dwindled away and, when needed again, had to be created afresh. It enabled Peter the Great to conquer the neighbouring portion of Finland, to secure his coast territories and to dominate the Baltic. In this he was assisted by the exhaustion of Sweden consequent on her endeavours to retain, what was no longer possible, the position of a *quasi*-great power which she had held since the days of Gustavus Adolphus. Sweden had been further weakened, especially as a naval state, by almost incessant wars with Denmark, which prevented all hope of Scandinavian predominance in the Baltic, the control of which sea has in these days passed into the hands of another state possessing a quickly created navy—the modem German empire.

The War of the Spanish Succession left Great Britain a Mediter­ranean power, a position which, in spite of twice losing Minorca, she still holds. In the War of the Austrian Succession, “ France was forced to give up her conquests for want of a navy, and England saved her position by her sea-power, though she had failed to use it to the best advantage ” (Mahan, *Influence on Hist.* p. 28o). This shows, as we shall find that a later war showed more plainly, that even the government of a thoroughly maritime country is not always sure of conducting its naval affairs wisely. The Seven Years’ War included some brilliant displays of the efficacy of sea-power. It was this which put the British in possession of Canada, decided which European race was to rule in India, and led to a British occupation of Havana in one hemisphere and of Manila in the other. In the same war Great Britain learnt how, by a feeble use of sea-power, a valuable possession like Minorca may be lost.· At the same time, the maritime trade and the general prosperity of the kingdom increased enormously. The result of the conflict made plain to all the paramount importance of having in the principal posts in the government men capable of understanding

what war is and how it ought to be conducted.

This lesson, as the sequel demonstrated, had not been learned when Great Britain became involved in a war with the insurgent

colonies in North America. Mahan’s comment is. striking: “ The magnificence of sea-power and its value had perhaps been more clearly shown by the uncontrolled sway and consequent exaltation of one

belligerent; but the lesson thus given, if more striking, is less vividly interesting than the spectacle of that sea-power meeting a foe worthy of its steel, and excited to exertion by a strife which endangered not only its most valuable colonies, but even its own shores ” (*Influence on Hist.* p. 338). Great Britain was, in fact, drawing too largely on the *prestige* acquired during the Seven Years’ War, and was governed by men who did not understand the first principles of naval warfare, and would not listen to those who did. They quite ignored the teaching of the then comparatively recent wars which has been alluded to already—that the enemy’s coast should be looked upon as the frontier. A century and a half earlier the Dutchman Grotius had written—

“ Quae meta Britannis Litora sunt aliis.”

Though ordinary prudence would have suggested ample preparation, British ministers allowed their country to remain unpre­pared. Instead of concentrating their efforts on the main objective, they frittered away force in attempts to relieve two beleaguered garrisons under the pretext of yielding to popular pressure, which is the official term for acting on the advice of irresponsible and uninstructed busybodies. “ Depuis le début de la crise,” says Captain Chevalier, “les ministres de la Grande- Bretagne s’étaient montrés inférieurs à leur tâche.” An impressive result of this was the repeated appearance of powerful and indeed numerically superior hostile fleets in the English Channel. The war—notwithstanding that land operations constituted an important part of it, and in the end settled the issue—was essentially oceanic. Captain Mahan says it was “ purely maritime.” It may be true that, whatever the belligerent result, the political result, as regards the *status* of the insurgent colonies, would have been the same. It is in the highest degree probable, indeed it closely approaches to certainty, that a proper use of the British sea-power would have prevented

independence from being conquered, as it were, at the point of the bayonet. There can be no surprise in store for the student acquainted with the vagaries of strategists who are influenced in war by political in preference to military requirements. Still, it is difficult to repress an emotion of astonishment on finding that a British government intentionally permitted de Grasse’s fleet and the French army in its convoy to cross the Atlantic unmolested, for fear of postponing for a time the revictualling of the garrison beleaguered at Gibraltar. Washington’s opinion as to the importance of the naval factor has been quoted already; and Mahan does not put the case too strongly when he declares that the success of the Americans was due to “ sea-power being in the hands of the French and its improper distribution by the English authorities.” England’s navy, misdirected as it was, made a good fight of it, never allowed itself to be decisively beaten in a considerable battle, and won at least one great victory. At the point of contact with the enemy, however, it was not in general so conspicuously successful as it was in the Seven Years’ War, or as it was to be in the great conflict with the French republic and empire. The truth is that its opponent, the French navy, was never so thoroughly a sea-going force as it was in the War of American Independence; and never so closely approached the British in sea experience as it did during that period. Great Britain met antagonists who were very nearly, but fortunately not quite, as familiar with the sea as she was; and she never found it so hard to beat them, or even to avoid being beaten by them. An Englishman would, naturally enough, start at the conclusion confronting him, if he were to speculate as to the result of more than one battle had the great Suffren’s captains and crews been quite up to the level of those commanded by stout old Sir Edward Hughes. Suffren, it should be said, before going to the East Indies, had “ thirty-eight years of almost uninterrupted sea-service ” (Laughton, *Studies in Naval Hist.* p. 103). A glance at a chart of the world, with the scenes of the general actions of the war dotted on it, will show how notably oceanic the campaigns were. The hostile fleets met over and over again on the far side of the Atlantic and in distant Indian seas. The French navy had penetrated into the ocean as readily and as far as the British could do. Besides this, it should be remembered that it was not until the 12th of April 1782, when Rodney in one hemisphere and Suffren in the other showed them the way, that British officers were able to escape from the fetters imposed on them by the *Fighting In­structions*—a fact worth remembering in days in which it is sometimes proposed, by establishing schools of naval tactics on shore, to revive the pedantry which made a decisive success in battle nearly impossible.

The mighty conflict which raged between Great Britain on one side and France and her allies on the other, with little intermission, for more than twenty years, presents a different aspect from that of the war last mentioned.

The victories which the British fleet was to gain were generally to be overwhelming; if not, they were looked upon as almost defeats. Whether the fleet\* opposed to the British was or was not the more numerous, the result was generally the same—the enemy was beaten. That there was a discoverable reason for this is certain. A great deal has been made of the disorganization in the French navy consequent on the confusion of the Revolution. That there was disorganization is undoubted; that it did impair discipline and, consequently, general efficiency will not be disputed; but that it was considerable enough to account by itself for the French naval defeats is altogether inadmissible. Revolutionary disorder had invaded the land-forces to a greater degree than it had invaded the sea-forces. The supersession, flight or guillotining of army officers had been beyond measure more frequent than was the case with the naval officers. In spite of all this the French armies were on the whole—even in the early days of the Revolution—extraordinarily successful. In 1792 “ the most formidable invasion that ever threatened France,” as Alison calls it, was repelled, though the invaders were the highly disciplined and veteran armies of Prussia and Austria. It was nearly two years