

Chapter 1 : Sea-Power And Other Studies Novel, Sea-Power and Other Studies Part 13

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Please use the follow button to get notification about the latest chapter next time when you visit LightNovelFree. Use F11 button to read novel in full-screen PC only. Drop by anytime you want to read free "fast" latest novel. Part 7 We may suspect that there was some discussion at Whitehall as to the wisdom of retaining a plan which caused so much inconvenience and had such poor results. The conclusion seems to have been to submit it to a searching test. The coasts of the United Kingdom were studded with stations--thirty-seven generally, but the number varied--for the entry of seamen. It has often been thought that they were simply impressment offices. The fact is that many more men were raised at these places by volunteering than by impressment. The rendezvous, as a rule, were in charge of captains or commanders, some few being entrusted to lieutenants. The order at first sight appeared sweeping enough. It contained the following words: On the 6th December, just a month after it had been tried, the Admiralty formulated the following conclusion: This was the last duty in which that distinguished officer was employed, and his having been selected for it appears to have been unknown to all his biographers. It is not surprising that after this the proceedings of the press-gang occupy scarcely any s. Such references to them as there are will be found in the writings of the novelist and the dramatist. Probably individual cases of impressment occurred till nearly the end of the Great War; but they could not have been many. Compulsory service most unnecessarily caused--not much, but still some--unjustifiable personal hardships. It tended to stir up a feeling hostile to the navy. It required to work its machinery costly out of all proportion to the results obtained. Indeed, it failed completely to effect what had been expected of it. In the great days of old our fleet, after all, was manned, not by impressed men, but by volunteers. It was largely due to that that we became masters of the sea. These meet the requirements of two classes. The publications satisfy, or at any rate go far towards satisfying, the wishes of those who want to be entertained, and also of those whose higher motive is a desire to discover the truth about notable historical occurrences. Putting the public in possession of the materials, previously hidden in more or less inaccessible muniment-rooms and record offices, with which the narratives of professed historians have been constructed, has had advantages likely to become more and more apparent as time goes on. It acts as a check upon the imaginative tendencies which even eminent writers have not always been able, by themselves, to keep under proper control. Had the contemporary document. We should have abandoned our belief in the fictions that the Armada was defeated by the weather, and that the great Herbert of Torrington was a lubber, a traitor, and a coward. It is not easy to calculate the benefit that we should have secured, had the presentation of some important events in the history of our national defence been as accurate as it was effective. Enormous sums of money have been wasted in trying to make our defensive arrangements square with a conception of history based upon misunderstanding or misinterpretation of facts. Pecuniary extravagance is bad enough; but there is a greater evil still. We have been taught to cherish, and we have been reluctant to abandon, a false standard of defence, though adherence to such a standard can be shown to have brought the country within measurable distance of grievous peril. The evidence was completed; some being adduced from the other side, by our fellow-countryman Sir J. Others have worked on similar lines; and a healthier view of our strategic conditions and needs is more widely held than it was; though it cannot be said to be, even yet, universally prevalent. Something deeper than mere literary interest, therefore, is to be attributed to a work which has recently appeared in Paris. It is, however, in the nature of a work of the kind that its separate parts should be virtually independent of each other. Consequently the volume which we now have may be treated properly as a book by itself. When completed the work is to contain all the document. The search for, the critical examination and the methodical classification. The book is compiled by Captain Desbriere, of the French Cuirassiers. There is no necessity to criticise the literary execution of the work. What is wanted is to explain the nature of its contents and to indicate the lessons which may be drawn from them. Nevertheless, attention may be called to a curious misreading of history contained in the preface. In stating the periods which the different volumes of the book

are to cover, the writer alludes to the Peace of Amiens, which, he affirms, England was compelled to accept by exhaustion, want of means of defence, and fear of the menaces of the great First Consul then disposing of the resources of France, aggrandised, pacified, and reinforced by alliances. The book being what it is and coming whence it does, such a statement ought not to be pa. On the contrary, wealth had never increased so fast Nor was there any ground for despondency in the aspect of the war itself. Between when the war began and when the Peace of Amiens interrupted it, the public income of Great Britain increased from 16,, to 28,, the war taxes not being included in the latter sum. The revenue of France, notwithstanding her territorial acquisitions, sank from 18,, to 18,, The French exports and imports by sea were annihilated; whilst the British exports were doubled and the imports increased more than 50 per cent. The French Navy had at the beginning 73, at the end of the war 39, s. Even as regards the army, the British force at the end of the war was not greatly inferior numerically to the French. It was, however, much scattered, being distributed over the whole British Empire. In view of the question under discussion, no excuse need be given for adducing these facts. Paris, Chapelot et Cie. He has not rested content with the publication of MSS. In preparing his book he visited England and examined our records; and, besides, he has inserted in their proper place pa. In this indifference they have some distinguished companions. We are informed by Captain Desbriere that the idea of a hostile descent on England was during a long time much favoured in France. The national archives and those of the Ministries of War and of Marine are filled with proposals for carrying it out, some dating back to Whether emanating from private persons or formulated in obedience to official direction, there are certain features in all the proposals so marked that we are able to cla. The appearance of these at many different points, it was believed, would so hara. In every proposal for an attempt of this cla. Indeed, generally the bulk of the force to be employed was ultimately to be composed of native sympathisers, who were also to provide--at least at the beginning--all the supplies and transport, both vehicles and animals, required. Every plan, no matter to which cla. That there was such a thing as the command of the sea is rarely alluded to; and when it is, it is merely to accentuate the possibility of neutralising it by evading the force holding it. There is something which almost deserves to be styled comical in the absolutely unvarying confidence, alike of amateurs and highly placed military officers, with which it was held that a superior naval force was a thing that might be disregarded. Generals who would have laughed to scorn anyone maintaining that, though there was a powerful Prussian army on the road to one city and an Austrian army on the road to the other, a French army might force its way to either Berlin or Vienna without either fighting or even being prepared to fight, such generals never hesitated to approve expeditions obliged to traverse a region in the occupation of a greatly superior force, the region being pelagic and the force naval. We had seized the little islands of St. Marcoff, a short distance from the coast of Normandy, and held them for years. We shall see by and by how far this remarkable att. Hoche himself was the inventor of a plan of hara. The plan, extraordinary as it was, was one of the few put into execution. The famous Fishguard Invasion was carried out by some fourteen hundred convicts commanded by an American adventurer named Tate. The direction to avoid fighting was exactly obeyed by Colonel Tate and the armed criminals under his orders. He landed in Cardigan Bay from a small squadron of French men-of-war at sunset on the 22nd February ; and, on the appearance of Lord Cawdor with the local Yeomanry and Militia, asked to be allowed to surrender on the 24th. At a subsequent exchange of prisoners the French authorities refused to receive any of the worthies who had accompanied Tate. At length were allowed to land; but were imprisoned in the forts of Cherbourg. The French records contain many expressions of the dread experienced by the inhabitants of the coast lest the English should put on sh. A more promising enterprise was that in which it was decided to obtain the a. The Dutch fleet was to put to sea with the object of engaging the English. An army of 15, was then to be embarked in the ports of Holland, and was to effect a diversion in favour of another and larger body, which, starting from France, was to land in Ireland, repeating the attempt of Hoche in December , which will be dealt with later on. The enterprise was frustrated by the action of Admiral Duncan, who decisively defeated the Dutch fleet off Camperdown in October. It might have been supposed that this would have driven home the lesson that no considerable military expedition across the water has any chance of success till the country sending it has obtained command of the sea; but it did not. On the 23rd February Bonaparte wrote: The question is less difficult than it has appeared to be to many. One of the foremost men in

France, Bonaparte was ready to take the lead in any undertaking which seemed likely to have a satisfactory ending--an ending which would redound to the glory of the chief who conducted it. The most important operation contemplated was the invasion of England; and--now that Hoche was no more--Bonaparte might well claim to lead it. His penetrating insight soon enabled him to see its impracticability until the French had won the command of the Channel. Of that there was not much likelihood; and at the first favourable moment he dissociated himself from all connection with an enterprise which offered so little promise of a successful termination that it was all but certain not to be begun. An essential condition, as already pointed out, of all the projected invasions was the receipt of a. One, and perhaps the princ. The result is that the real character of the great mutinies has been altogether misunderstood. As regards defence against the enemy, the mutinies affected the security of the country very little. The seamen always expressed their determination to do their duty if the enemy put to sea. Even at the Nore they conspicuously displayed their general loyalty; and, as a matter of fact, discipline had regained its sway some time before the expedition preparing in Holland was ready. How effectively the crews of the s. Though earlier in date than the events just discussed, the celebrated first expedition to Ireland has been intentionally left out of consideration till now. As to the general features of the undertaking, and even some of its more important details, the doc.

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Careful study and analysis of past events, therefore, may be trusted to furnish safe guidance in dealing with present-day problems of naval strategy and tactics, provided due allowance is made for the changed conditions existing in modern naval materiel. For example, the introduction of steam propulsion into war-ships has produced a great increase of mobility and manoeuvring capability ; war-fleets can now reach desired positions at pre-arranged times more speedily and with greater certainty than was possible in the days of sailing ships. This increased mobility, in combination with greater speed and certainty in covering distance, must be treated of course as an important factor in the consideration of modern naval strategy ; but as it is the common possession of maritime nations, the relative conditions, as between rivals, are not so greatly changed as might at first sight be supposed. Similar considerations hold good in regard to modern improvements in naval armaments. Advances have been made in the size, weight, and power of naval guns ; in their effective range and accuracy ; in appliances for working, loading, and sighting guns ; in ammunition and projectiles ; but these are not peculiar to any fleet. Under-water attacks were projected and experimented with more than a century ago by Bushnell, Fulton, and others. They have only become powerful means of destruction in recent times, and are now generally adopted. Locomotive torpedoes possessing high speed and great accuracy over considerable ranges are now available, as well as mines containing large explosive charges. Fleet tactics must be adjusted, no doubt, in face of these altered conditions, but it does not follow that the principles of naval strategy must be revolutionised. An undue concentration of interest on modern advances in warship design may do, and indeed has done, much harm by leading to false and dangerous conclusions. It is necessary, no doubt, to study closely all questions affecting warship design and armament ; yet there are other important matters to be kept in view if full naval efficiency is to be secured. In recent years there has undoubtedly been a tendency to magnify the importance of the warship, and to base statements of relative naval power too much on mere enumerations of numbers and on estimates of the individual fighting-power of ships. Fortunately a reaction has set in ; fuller recognition is being accorded to necessary training, and the attainment of sea experience and personal qualities essential to the efficient manning, command, and use of the Fleet. Courage, skill, and endurance on the part of officers and men are recognised to be the determining factors in the struggle for command of the sea ; and renewed attention is being devoted to the lessons of the past. It is an opportune moment, therefore, for the collection and republication of the twelve admirable essays contained in the volume under review. These essays have previously appeared in various journals and magazines or in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* ; they vary in importance, and were not designed to form chapters in a book ; but they hang well together, and are marked by a common purpose modestly expressed in the preface by the "hope that they may be of some use to those who are interested in naval history. This little book should do much to promote a better understanding of what the Royal Navy ought to be and to do, in order that it may meet the needs of the Empire and secure the continuance of British sea supremacy. The twelve essays fall naturally into four groups. Smith, Elder, and Co. The essays were originally published independently, and each of them was self-contained, consequently there is a certain amount of repetition ; but if it be true that "reiteration is the surest means of conviction," there cannot, in the public interest, be too frequent repetition of these principles. At the same time he brings into prominence the valuable contributions to the science of naval warfare previously and independently made by Admiral Colomb, and the lead taken by that distinguished officer in the use of the historical method. In regard to wealth of illustration, literary grace, and compactness of expression Sir Cyprian Bridge himself need fear comparison with no modern writer on naval policy. He has the art of making highly technical subjects intelligible to the layman. If space permitted, many illustrations might be given of these qualities, but only one passage can be quoted: This is the fundamental condition on which the continued existence of the British Empire depends. It is thoroughly well known to every foreign Government, friendly or unfriendly. That must be destroyed or decisively defeated, or intimidated into

remaining in its ports. Not one of these can be effected without a mobile, that is a sea-going, fleet. The British Empire may fall to pieces from causes as yet unknown or unsuspected: This is not a result of deliberate policy: As he puts it, "for a great country to be strong it must not rely upon a navy alone: The words which Sir Cyprian. Bridge wrote ten years ago are still worth quotation: The strength of such an army will largely depend upon the amount of mobile land force of which we can dispose. Consequently defence against invasion even of an island is the duty of a land army as well as of a fleet. Two of the remaining essays deal with the life and work of Nelson ; they were written at the request of the Councils of two professional Institutions during the year of the centenary of Trafalgar. In these essays Sir Cyprian Bridge formulates his conclusions respecting the tactics employed by Nelson at Trafalgar, and is not in complete agreement with some other writers. Togo gave the latest proof of this fact in the great fight at Tsushima. Sir Cyprian Bridge makes another significant comment of special interest at the present moment: All of them have relation to the personnel of the Navy at various epochs, and are of considerable interest. Closely related to this essay is that which deals with the Navy and the merchant service, in which it is demonstrated from official documents that since the year the British merchant service has always contained "an appreciable percentage of foreigners" in its ranks, and that "only a small proportion of the immense number of men required by the Navy came or could have come from the merchant service. Only a glimpse of the interest and value of this book has been given above; readers who peruse it will agree that it is really a treasury of information and readable throughout.

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PREFACE The essays collected in this volume are republished in the hope that they may be of some use to those who are interested in naval history. The aim has been to direct attention to certain historical occurrences and conditions which the author ventures to think have been often misunderstood. An endeavour has been made to show the continuity of the operation of sea-power throughout history, and the importance of recognising this at the present day. In some cases specially relating to our navy at different periods a revision of the more commonly accepted conclusions--formed, it is believed, on imperfect knowledge--is asked for. It is also hoped that the intimate connection between naval history in the strict sense and military history in the strict sense has been made apparent, and likewise the fact that both are in reality branches of the general history of a nation and not something altogether distinct from and outside it. In a collection of essays on kindred subjects some repet. Bridge, has very kindly seen the book through the press. The affinity of these two and the indiscriminate manner in which the term has been applied to each have tended to obscure its real significance. It is one of those compound words in which a Teutonic and a Latin or Romance element are combined, and which are easily formed and become widely current when the sea is concerned. The term in one form is as old as the fifteenth century. For four things our n. Even in its present form the term is not of very recent date. In the last two extracts it means all the elements of the naval strength of the state referred to; and this is the meaning that is now generally, and is likely to be exclusively, attached to the term owing to the brilliant way in which it has been elucidated by Captain A. Mahan of the United States Navy in a series of remarkable works. One instance out of many may be cited from the historian Adolf Holm. We may note, as a proof of the indeterminate meaning of the expression until his own epoch-making works had appeared, that Mahan himself in his earliest book used it in both senses. The other meaning of the term forms the general subject of his writings above enumerated. We may regard him as the virtual inventor of the term in its more diffused meaning, for--even if it had been employed by earlier writers in that sense--it is he beyond all question who has given it general currency. He has made it impossible for anyone to treat of sea-power without frequent reference to his writings and conclusions. Leipzig und Halle, Before Mahan no historian--not even one of those who specially devoted themselves to the narration of naval occurrences--had evinced a more correct appreciation of the general principles of naval warfare than Thucydides. He alludes several times to the importance of getting command of the sea. This country would have been saved some disasters and been less often in peril had British writers--taken as guides by the public--possessed the same grasp of the true principles of defence as Thucydides exhibited. Brief as it is, it shows that on the subject of sea-power he was a predecessor of Mahan. In a speech in favour of prosecuting the war, which he puts into the mouth of Pericles, these words occur: This wider meaning should be attached to certain pa. This is perhaps as exact a definition of sea-power as could be given in a sentence. Yet no one who has studied his works will find it difficult to understand what it indicates. Our present task is to put readers in possession of the means of doing this. The best, indeed--as Mahan has made us see--the only effective way of attaining this object is to treat the matter historically. Whatever date we may agree to a. It is not intended to give a condensed history of sea-power, but rather an a. It is important to know that it is not something which originated in the middle of the seventeenth century, and having seriously affected history in the eighteenth, ceased to have weight till Captain Mahan appeared to comment on it in the last decade of the nineteenth. With a few masterly touches Mahan, in his brief allusion to the second Punic war, has ill. What has to be shown is that the principles which he has laid down in that case, and in cases much more modern, are true and have been true always and everywhere. Until this is perceived there is much history which cannot be understood, and yet it is essential to our welfare as a maritime people that we should understand it thoroughly. Our failure to understand it has more than once brought us, if not to the verge of destruction, at any rate within a short distance of serious disaster.

Notwithstanding the much greater frequency of land wars, the course of history has been profoundly changed more often by contests on the water. That this has not received the notice it deserved is true, and Mahan tells us why. As in modern times the fate of India and the fate of North America were determined by sea-power, so also at a very remote epoch sea-power decided whether or not h. Before the Tarquins were driven out of Rome a Phocoean fleet was encountered B. The control of these waters was the object of prolonged and memorable struggles, for on it--as the result showed--depended the empire of the world. From very remote times the consolidation and expansion, from within outwards, of great continental states have had serious consequences for mankind when they were accompanied by the acquisition of a coast-line and the absorption of a maritime population. We shall find that the process loses none of its importance in recent years. There is something highly significant in the uniformity of the efforts of a. Our own immediate posterity will, perhaps, have to reckon with the results of similar efforts in our own day. It is this which gives a living interest to even the very ancient history of sea-power, and makes the study of it of great practical importance to us now. We shall see, as we go on, how the phenomena connected with it reappear with striking regularity in successive periods. Looked at in this light, the great conflicts of former ages are full of useful, indeed necessary, instruction. Until Persia had expanded to the sh. The conquest of Egypt by Cambyses had shown how formidable that ambition could be when supported by an efficient navy. With the aid of the naval forces of the Phoenician cities the Persian invasion of Greece was rendered comparatively easy. It was the naval contingents from Phoenicia which crushed the Ionian revolt. The expedition of Mardonius, and still more that of Datis and Artaphernes, had indicated the danger threatening Greece when the master of a great army was likewise the master of a great navy. Their defeat at Marathon was not likely to, and as a matter of fact did not, discourage the Persians from further attempts at aggression. As the advance of Cambyses into Egypt had been flanked by a fleet, so also was that of Xerxes into Greece. By the good fortune sometimes vouch-safed to a people which, owing to its obstinate opposition to, or neglect of, a wise policy, scarcely deserves it, there appeared at Athens an influential citizen who understood all that was meant by the term sea-power. Themistocles saw more clearly than any of his contemporaries that, to enable Athens to play a leading part in the h. One scene of action remained--the sea. Persuaded by him the Athenians increased their navy, so that of the vessels comprising the Greek fleet at Artemisium, had been provided by Athens, which also sent a large reinforcement after the first action. Though no one has ever surpa. He felt, and probably expressed the feeling, exactly as--in the war of Arnerican Independence--Was. To have made certain of success, the Persians should have first obtained a command of the aegean, as complete for all practical purposes as the French and English had of the sea generally in the war against Russia of The Persian sea-power was not equal to the task. The fleet of the great king was numerically stronger than that of the Greek allies; but it has been proved many times that naval efficiency does not depend on numerical superiority alone. The choice sections of the Persian fleet were the contingents of the Ionians and Phoenicians. The former were half-hearted or disaffected; whilst the latter were, at best, not superior in skill, experience, and valour to the Greek sailors. At Salamis Greece was saved not only from the ambition and vengeance of Xerxes, but also and for many centuries from oppression by an Oriental conqueror. Persia did not succeed against the Greeks, not because she had no sea-power, but because her sea-power, artificially built up, was inferior to that which was a natural element of the vitality of her foes. Ionia was lost and Greece in the end enslaved, because the quarrels of Greeks with Greeks led to the ruin of their naval states. The Peloponnesian was largely a naval war. The confidence of the Athenians in their sea-power had a great deal to do with its outbreak. The immediate occasion of the hostilities, which in time involved so many states, was the opportunity offered by the conflict between Corinth and Corcyra of increasing the sea-power of Athens. Hitherto the Athenian naval predominance had been virtually confined to the aegean Sea. Repeated invasions of her territory, the ravages of disease amongst her people, and the rising disaffection of her allies had been more than made up for by her predominance on the water. The scale of the subsequent Syracusan expedition showed how vigorous Athens still was down to the interruption of the war by the peace of Nicias. The great expedition just mentioned over-taxed her strength. Its failure brought about the ruin of the state. It was held by contemporaries, and has been held in our own day, that the Athenian defeat at Syracuse was due to the omission of the government at home to keep the force in Sicily properly supplied

and reinforced. This explanation of failure is given in all ages, and should always be suspected. The friends of unsuccessful generals and admirals always offer it, being sure of the support of the political opponents of the administration. After the despatch of the supporting expedition under Demosthenes and Eurymedon, no further great reinforcement, as Nicias admitted, was possible. The weakness of Athens was in the character of the men who swayed the popular assembly. A people which remembered the administration of a Pericles, and yet allowed a Cleon or an Alcibiades to direct its naval and military policy, courted defeat. Nicias, notwithstanding the possession of high qualities, lacked the supreme virtue of a commander--firm resolution. He dared not face the obloquy consequent on withdrawal from an enterprise on which the popular hopes had been fixed; and therefore he allowed a reverse to be converted into an overwhelming disaster. So completely had that control been exercised by Carthage, that she had anticipated. The Romans were precluded by treaties from trading with the Carthaginian territories in Hispania, Africa, and Sardinia. The vision of universal empire could hardly as yet have formed itself in the imagination of a single Roman. The area of Phoenician maritime commerce was vast enough both to excite jealousy and to offer vulnerable points to the cupidity of rivals. It is probable that the modern estimate of the sea-power of Carthage is much exaggerated. It was great by comparison, and of course overwhelmingly great when there were none but insignificant competitors.

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was that of Xerxes into Greece. By the good fortune sometimes vouchsafed to a people which, owing to its obstinate opposition to, or neglect of, a wise policy, scarcely deserves it, there appeared at Athens an influential citizen who understood all that was meant by the term sea-power.