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FRENCH NAVAL TACTICS.—NO III.

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A system of manœuvres once determined on, we may transport ourselves, in fancy, to the field of battle. What strategic combinations do we find there? "The line ahead is the line of battle for all ships carrying their batteries in broadside; the line abreast for ships intended for ramming." Such are the directions contained in the treatise on tactics published in 1861. Although the French iron-clads still carry their guns in broadside, yet it is as rams, or as vessels intended to fight by ramming, that they must be regarded. The same lesson on this point reaches us from the waters of Lissa and the shores of the Chesapeake: the day when ships themselves were propelled *en masse* as an element of destruction commenced the decline of artillery. The foundries, it is true, have not yet said this last word; but in the relative conditions in which we now find ships and guns, there is not an admiral would dare present his broadside to an enemy in the hope of stopping him or turning him from his purpose. In fact, if ordnance has obtained some advantages over stationary bodies at short distances, it remains powerless against moving bodies. It is by the shock we must conquer; against the shock we must provide. On the approach of an enemy an iron-clad cannot do better than to reserve her fire, for the slight advantage of a shot or two, rendered uncertain by the rapidly changing distance, would not compensate for the inconvenience of a cloud of smoke which would envelope her at this critical moment, when her safety depended on the precision of her movements.

The iron-clad navy does not recognize the fundamental order of battle. That an order of steaming may at the same time be an order of battle, one single condition is necessary: the ships must always head toward the point whence the attack is to come. Starting out from this datum, many combinations more or less ingenious may be proposed, but in practice the various figures are sure to end, the first in a sort of irregular line abreast, and soon after in a *mélée*.

From the naval battles which have already taken place we may judge somewhat of those of the future, so long as naval material undergoes no new change. Two iron-clad fleets meet and approach each other without firing. Every ship will select a particular adversary in the opposing lines, whom she will endeavour to sink by running down. The attempt to strike a square solid blow will often result merely in colliding obliquely; and frequently the shock will be avoided

altogether, and the two ships find themselves close alongside each other. It is then that the guns will come into play, and the broadsides poured in at close quarters will shatter the plating and crush in the sides. What has been the result of the first encounter? At nearly all points the two lines have penetrated each other. Impelled by the speed they have acquired, the ships separate after passing, and rapidly increase their distance. In order to renew the fight, they must suddenly turn and retrace their steps. The fleet which is the first and the quickest in the execution of this manœuvre possesses an immense advantage over her enemy, by threatening their broadsides, and, assuming the character of pursuer, forces upon the enemy that of pursued. Such is the result we shall always see when two fleets join in battle. The *mélée* becomes established among them by a series of passes; and if the two sides are equally skilful in manœuvring, the *mélée* will soon become converted into a set of single combats in which all intervention of signals will become impossible.

When signals cease the mind of the admiral should still animate and guide the fleet. If he has not inspired all with a mutual good-will, with a care for their common glory, with a desire not to survive defeat; if he has not in short, organized victory in advance, he need not flatter himself with the hope of obtaining it. Whatever may be his personal heroism, whatever may be the example of his own ship, it is only through a lively sympathy that the one can become contagious, the other find imitators.

It is sad to see on how many occasions naval battles have given rise to recriminations which have come near to tarnishing the highest reputations. Ruyter complained of having been abandoned by Tromp, and Tromp cast the same reproach on Vice-Admiral Sweers. D'Estrées brought accusations against Duquesne, and was in turn complained of by Martel. Keppel and Palisser mutually traduced each other before the bar of public opinion; de Grasse brought his whole fleet before a court-martial; Suffren broke his captains and found scarcely one of them his exacting zeal hesitated to disgrace; Villeneuve believed himself to have suffered at Trafalgar the defection Brueys imputed to him at Aboukir. Nelson and Duguay-Trouin alone were always satisfied, and for that very reason generally had the right to be. Whence arise in all ages and in all navies these pretended refusals of support, or, what is not less grave in its consequences, the disheartening conviction that due support has not been rendered, and may still be wanting? The cause lies in the ab-

sence of a simple and practical rule—in the ill-defined division of responsibility.

A fleet should never become engaged except through the will of the commander-in-chief. This principle is, of course, indisputable. It is necessary to repress, to check severely, if need be, the impetuous; it is only the signal to engage that will set the several captains free, and authorize them to yield to their impulses. Until that moment they should remain plastic in the hands of the admiral, obedient to his orders, attentive to his signals and his movements. Let them chafe if they will, but let them obey. We would not wish to see renewed the heroic follies of Poitiers, Crécy, and Agincourt. All changes from the moment the admiral gives the word and he, the first, leads against the enemy. The fleet advances in good order, each ship maintaining her place, that, arriving *en masse*, the blow may be the more decisive. It is only known that there is no withdrawing. The enemy's line once broken, the signal book may be closed without fear. The responsibility of the captains then begins.

LESSONS OF THE DECADE APPLIED.— NO. VIII.

MARCHING.—The squad being perfectly steady and compact in its facings, the instructor next proceeds to have them march in rank and halt. He therefore commands: *Squad forward*,—*Guide centre*—MARCH! At the command *forward*, each man will rest the weight of the body on the right leg. At the word "March" all step off with the left foot together, the body erect, the arms hanging at the sides without swinging, the upper part of the body slightly inclined forward, the length of the step twenty-six inches, the cadence of the time ninety steps a minute, called "common time." The line will be regulated by the centre-man, or guide, who will step short, take some two objects in line, in front to keep them straight, and march directly on them. The instructor will generally march before this guide, who is responsible for the direction of the march in line. The instructor will watch him specially, and see that he takes two objects before him for points of direction and marches towards them, without swerving right or left. The rest regulate on him, yielding to pressure from the centre, and resisting that at the flanks. The man at the head of the file is in like manner responsible for its march, and will be also attended to by the instructor, who will march beside him.

After marching a short distance, the instructor commands, *Squad—HALT!* The