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### **The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812**

Alfred Thayer Mahan (1840–1914) was an American naval officer, considered one of the most important naval strategists of the nineteenth century. In 1885 he was appointed Lecturer in Naval History and Tactics at the US Naval War College, and became President of the institution between 1886–1889. These volumes, first published in 1893, contain Mahan's detailed analysis of British and French naval strategy during the French Revolution, defined as lasting between 1793–1812. Mahan recounts chronologically the major naval battles and campaigns between Britain and France and their allies, analysing the different naval strategies used and discussing Britain's successful naval tactics. Mahan was the first naval strategist to explore the importance of controlling and protecting commercial shipping and preventing blockades of ports during warfare, tactics which he fully explores using historical examples from the French Revolution in these volumes. Volume 1 covers the period 1793–1801.

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# The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire, 1793-1812

VOLUME 1

A. T. MAHAN



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THE  
INFLUENCE OF SEA POWER  
UPON THE  
FRENCH REVOLUTION AND EMPIRE  
1793-1812

BY

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OF "THE GULF AND INLAND WATERS," AND OF A

"LIFE OF ADMIRAL FARRAGUT"

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## P R E F A C E.



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

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

In pondering this matter, it occurred to the author — whose acquaintance with naval history was at that time wholly superficial — that the part played by navies, and by maritime power generally, as a factor in the results of history, and as shaping the destinies of nations and of the world, had received

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little or no particular attention. If this were so, an analysis of the course of events through a series of years, directed to show the influence of Sea Power upon History, would at least serve to imbue his hearers with an exalted sense of the mission of their calling; and might also, by throwing light upon the political bearings of naval force, contribute to give the service and the country a more definite impression of the necessity to provide a fleet adequate to great undertakings, lest, if an occasion should arise for what he has ventured to call "statesmanship directing arms," we should be found unprepared, through having no sufficient armed force to direct.

In avowing this as the original, and, for a time at least, almost the sole motive of his work, the author practically confesses that he at the beginning had no scientific appreciation or reasoned knowledge of the naval history of the past. Upon giving this the attention required by his new duties, and collating the various incidents with the teachings of recognized authorities upon land warfare, he soon came to recognize that the principles which they claimed to be of general application in their own specialty received also ample and convincing illustration in naval annals; although the development of the Art of War at sea has been slower, and is now less advanced, than on shore. This backward result has been due, partly, to uncertainties peculiar to the sea, and partly



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to a contempt for the study of the past, and of its experience, as “not practical,” from which the naval profession has not yet wholly rid itself.

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

That the author has done so is due, wholly and exclusively, to the Naval War College, which was in-

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

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

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