moment, are nevertheless not inappropriate as an explanation of the general tenor of the work itself; and they suggest, moreover, another line of reflection upon the influence, imperceptibly exerted, and passively accepted in men's minds, by the quiet passing of even a single calendar year.

The very lapse of time and subsidence of excitement which tend to insure dispassionate and impartial treatment by the historian, and a juster proportion of impression in spectators, tend also to produce indifference and lethargy in the people at large; whereas in fact the need for sustained interest of a practical character still exists. Intelligent provision for the present and future ought now to succeed to the emotional experiences of the actual war. The reading public has been gorged and surfeited with war literature, a fact which has been only too painfully realized by publishers and editors, who purvey for

its appetite and have overstocked the larder. Coincident with this has come an immense wave of national prosperity and consequent business activity, which increasingly engross the attention of men's minds. So far as the mere movement of the imagination, or the stirring of the heart is concerned, this reaction to indifference after excessive agitation was inevitable, and is not in itself unduly to be deplored; but it will be a matter, not merely of lasting regret, but of permanent harm, if the nation again sinks into the general apathy concerning its military and naval necessities which previously existed, and which, as the experience of Great Britain has shown, is unfortunately characteristic of popular representative governments, where present votes are more considered than future emergencies. Not the least striking among the analogies of warfare are the sufferings undergone, and the risks of failure incurred, through imperfect organization, in the Crimea, and in our own recent hostilities with Spain. And let not the public deceive itself, nor lay the fault exclusively, or even chiefly, upon its servants, whether in the military services or in the halls of Congress. The one and the other will respond adequately to any demand made upon them, if the means are placed betimes in their hands; and the officers of the army and navy certainly have not to reproach themselves, as a body, with official failure to represent the dangers, the exposure, and the needs of the commonwealth. It should be needless to add that circumstances now are greatly changed, through the occurrences of last year; and that henceforth the risks from

neglect, if continued, will vastly exceed those of former days. The issue lies with the voters.

I

How the Motive of the War gave Direction to its Earlier Movements.—Strategic Value of Puerto Rico.—Considerations on the Size and Qualities of Battleships.—Mutual Relations of Coast Defence and Navy.

It is a common and a true remark that final judgment cannot be passed upon events still recent. Not only is time required for the mere process of collecting data, of assorting and testing the numerous statements, always imperfect and often conflicting, which form the material for history, but a certain and not very short interval must be permitted to elapse during which men's brains and feelings may return to normal conditions, and permit the various incidents which have exalted or depressed them to be seen in their totality, as well as in their true relative importance. There are thus at least two distinct operations essential to that accuracy of judgment to which alone finality can be attributed,—first, the diligent and close study of detail, by which knowledge is completed; and, second, a certain detachment of the mind from the prejudgments and passions engendered by immediate contact, a certain remoteness, corresponding to the idea of physical distance, in virtue of which confusion and distortion of impression disappear, and one is enabled not only to distinguish the decisive outlines of a period, but also to relegate to their true

place in the scheme subordinate details which, at the moment of occurrence, had made an exaggerated impression from their very nearness.

It is yet too soon to look for such fulness and justness of treatment in respect to the late hostilities with Spain. Mere literal truth of narrative cannot yet be attained, even in the always limited degree to which historical truth is gradually elicited from a mass of partial and often irreconcilable testimony; and literal truth, when presented, needs to be accompanied by a discriminating analysis and estimate of the influence exerted upon the general result by individual occurrences, positive or negative. I say positive or negative, for we are too apt to overlook the vast importance of negative factors, of inaction as compared to action, of things not done in comparison with those that were done, of mistakes of omission as contrasted with those of commission. Too frequently men, spectators or actors in careers essentially of action, imagine that a safe course is being held because things continue seemingly as they were; whereas, at least in war, failure to dare greatly is often to run the greatest of risks. "Admiral Hotham," wrote Nelson in 1795, "is perfectly satisfied that each month passes without any losses on our side." The result of this purely negative conduct, of this military sin of mere omission, was that Bonaparte's great Italian campaign of 1796 became possible, that the British Fleet was forced to quit the Mediterranean, and the map of Europe was changed. It is, of course, a commonplace that things never really remain as

they were; that they are always getting better or worse, at least relatively.

But while it is true that men must perforce be content to wait a while for the full and sure accounts, and for the summing up which shall pass a final judgment upon the importance of events and upon the reputations of the actors in them, it is also true that in the drive of life, and for the practical guidance of life, which, like time and tide, waits for no man, a rapid, and therefore rough, but still a working decision must be formed from the new experiences, and inferences must be drawn for our governance in the present and the near future, whose exigencies attend us. Absolutely correct conclusions, if ever attained in practical life, are reached by a series of approximations; and it will not do to postpone action until exhaustive certainty has been gained. We have tried it at least once in the navy, watching for a finality of results in the experimental progress of European services. What the condition of our own fleet was at the end of those years might be fresh in all our memories, if we had time to remember. Delayed action maybe eminently proper at one moment; at another it may mean the loss of opportunity. Nor is the process of rapid decision—essential in the field—wholly unsafe in council, if inference and conclusion are checked by reference to well-settled principles and fortified by knowledge of the experience of ages upon whose broad bases those principles rest. Pottering over mechanical details doubtless has its place, but it tends to foster a hesitancy of action which wastes time more

valuable than the resultant gain.

The preceding remarks indicate sufficiently the scope of these papers. It is not proposed to give a complete story of the operations, for which the material is not yet available. Neither will it be attempted to pronounce decisions absolutely final, for the time is not yet ripe. The effort will be rather to suggest general directions to thought, which may be useful to a reader as he follows the many narratives, official or personal, given to the public; to draw attention to facts and to analogies; to point out experiences, the lessons from which may be profitable in determining the character of the action that must speedily be taken to place the sea power of the Republic upon a proper material basis; and, finally, to bring the course of this war into relation with the teachings of previous history,—the experiences of the recent past to reinforce or to modify those of the remoter past; for under superficial diversity, due to differences of conditions, there often rests fundamental identity, the recognition of which equips the mind, quickens it, and strengthens it for grappling with the problems of the present and the future. The value of history to us is as a record of human experience; but experiences must be understood.

The character and the direction of the first movements of the United States in this conflict with Spain were determined by the occasion, and by the professed object, of the hostilities. As frequently happens, the latter began before any formal declaration of war had been made; and, as the avowed purpose

and cause of our action were not primarily redress for grievances of the United States against Spain, but to enforce the departure of the latter from Cuba, it followed logically that the island became the objective of our military movements, as its deliverance from oppression was the object of the war. Had a more general appreciation of the situation been adopted, a view embracing the undeniable injury to the United States, from the then existing conditions, and the generally iniquitous character of Spanish rule in the colonies, and had war for these reasons been declared, the objective of our operations might have been differently chosen for strategic reasons; for our leading object in such case would not have been to help Cuba, but to constrain Spain, and to compel her to such terms as we might demand. It would have been open, for instance, to urge that Puerto Rico, being between five and six hundred miles from the eastern end of Cuba and nearly double that distance from the two ports of the island most important to Spain,—Havana on the north and Cienfuegos on the south,—would be invaluable to the mother country as an intermediate naval station and as a base of supplies and reinforcements for both her fleet and army; that, if left in her undisturbed possession, it would enable her, practically, to enjoy the same advantage of nearness to the great scene of operations that the United States had in virtue of our geographical situation; and that, therefore, the first objective of the war should be the eastern island, and its reduction the first object. The effect of this would have been to throw Spain back upon her home territory

for the support of any operations in Cuba, thus entailing upon her an extremely long line of communications, exposed everywhere throughout its course, but especially to the molestation of small cruisers issuing from the harbors of Puerto Rico, which flank the routes, and which, upon the supposition, would have passed into our hands. This view of the matter was urged upon the writer, a few days before hostilities began, by a very old and intelligent naval officer who had served in our own navy and in that of the Confederate States. To a European nation the argument must have been quite decisive; for to it, as distant, or more distant than Spain from Cuba, such an intermediate station would have been an almost insurmountable obstacle while in an enemy's hands, and an equally valuable base if wrested from him. To the United States these considerations were applicable only in part; for, while the inconvenience to Spain would be the same, the gain to us would be but little, as our lines of communication to Cuba neither required the support of Puerto Rico, nor were by it particularly endangered.

This estimate of the military importance of Puerto Rico should never be lost sight of by us as long as we have any responsibility, direct or indirect, for the safety or independence of Cuba. Puerto Rico, considered militarily, is to Cuba, to the future Isthmian canal, and to our Pacific coast, what Malta is, or may be, to Egypt and the beyond; and there is for us the like necessity to hold and strengthen the one, in its entirety and in its immediate surroundings, that there is for Great Britain

to hold the other for the security of her position in Egypt, for her use of the Suez Canal, and for the control of the route to India. It would be extremely difficult for a European state to sustain operations in the eastern Mediterranean with a British fleet at Malta. Similarly, it would be very difficult for a transatlantic state to maintain operations in the western Caribbean with a United States fleet based upon Puerto Rico and the adjacent islands. The same reasons prompted Bonaparte to seize Malta in his expedition against Egypt and India in 1798. In his masterly eyes, as in those of Nelson, it was essential to the communications between France, Egypt, and India. His scheme failed, not because Malta was less than invaluable, but for want of adequate naval strength, without which no maritime position possesses value.

There were, therefore, in America two possible objectives for the United States, in case of a war against Spain waged upon grounds at all general in their nature; but to proceed against either was purely a question of relative naval strength. Unless, and until, the United States fleet available for service in the Caribbean Sea was strong enough to control permanently the waters which separated the Spanish islands from our territory nearest to them, the admitted vast superiority of this country in potential resources for land warfare was completely neutralized. If the Spanish Navy preponderated over ours, it would be evidently impossible for transports carrying troops and supplies to traverse the seas safely; and, unless they could so do, operations of war

in the enemy's colonies could neither be begun nor continued. If, again, the two fleets were so equally balanced as to make the question of ultimate preponderance doubtful, it was clearly foolish to land in the islands men whom we might be compelled, by an unlucky sea-fight, to abandon there.

This last condition was that which obtained, as war became imminent. The force of the Spanish Navy—on paper, as the expression goes—was so nearly equal to our own that it was well within the limits of possibility that an unlucky incident—the loss, for example, of a battleship—might make the Spaniard decisively superior in nominal, or even in actual, available force. An excellent authority told the writer that he considered that the loss of the *Maine* had changed the balance—that is, that whereas with the *Maine* our fleet had been slightly superior, so after her destruction the advantage, still nominal, was rather the other way. We had, of course, a well-founded confidence in the superior efficiency of our officers and men, and in the probable better condition of our ships and guns; but where so much is at stake as the result of a war, or even as the unnecessary prolongation of war, with its sufferings and anxieties, the only safe rule is to regard the apparent as the actual, until its reality has been tested. However good their information, nations, like fencers, must try their adversary's force before they take liberties. Reconnaissance must precede decisive action. There was, on the part of the Navy Department, no indisposition to take risks, provided success, if obtained, would give an adequate gain. It was clearly recognized

that war cannot be made without running risks; but it was also held, unwaveringly, that no merely possible success justified risk, unless it gave a fair promise of diminishing the enemy's naval force, and so of deciding the control of the sea, upon which the issue of the war depended. This single idea, and concentration of purpose upon it, underlay and dictated every step of the Navy Department from first to last,—so far, at least, as the writer knows,—and it must be borne in mind by any reader who wishes to pass intelligent judgment upon the action or non-action of the Department in particular instances.

It was this consideration that brought the *Oregon* from the Pacific to the Atlantic,—a movement initiated before hostilities opened, though not concluded until after they began. The wisdom of the step was justified not merely, nor chiefly, by the fine part played by that ship on July 3, but by the touch of certainty her presence imparted to the grip of our fleet upon Cervera's squadron during the preceding month, and the consequent power to move the army without fear by sea to Santiago. Few realize the doubts, uncertainties, and difficulties of the sustained watchfulness which attends such operations as the "bottling" of the Spanish fleet by Admiral Sampson; for "bottling" a hostile fleet does not resemble the chance and careless shoving of a cork into a half-used bottle,—it is rather like the wiring down of champagne by bonds that cannot be broken and through which nothing can ooze. This it is which constitutes the claim of the American Commander-in-Chief

upon the gratitude of his countrymen; for to his skill and tenacity in conducting that operation is primarily due the early ending of the war, the opportunity to remove our stricken soldiery from a sickly climate, the ending of suspense, and the saving of many lives. "The moment Admiral Cervera's fleet was destroyed," truly said the London "Times" (August 16), "the war was practically at an end, unless Spain had elected to fight on to save the point of honor;" for she could have saved nothing else by continued war.

To such successful operation, however, there is needed not only ships individually powerful, but numbers of such ships; and that the numbers of Sampson's fleet were maintained—not drawn off to other, though important, operations—even under such sore temptation as the dash of Cámara's fleet from Cadiz towards the Philippines, was due to the Department's ability to hold fast the primary conception of concentration upon a single purpose, even though running thereby such a risk as was feared from Cámara's armored ships reaching Dewey's unarmored cruisers before they were reinforced. The chances of the race to Manila, between Cámara, when he started from Cadiz, and the two monitors from San Francisco, were deliberately taken, in order to ensure the retention of Cervera's squadron in Santiago, or its destruction in case of attempted escape. Not till that was sufficiently provided for would Watson's division be allowed to depart. Such exclusive tenacity of purpose, under suspense, is more difficult of maintenance than can be readily recognized by those who have not undergone it. To avoid misconception,

it should be added here that our division at the Philippines was not itself endangered, although it was quite possible that Manila Bay might have to be temporarily abandoned if Cámara kept on. The movements of the monitors were well in hand, and their junction assured, even under the control of a commander of less conspicuous ability than that already shown by Admiral Dewey. The return of the united force would speedily have ensured Cámara's destruction and the restoration of previous conditions. It is evident, however, that a certain amount of national mortification, and possibly of political complication, might have occurred in the interim.

The necessity and the difficulty of thus watching the squadrons of an enemy within his ports—of "blockading" them, to use a common expression, of "containing" them, to conform to a strictly accurate military terminology—are more familiar to the British naval mind than to ours; for, both by long historical experience and by present-day needs, the vital importance of so narrowly observing the enemy's movements has been forced upon its consciousness. A committee of very distinguished British admirals a few years since reported that, having in view the difficulty of the operation in itself, and the chances of the force detailed falling below its *minimum* by accidents, or by absence for coal or refits, British naval supremacy, vital to the Empire, demanded the number of five British battleships to three of the fleet thus to be controlled. Admiral Sampson's armored ships numbered seven to Cervera's four, a proportion

not dissimilar; but those seven were all the armored ships, save monitors, worthless for such purpose, that the United States owned, or would own for some months yet to come. It should be instructive and convincing to the American people to note that when two powerful armored ships of the enemy were thus on their way to attack at one end of the world an admiral and a division that had deserved so well of their country, our whole battle-fleet, properly so called, was employed to maintain off Santiago the proportions which foreign officers, writing long before the conditions arose, had fixed as necessary. Yet the state with which we were at war ranks very low among naval Powers.

The circumstance possesses a furthermost practical present interest, from its bearing upon the question between numbers and individual size in the organization of the naval line of battle; for the ever importunate demand for increase in dimensions in the single ship is already upon the United States Navy, and to it no logical, no simply rational, limit has yet been set This question may be stated as follows: A country can, or will, pay only so much for its war fleet. That amount of money means so much aggregate tonnage. How shall that tonnage be allotted? And, especially, how shall the total tonnage invested in armored ships be divided? Will you have a few very big ships, or more numerous medium ships? Where will you strike your mean between numbers and individual size? You cannot have both, unless your purse is unlimited. The Santiago incident, alike in the battle, in the preceding blockade, and in the concurrent necessity

of sending battleships to Dewey, illustrates various phases of the argument in favor of numbers as against extremes of individual size. Heavier ships were not needed; fewer ships might have allowed some enemy to escape; when Cervera came out, the *Massachusetts* was coaling at Guantanamo, and the *New York* necessarily several miles distant, circumstances which, had the ships been bigger and fewer, would have taken much more, proportionately, from the entire squadron at a critical moment. Above all, had that aggregate, 65,934 of tonnage, in seven ships, been divided among five only, of 13,000 each, I know not how the two ships that were designated to go with Watson to the Philippines could possibly have sailed.

The question is momentous, and claims intelligent and immediate decision; for tonnage once locked up in a built ship cannot be got out and redistributed to meet the call of the moment. Neither may men evade a definite conclusion by saying that they will have both unlimited power—that is, size—and unlimited number; for this they cannot have. A decision must be reached, and upon it purpose must be concentrated unwaveringly; the disadvantages as well as the advantages of the choice must be accepted with singleness of mind. Individual size is needed, for specific reasons; numbers also are necessary. Between the two opposing demands there is doubtless a mean of individual size which will ensure the maximum offensive power *of the fleet*; for that, and not the maximum power of the single ship, is the true object of battleship construction. Battleships in

all ages are meant to act together, in fleets; not singly, as mere cruisers.

A full discussion of all the considerations, on one side or the other, of this question, would demand more space, and more of technical detail, than the scope of these papers permits. As with most conclusions of a concrete character dealing with contradictory elements, the result reached will inevitably be rather an approximation than an absolute demonstrable certainty; a broad general statement, not a narrow formula. All rules of War, which is not an exact science, but an art, have this characteristic. They do not tell one exactly how to do right, but they give warning when a step is being contemplated which the experience of ages asserts to be wrong. To an instructed mind they cry silently, "Despite all plausible arguments, this one element involved in that which you are thinking to do shows that in it you will go wrong." In the judgment of the writer, two conditions must be primarily considered in determining a class of battleship to which, for the sake of homogeneousness, most of the fleet should conform. Of these two, one must be given in general terms; the other can be stated with more precision. The chief requisite to be kept in view in the battleship is the offensive power of the fleet of which it is a member. The aggregate gun-power of the fleet remaining the same, the increase of its numbers, by limiting the size of the individual ships, tends, up to a certain point, to increase its offensive power; for war depends largely upon combination, and facility of combination increases

with numbers. Numbers, therefore, mean increase of offensive power, other things remaining equal. I do not quote in defence of this position Nelson's saying, that "numbers only can annihilate," because in his day experience had determined a certain mean size of working battleship, and he probably meant merely that preponderant numbers of that type were necessary; but weight may justly be laid upon the fact that our forerunners had, under the test of experience, accepted a certain working mean, and had rejected those above and below that mean, save for exceptional uses.

The second requisite to be fulfilled in the battleship is known technically as coal endurance,—ability to steam a certain distance without recoaling, allowing in the calculation a reasonable margin of safety, as in all designs. This standard distance should be the greatest that separates two coaling places, as they exist in the scheme of fortified coaling ports which every naval nation should frame for itself. In our own case, such distance is that from Honolulu to Guam, in the Ladrones, —3,500 miles. The excellent results obtained from our vessels already in commission, embodying as they do the tentative experiences of other countries, as well as the reflective powers of our own designers, make it antecedently probable that 10,000 and 12,000 tons represent the extremes of normal displacement advantageous for the United States battleship. When this limit is exceeded, observation of foreign navies goes to show that the numbers of the fleet will be diminished and its aggregate

gun-power not increased,—that is, ships of 15,000 tons actually have little more gun-power than those of 10,000. Both results are deviations from the ideal of the battle-fleet already given. In the United States Navy the tendency to huge ships needs to be particularly watched, for we have a tradition in their favor, inherited from the successes of our heavy frigates in the early years of this century. It must be recalled, therefore, that those ships were meant to act singly, but that long experience has shown that for fleet operations a mean of size gives greater aggregate efficiency, both in force and in precision of manœuvre. In the battleship great speed also is distinctly secondary to offensive power and to coal endurance.

To return from a long digression. Either Cuba or Puerto Rico might, in an ordinary case of war, have been selected as the first objective of the United States operations, with very good reasons for either choice. What the British island Santa Lucia is to Jamaica, what Martinique would be to France, engaged in important hostilities in the Caribbean, that, in measure, Puerto Rico is to Cuba, and was to Spain. To this was due the general and justifiable professional expectation that Cervera's squadron would first make for that point, although the anchorage at San Juan, the principal port, leaves very much to be desired in the point of military security for a fleet,—a fact that will call for close and intelligent attention on the part of the professional advisers of the Navy Department. But, while either of the Spanish islands was thus eligible, it would have been quite out

of the question to attempt both at the same time, our navy being only equal to the nominal force of Spain; nor, it should be added, could a decided superiority over the latter have justified operations against both, unless our numbers had sufficed to overbear the whole of the hostile war fleet at both points. To have the greater force and then to divide it, so that the enemy can attack either or both fractions with decisively superior numbers, is the acme of military stupidity; nor is it the less stupid because in practice it has been frequently done. In it has often consisted the vaunted operation of "surrounding an enemy," "bringing him between two fires," and so forth; pompous and troublesome combinations by which a divided force, that could perfectly well move as a whole, starts from two or three widely separated points to converge upon a concentrated enemy, permitting him meanwhile the opportunity, if alert enough, to strike the divisions in detail.

Having this obvious consideration in mind, it is curious now to recall that in the "North American Review," so lately as February, 1897, appeared an article entitled, "Can the United States afford to fight Spain?" by "A Foreign Naval Officer,"—evidently, from internal indications, a Spaniard,—in which occurred this brilliant statement: "For the purposes of an attack upon Spain in the West Indies, the American fleet would necessarily divide itself into two squadrons, one ostensibly destined for Puerto Rico, the other for Cuba.... Spain, before attempting to inflict serious damage upon places on the

American coast, would certainly try to cut off the connection between the two American squadrons operating in the West Indies, and to attack each separately." The remark illustrates the fool's paradise in which many Spaniards, even naval officers, were living before the war, as is evidenced by articles in their own professional periodicals. To attribute such folly to us was not complimentary; and I own my remarks, upon first reading it, were not complimentary to the writer's professional competency.

All reasons, therefore, combined to direct the first movement of the United States upon Cuba, and upon Cuba alone, leaving Spain in undisputed possession of such advantages as Puerto Rico might give. But Cuba and Puerto Rico, points for attack, were not, unluckily, the only two considerations forced upon the attention of the United States. We have a very long coast-line, and it was notorious that the defences were not so far advanced, judged by modern standards, as to inspire perfect confidence, either in professional men or in the inhabitants. By some of the latter, indeed, were displayed evidences of panic unworthy of men, unmeasured, irreflective, and therefore irrational; due largely, it is to be feared, to that false gospel of peace which preaches it for the physical comfort and ease of mind attendant, and in its argument against war strives to smother righteous indignation or noble ideals by appealing to the fear of loss,—casting the pearls of peace before the swine of self-interest. But a popular outcry, whether well or ill founded, cannot be wholly disregarded by a representative Government; and, outside

of the dangers to the coast,—which, in the case of the larger cities at least, were probably exaggerated,—there was certainly an opportunity for an enterprising enemy to embarrass seriously the great coasting trade carried on under our own flag. There was much idle talk, in Spain and elsewhere, about the injury that could be done to United States commerce by scattered cruisers, commerce-destroyers. It was overlooked that our commerce under our own flag is inconsiderable: there were very few American ships abroad to be captured. But the coasting trade, being wholly under our own flag, was, and remains, an extremely vulnerable interest, one the protection of which will make heavy demands upon us in any maritime war. Nor can it be urged that that interest alone will suffer by its own interruption. The bulky cargoes carried by it cannot be transferred to the coastwise railroads without overtaxing the capacities of the latter; all of which means, ultimately, increase of cost and consequent suffering to the consumer, together with serious injury to all related industries dependent upon this traffic.

Under these combined influences the United States Government found itself confronted from the beginning with two objects of military solicitude, widely divergent one from the other, both in geographical position and in method of action; namely, the attack upon Cuba and the protection of its own shores. As the defences did not inspire confidence, the navy had to supplement their weakness, although it is essentially an offensive, and not a defensive, organization. Upon this the enemy

counted much at the first. "To defend the Atlantic coasts in case of war," wrote a Spanish lieutenant who had been Naval Attaché in Washington, "the United States will need one squadron to protect the port of New York and another for the Gulf of Mexico. But if the squadron which it now possesses is devoted to the defence of New York (including Long Island Sound), the coasts of the Gulf of Mexico must be entirely abandoned and left at the mercy of blockade and bombardment." Our total force for the order of battle, prior to the arrival of the *Oregon*, was nominally only equal to that of the enemy, and, when divided between the two objects named, the halves were not decisively superior to the single squadron under Cervera,—which also might be reinforced by some of the armored ships then in Spain. The situation, therefore, was one that is not infrequent, but always embarrassing,—a double purpose and a single force, which, although divisible, ought not to be divided.

It is proper here to say, for the remark is both pertinent and most important, that coast defences and naval force are not interchangeable things; neither are they opponents, one of the other, but complementary. The one is stationary, the other mobile; and, however perfect in itself either may be, the other is necessary to its completeness. In different nations the relative consequence of the two may vary. In Great Britain, whose people are fed, and their raw materials obtained, from the outside world, the need for a fleet vastly exceeds that for coast defences. With us, able to live off ourselves, there is more approach to parity.

Men may even differ as to which is the more important; but such difference, in this question, which is purely military, is not according to knowledge. In equal amounts, mobile offensive power is always, and under all conditions, more effective to the ends of war than stationary defensive power. Why, then, provide the latter? Because mobile force, whatever shape it take, ships or men, is limited narrowly as to the weight it can bear; whereas stationary force, generally, being tied to the earth, is restricted in the same direction only by the ability of the designer to cope with the conditions. Given a firm foundation, which practically can always be had, and there is no limit to the amount of armor, —mere defensive outfit,—be it wood, stone, bricks, or iron, that you can erect upon it; neither is there any limit to the weight of guns, the offensive element, that the earth can bear; only they will be motionless guns. The power of a steam navy to move is practically unfettered; its ability to carry weight, whether guns or armor, is comparatively very small. Fortifications, on the contrary, have almost unbounded power to bear weight, whereas their power to move is *nil*; which again amounts to saying that, being chained, they can put forth offensive power only at arm's length, as it were. Thus stated, it is seen that these two elements of sea warfare are in the strictest sense complementary, one possessing what the other has not; and that the difference is fundamental, essential, unchangeable,—not accidental or temporary. Given local conditions which are generally to be found, greater power, defensive and offensive,

can be established in permanent works than can be brought to the spot by fleets. When, therefore, circumstances permit ships to be squarely pitted against fortifications,—not merely to pass swiftly by them,—it is only because the builders of the shore works have not, for some reason, possibly quite adequate, given them the power to repel attack which they might have had. It will not be asserted that there are no exceptions to this, as to most general rules; but as a broad statement it is almost universally true. "I took the liberty to observe," wrote Nelson at the siege of Calvi, when the commanding general suggested that some vessels might batter the forts, "that the business of laying wood against walls was much altered of late." Precisely what was in his mind when he said "of late" does not appear, but the phrase itself shows that the conditions which induced any momentary equality between ships and forts when brought within range were essentially transient.

As seaports, and all entrances from the sea, are stationary, it follows naturally that the arrangements for their defence also should, as a rule, be permanent and stationary, for as such they are strongest. Indeed, unless stationary, they are apt not to be permanent, as was conclusively shown in the late hostilities, where all the new monitors, six in number, intended for coast defence, were diverted from that object and despatched to distant points; two going to Manila, and stripping the Pacific coast of protection, so far as based upon them. This is one of the essential vices of a system of coast defence dependent upon

ships, even when constructed for that purpose; they are always liable to be withdrawn by an emergency, real or fancied. Upon the danger of such diversion to the local security, Nelson insisted, when charged with the guard of the Thames in 1801. The block ships (floating batteries), he directed, were on no account to be moved for any momentary advantage; for it might very well be impossible for them to regain their carefully chosen positions when wanted there. Our naval scheme in past years has been seriously damaged, and now suffers, from two misleading conceptions: one that a navy is for defence primarily, and not for offensive war; the other, consequent mainly upon the first, that the monitor, being stronger defensively than offensively, and of inferior mobility, was the best type of warship. The Civil War, being, so far as the sea was concerned, essentially a coast war, naturally fostered this opinion. The monitor in smooth water is better able to stand up to shore guns than ships are which present a larger target; but, for all that, it is more vulnerable, both above water and below, than shore guns are if these are properly distributed. It is a hybrid, neither able to bear the weight that fortifications do, nor having the mobility of ships; and it is, moreover, a poor gun-platform in a sea-way.

There is no saying of Napoleon's known to the writer more pregnant of the whole art and practice of war than this, "Exclusiveness of purpose is the secret of great successes and of great operations." If, therefore, in maritime war, you wish permanent defences for your coasts, rely exclusively upon

stationary works, if the conditions admit, not upon floating batteries which have the weaknesses of ships. If you wish offensive war carried on vigorously upon the seas, rely exclusively upon ships that have the qualities of ships and not of floating batteries. We had in the recent hostilities 26,000 tons of shipping sealed up in monitors, of comparatively recent construction, in the Atlantic and the Pacific. There was not an hour from first to last, I will venture to say, that we would not gladly have exchanged the whole six for two battleships of less aggregate displacement; and that although, from the weakness of the Spanish defences, we were able to hug pretty closely most parts of the Cuban coast. Had the Spanish guns at Santiago kept our fleet at a greater distance, we should have lamented still more bitterly the policy which gave us sluggish monitors for mobile battleships.

II

The Effect of Deficient Coast-Defence upon the Movements of the Navy.—The Military and Naval Conditions of Spain at the Outbreak of the War.

The unsatisfactory condition of the coast defences, whereby the navy lost the support of its complementary factor in the scheme of national sea power, imposed a vicious, though inevitable, change in the initial plan of campaign, which should have been directed in full force against the coast of Cuba. The four newer monitors on the Atlantic coast, if distributed among our principal ports, were not adequate, singly, to resist the attack which was suggested by the possibilities of the case —though remote—and still more by the panic among certain of our citizens. On the other hand, if the four were massed and centrally placed, which is the correct disposition of any mobile force, military or naval, intended to counteract the attack of an enemy whose particular line of approach is as yet uncertain, their sluggishness and defective nautical qualities would make them comparatively inefficient. New York, for instance, is a singularly central and suitable point, relatively to our northern Atlantic seaboard, in which to station a division intended to meet and thwart the plans of a squadron like Cervera's, if directed against our coast ports, in accordance with the fertile imaginations of

evil which were the fashion in that hour. Did the enemy appear off either Boston, the Delaware, or the Chesapeake, he could not effect material injury before a division of ships of the *Oregon* class would be upon him; and within the limits named are found the major external commercial interests of the country as well as the ocean approaches along which they travel. But had the monitors been substituted for battleships, not to speak of their greater slowness, their inferiority as steady gun-platforms would have placed them at a serious disadvantage if the enemy were met outside, as he perfectly well might be.

It was probably such considerations as these, though the writer was not privy to them, that determined the division of the battle fleet, and the confiding to the section styled the Flying Squadron the defence of the Atlantic coast for the time being. The monitors were all sent to Key West, where they would be at hand to act against Havana; the narrowness of the field in which that city, Key West, and Matanzas are comprised making their slowness less of a drawback, while the moderate weather which might be expected to prevail would permit their shooting to be less inaccurate. The station of the Flying Squadron in Hampton Roads, though not so central as New York relatively to the more important commercial interests, upon which, if upon any, the Spanish attack might fall, was more central as regards the whole coast; and, above all, was nearer than New York to Havana and to Puerto Rico. The time element also entered the calculations in another way, for a fleet of heavy ships is more certainly able

to put to sea at a moment's notice, in all conditions of tide and weather, from the Chesapeake than from New York Bay. In short, the position chosen may be taken to indicate that, in the opinion of the Navy Department and its advisers, Cervera was not likely to attempt a dash at an Atlantic port, and that it was more important to be able to reach the West Indies speedily than to protect New York or Boston,—a conclusion which the writer entirely shared.

The country, however, should not fail to note that the division of the armored fleet into two sections, nearly a thousand miles apart, though probably the best that could be done under all the circumstances of the moment, was contrary to sound practice; and that the conditions which made it necessary should not have existed. Thus, deficient coast protection reacts unfavorably upon the war fleet, which in all its movements should be free from any responsibility for the mere safety of the ports it quits. Under such conditions as then obtained, it might have been possible for Spain to force our entire battle fleet from its offensive undertaking against Cuba, and to relegate it to mere coast defence. Had Cervera's squadron, instead of being despatched alone to the Antilles, been recalled to Spain, as it should have been, and there reinforced by the two armored ships which afterwards went to Suez with Cámara, the approach of this compact body would have compelled our fleet to concentrate; for each of our divisions of three ships—prior to the arrival of the *Oregon*—would have been too weak to hazard an engagement with the

enemy's six. When thus concentrated, where should it be placed? Off Havana, or at Hampton Roads? It could not be at both. The answer undoubtedly should be, "Off Havana;" for there it would be guarding the most important part of the enemy's coast, blocking the access to it of the Spanish fleet, and at the same time covering Key West, our naval base of operations. But if the condition of our coast defences at all corresponded to the tremors of our seaport citizens, the Government manifestly would be unable to hold the fleet thus at the front. Had it, on the contrary, been impossible for an enemy's fleet to approach nearer than three miles to our sea-coast without great and evident danger of having ships damaged which could not be replaced, and of wasting ammunition at ranges too long even for bombardments, the Spanish battle fleet would have kept away, and would have pursued its proper object of supporting their campaign in Cuba by driving off our fleet—if it could. It is true that no amount of fortification will secure the coasting trade beyond easy gunshot of the works; but as the enemy's battle fleet could not have devoted itself for long to molesting the coasters—because our fleet would thereby be drawn to the spot—that duty must have devolved upon vessels of another class, against which we also would have provided, and did provide, by the squadron of cruisers under Commodore Howell. In short, proper coast defence, the true and necessary complement of an efficient navy, releases the latter for its proper work,—offensive, upon the open seas, or off the enemy's shores.

The subject receives further illumination when we consider, in addition to the hypothetical case just discussed,—the approach of six Spanish ships,—the actual conditions at the opening of the campaign. We had chosen Cuba for our objective, had begun our operations, Cervera was on his way across the ocean, and our battle fleet was divided and posted as stated. It was reasonable for us to estimate each division of our ships—one comprising the *New York*, *Iowa*, and *Indiana*, the other the *Brooklyn*, *Massachusetts*, and *Texas*—as able to meet Cervera's four, these being of a class slightly inferior to the best of ours. We might at least flatter ourselves that, to use a frequent phrase of Nelson's, by the time they had soundly beaten one of these groups, they would give us no more trouble for the rest of the year. We could, therefore, with perfect military propriety, have applied the two divisions to separate tasks on the Cuban coast, if our own coast had been adequately fortified.

The advantage—nay, the necessity—of thus distributing our battleships, having only four enemies to fear, will appear from a glance at the map of Cuba. It will there be seen that the island is particularly narrow abreast of Havana, and that from there, for a couple of hundred miles to the eastward, extends the only tolerably developed railroad system, by which the capital is kept in communication with the seaports, on the north coast as far as Sagua la Grande, and on the south with Cienfuegos and Batabano. This narrowness, and the comparative facility of communication indicated by the railroads, enabled Spain, during

her occupation, effectually to prevent combined movements between the insurgents in the east and those in the west; a power which Weyler endeavored to increase by the *trocha* system,—a ditch or ditches, with closely supporting works, extending across the island. Individuals, or small parties, might slip by unperceived; but it should have been impossible for any serious co-operation to take place. The coast-wise railroads, again, kept Havana and the country adjacent to them in open, if limited, communication with the sea, so long as any one port upon their lines remained unblockaded. For reasons such as these, in this belt of land, from Havana to Sagua and Cienfuegos, lay the chief strength of the Spanish tenure, which centred upon Havana; and in it the greatest part of the Spanish army was massed. Until, therefore, we were ready to invade, which should not have been before the close of the rainy season, the one obvious course open to us was to isolate the capital and the army from the sea, through which supplies of all kinds—daily bread, almost, of food and ammunition—were introduced; for Cuba, in these respects, produces little.

To perfect such isolation, however, it was necessary not only to place before each port armed cruisers able to stop merchant steamers, but also to give to the vessels so stationed, as well on the south as on the north side, a backbone of support by the presence of an armored fleet, which should both close the great ports—Havana and Cienfuegos—and afford a rallying-point to the smaller ships, if driven in by the appearance of

Cervera's division. The main fleet—three armored ships—on the north was thus used, although the blockade, from the fewness of available cruisers, was not at first extended beyond Cardenas. On the south a similar body—the Flying Squadron—should from the first have been stationed before Cienfuegos; for each division, as has been said, could with military propriety have been risked singly against Cervera's four ships. This was not done, because it was possible—though most improbable—that the Spanish squadron might attempt one of our own ports; because we had not perfect confidence in the harbor defences; and because, also, of the popular outcry. Consequently, the extremely important port of Cienfuegos, a back door to Havana, was blockaded only by a few light cruisers; and when the Spanish squadron was reported at Curaçao, these had to be withdrawn. One only was left to maintain in form the blockade which had been declared; and she had instructions to clear out quickly if the enemy appeared. Neither one, nor a dozen, of such ships would have been the slightest impediment to Cervera's entering Cienfuegos, raising our blockade by force; and this, it is needless to add, would have been hailed in Spain and throughout the Continent of Europe as a distinct defeat for us,—which, in truth, it would have been, carrying with it consequences political as well as military.

This naval mishap, had it occurred, would have been due mainly to inadequate armament of our coasts; for to retain the Flying Squadron in the Chesapeake, merely as a guard to

the coasting trade, would have been a serious military error, subordinating an offensive operation—off Cienfuegos—to one merely defensive, and not absolutely vital. "The best protection against an enemy's fire," said Farragut, "is a well-directed fire from our own guns." Analogically, the best defence for one's own shores is to harass and threaten seriously those of the opponent; but this best defence cannot be employed to the utmost, if the inferior, passive defence of fortification has been neglected. The fencer who wears also a breastplate may be looser in his guard. Seaports cannot strike beyond the range of their guns; but if the great commercial ports and naval stations can strike effectively so far, the fleet can launch into the deep rejoicing, knowing that its home interests, behind the buckler of the fixed defences, are safe till it returns.

The broader determining conditions, and the consequent dispositions made by the Government of the United States and its naval authorities, in the recent campaign, have now been stated and discussed. In them is particularly to be noted the crippling effect upon naval operations produced by the consciousness of inadequate coast defences of the permanent type. The sane conclusion to be drawn is, that while sea-coast fortification can never take the place of fleets; that while, as a defence even, it, being passive, is far inferior to the active measure of offensive defence, which protects its own interests by carrying offensive war out on to the sea, and, it may be, to the enemy's shores; nevertheless, by the fearless freedom of movement it permits to

the navy, it is to the latter complementary,—completes it; the two words being etymologically equivalent.

The other comments hitherto made upon our initial plan of operations—for example, the impropriety of attempting simultaneous movements against Puerto Rico and Cuba, and the advisability or necessity, under the same conditions, of moving against both Cienfuegos and Havana by the measure of a blockade—were simply special applications of general principles of warfare, universally true, to particular instances in this campaign. They address themselves, it may be said, chiefly to the soldier or seaman, as illustrating his especial business of directing war; and while their value to the civilian cannot be denied,—for whatever really enlightens public opinion in a country like ours facilitates military operations,—nevertheless the function of coast defence, as contributory to sea power, is a lesson most necessary to be absorbed by laymen; for it, as well as the maintenance of the fleet, is in this age the work of peace times, when the need of preparation for war is too little heeded to be understood. The illustrations of the embarrassment actually incurred from this deficiency in the late hostilities are of the nature of an object lesson, and as such should be pondered.

At the same time, however, that attention is thus called to the inevitable and far-reaching effect of such antecedent neglects, shown in directions where men would not ordinarily have expected them, it is necessary to check exaggeration of coast defence, in extent or in degree, by remarking that in

any true conception of war, fortification, defence, inland and sea-coast alike, is of value merely in so far as it conduces to offensive operations. This is conspicuously illustrated by our recent experience. The great evil of our deficiencies in coast armament was that they neutralized temporarily a large part of our navy; prevented our sending it to Cuba; made possible that Cervera's squadron, during quite an interval, might do this or that thing of several things thus left open to him, the result of which would have been to encourage the enemy, and possibly to produce political action by our ill-wishers abroad. Directly upon this consideration—of the use that the Flying Squadron might have been, if not held up for coast defence—follows the further reflection how much more useful still would have been a third squadron; that is, a navy half as large again as we then had. Expecting Cervera's force alone, a navy of such size, free from anxiety about coast defence, could have barred to him San Juan de Puerto Rico as well as Cienfuegos and Havana; or had Cámara been joined to Cervera, as he should have been, such a force would have closed both Cienfuegos and Havana with divisions that need not have feared the combined enemy. If, further, there had been a fourth squadron—our coast defence in each case remaining the same—our evident naval supremacy would probably have kept the Spanish fleet in Europe. Not unlikely there would have been no war; in which event, the anti-imperialist may observe there would, thanks to a great and prepared navy, have been no question of the Philippines, and

possibly none of Hawaii.

In short, it is with coast defence and the navy as it is with numbers *versus* size in battleships. Both being necessary, the question of proportion demands close attention, but in both cases the same single principle dominates: offensive power, not defensive, determines the issues of war. In the solution of the problem, the extent to be given coast defence by fortification depends, as do all military decisions, whether of preparation or of actual warfare, upon certain well-recognized principles; and for a given country or coast, since the natural conditions remain permanent, the general dispositions, and the relative power of the several works, if determined by men of competent military knowledge, will remain practically constant during long periods. It is true, doubtless, that purely military conclusions must submit to some modification, in deference to the liability of a population to panics. The fact illustrates again the urgent necessity for the spread of sound elementary ideas on military subjects among the people at large; but, if the great coast cities are satisfied of their safety, a government will be able to resist the unreasonable clamor—for such it is—of small towns and villages, which are protected by their own insignificance. The navy is a more variable element; for the demands upon it depend upon external conditions of a political character, which may undergo changes not only sudden, but extensive. The results of the war with Spain, for instance, have affected but little the question of passive coast defence, by fortification or otherwise;

but they have greatly altered the circumstances which hitherto have dictated the size of our active forces, both land and sea. Upon the greater or less strength of the navy depends, in a maritime conflict, the aggressive efficiency which shortens war, and so mitigates its evils. In the general question of preparation for naval war, therefore, the important centres and internal waterways of commerce must receive local protection, where they are exposed to attack from the sea; the rest must trust, and can in such case safely trust, to the fleet, upon which, as the offensive arm, all other expenditure for military maritime efficiency should be made. The preposterous and humiliating terrors of the past months, that a hostile fleet would waste coal and ammunition in shelling villages and bathers on a beach, we may hope will not recur.

Before proceeding to study the operations of the war, the military and naval conditions of the enemy at its outbreak must be briefly considered.

Spain, being a state that maintains at all times a regular army, respectable in numbers as well as in personal valor, had at the beginning, and, from the shortness of the war, continued to the end to have a decided land superiority over ourselves. Whatever we might hope eventually to produce in the way of an effective army, large enough for the work in Cuba, time was needed for the result, and time was not allowed. In one respect only the condition of the Peninsula seems to have resembled our own; that was in the inadequacy of the coast defences. The matter

there was even more serious than with us, because not only were the preparations less, but several large sea-coast cities—for instance, Barcelona, Malaga, Cadiz—lie immediately upon the sea-shore; whereas most of ours are at the head of considerable estuaries, remote from the entrance. The exposure of important commercial centres to bombardment, therefore, was for them much greater. This consideration was indeed so evident, that there was in the United States Navy a perceptible current of feeling in favor of carrying maritime war to the coast of Spain, and to its commercial approaches.

The objection to this, on the part of the Navy Department, was, with slight modifications, the same as to the undertaking of operations against Puerto Rico. There was not at our disposition, either in armored ships or in cruisers, any superfluity of force over and above the requirements of the projected blockade of Cuba. To divert ships from this object, therefore, would be false to the golden rule of concentration of effort,—to the single eye that gives light in warfare. Moreover, in such a movement, the reliance, as represented in the writer's hearing, would have been upon moral effect, upon the dismay of the enemy; for we should soon have come to the end of our physical coercion. As Nelson said of bombarding Copenhagen, "We should have done our worst, and no nearer friends." The influence of moral effect in war is indisputable, and often tremendous; but like some drugs in the pharmacopœia, it is very uncertain in its action. The other party may not, as the boys say, "scare worth a cent;" whereas

material forces can be closely measured beforehand, and their results reasonably predicted. This statement, generally true, is historically especially true of the Spaniard, attacked in his own land. The tenacity of the race has never come out so strongly as under such conditions, as was witnessed in the old War of the Spanish Succession, and during the usurpation of Napoleon.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.