

By permanent power, I mean, a natural inherent and perpetual ability in a nation, which though always in being, may not be always in action, or not always advantageously directed; and by accidental power, I mean, a fortunate or accidental disposition or exercise of national strength, in whole or in part.

THERE undoubtedly was a time when any one European nation, with only eight or ten ships of war, equal to the present ships of the line, could have carried terror to all others, who had not began to build a navy, however great their natural ability might be for that purpose: but this can be considered only as accidental, and not as a standard to compare permanent power by, and could last no longer than until those powers built as many or more ships than the former. After this a larger fleet was necessary, in order to be superior; and a still larger would again supersede it. And thus mankind have gone on building fleet upon fleet, as occasion or situation dictated. And this reduces it to an original question, which is: Which power can build and man the largest number of ships? The natural answer to which, is, That power which has the largest revenue and the greatest number of inhabitants, provided its situation of coast affords sufficient conveniencies.

FRANCE being a nation on the continent of Europe, and Britain an island in its neighbourhood, each of them derived different ideas from their different situations. The inhabitants of Britain could carry on no foreign trade, nor stir from the spot they dwelt upon,