another way of saying that her commerce had increased so largely that the navy was not strong enough to look after it as well as oppose the enemy’s main force. Notwithstanding her losses she was on the winning side in the conflict. Much misery and ruin had been caused, but not enough to affect the issue of the war.

Torrington’s proceedings in July 1690 were at the time the subject of much angry discussion. The debate, still meriting the epithet angry, has been renewed within the last few years. The matter has to be noticed here, because it involves the consideration of a question of naval strategy which must be understood by those who wish to know the real meaning of the term sea-power, and who ought to learn that it is not a thing to be idly risked or thrown away at the bidding of the ignorant and the irresponsible. Arthur Herbert, earl of Torrington—the later peerage is a viscountey held by the Byng family—was in command of the allied English and Dutch fleet in the English Channel. “ The disparity of force, ’’ says Mahan, “ was still in favour of France in 1690, but it was not so great as the year before. ” We can measure the ability of the then English government for conducting a great war, when we know that, in its wisdom, it had still further weakened the fleet by dividing if. Vice-Admiral Killigrew had been sent to the Mediterranean with a squadron, and had neglected, and indeed refused when urged, to take the necessary steps to repair this error. The government having omitted, as governments sometimes do, to gain any trustworthy intelligence of the strength or movements of the enemy, Torrington suddenly found himself confronted by a considerably superior French fleet under Tour- ville, one of the greatest of French sea-officers. Since then the intentions of the French have been questioned; but it is beyond dispute that, in England at the time, Tourville’s movements were believed to be preliminary to invasion. Whether Tourville deliberately meant his movement to cover an invasion or not, invasion would almost certainly have followed complete success on his part; otherwise, his victory would have been without any valuable result. Torrington saw that as long as he could keep his own fleet intact, he could, though much weaker than his opponent, prevent him from doing serious harm. Though personally not a believer in the imminence of invasion, the English admiral knew that “ most men were in fear that the French would invade.” His own view was “ that whilst we had a fleet in being they would not dare to make an attempt.” Of late years controversy has raged round this phrase, “ a fleet in being,” and the strategic principle which it expresses. Most seamen were at the time, have been since, and still are in agree­ment with Torrington. This might be supposed enough to settle the question. It has not been allowed, however, to remain one of purely naval strategy. It was made at the time a matter of party politics. This is why it is so necessary that in a notice of sea-power it should be discussed. Both as a strategist and as a tactician Torrington was immeasurably ahead of his contemporaries. The only English admirals who can be placed above him are Hawke and Nelson. He paid the penalty of his pre- eminence: he could not make ignorant men and dull men see the meaning or the advantages of his proceedings. Mahan, who is specially qualified to do him full justice, does not devote much space in his work to a consideration of Torrington’s case, evidently because he had not sufficient materials before him on which to form a judgment. The admiral's character had been taken away already by Macaulay, who did have ample evidence before him; William III., with all his fine qualities, did not possess a military genius quite equal to that of Napoleon; and Napoleon, in naval strategy, was often wrong. William III. understood that subject even less than the French emperor did; and his favourites were still less capable of understanding it. Conse­quently Torrington’s action has been put down to jealousy of the Dutch. There have been people who accused Nelson of being jealous of the naval reputation of Caracciolo! The explanation of Torrington’s conduct is this: He had a fleet so much weaker than Tourville’s that he could not fight a general action with the latter without a practical certainty of a crushing defeat.

Such a result would have laid the kingdom open: a defeat of the allied fleet, says Mahan, “ if sufficiently severe, might involve the fall of William’s throne in England.” Given certain move­ments of the French fleet, Torrington might have manoeuvred to slip past it to the westward and join his force with that under Killigrew, which would make him strong enough to hazard a battle. This proved impracticable. There was then one course left—to retire before the French, but not to keep far from them. He knew that, though not strong enough to engage their whole otherwise unemployed fleet with any hope of success, he would be quite strong enough to fight and most likely beat it, when a part of it was trying either to deal with our ships to the west- ward or to cover the disembarkation of an invading army. He, therefore, proposed to keep his “ fleet in being ” in order to fall on the enemy when the latter would have two affairs at the same time on his hands. Vice-Admiral Colomb rose to a greater height than was usual even with him in his criticism of this campaign. What Torrington did was merely to reproduce on the sea what has been noticed dozens of times on shore, viz. the menace of the flanking enemy. In land warfare this is held to give exceptional opportunities for the display of good generalship, but, to quote Mahan over again, a navy “ acts on an element strange to most writers, its members have been from time immemorial a strange race apart, without prophets of their own, neither themselves nor their calling understood.” Whilst Torrington has had the support of the seamen, his opponents have been landsmen. For the crime of being a good strategist he was brought before a court-martial, but acquitted. His sovereign, who had been given the crowns of three kingdoms to defend our laws, showed his respect for them by flouting a legally constituted tribunal and disregarding its solemn finding. The admiral who had saved his country was dismissed from the service. Still, the principle of the “ fleet in being ” lies at the bottom of all sound strategy.

Admiral Colomb has pointed out a great change of plan in the later naval campaigns of the 17th century. Improvements in naval architecture, in the methods of preserving food, and in the arrangements for keeping the crews healthy, permitted fleets to be employed at a distance from their home ports for long continuous periods. The Dutch, as allies of the Spaniards, kept a fleet in the Mediterranean for many months. The great de Ruyter was mortally wounded in one of the battles there fought. In the War of the Spanish Succession the Anglo-Dutch fleet found its principal scene of action eastward of Gibraltar. This, as it were, set the fashion for future wars. It became a kind of tacitly accepted rule that the operation of British sea-power was to be felt in the enemy’s, rather than in British waters. The hostile coast was regarded strategically as the British frontier, and the sea was looked upon as territory which the enemy must be prevented from invading. Acceptance of this principle led in time to the so-called “block­ades ” of Brest and Toulon. The name was misleading. As Nelson took care to explain, there was no desire to keep the enemy’s fleet in; what was desired was to be near enough to attack it if it came out. The wisdom of the plan is undoubted. The hostile navy could be more easily watched and more easily followed if it put to sea. To carry out this plan a navy stronger in number of ships or in general efficiency than that of the enemy was necessary. With the exception of that of American Independence, which will, therefore, require special notice, England’s subsequent great wars were conducted in accordance with the rule.

In the early part of the 18th century there was a remarkable manifestation of sea-power in the Baltic. Peter the Great, having created an efficient army, drove the Swedes from the coast provinces south of the Gulf of Finland.

Like the earlier monarchies of which we have spoken,

Russia, in the Baltic at least, now became a naval state. A large fleet was built, and, indeed, a considerable navy established. It was a purely artificial creation, and showed the merits and defects of its character. At first, and when under the eye of its creator, it was strong; when Peter was no more it