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Source: *The North American Review*, Jul., 1903, Vol. 177, No. 560 (Jul., 1903), pp. 31-44

Published by: University of Northern Iowa

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25119415>

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# A NEW VIEW OF THE WAR OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY EMIL REICH, LL.D.

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THE history of the Revolutionary War suffers from a combination of circumstances, all making for oblivion or neglect of the true causes and real trend of its momentous events. The Americans themselves, with few exceptions, have related it in the manner in which, from the Hellenes downwards, all great nations have arranged rather than stated the beginnings of their ultimate grandeur. The vanity of nations, growing apace with their real greatness, nay, constantly outmarching it, has done, in this case, what it never fails to do in cases of even much smaller dimensions: vanity has been fighting its clever and deceptive rearguard-fights, in order to hide or let escape the really important corps of combatants. In the States the name of Lafayette is seen and heard in each town, in each county, in each State. Innumerable streets, very numerous towns and institutions, parks, etc., are named after the young French marquis, who, in reality, performed none of the decisive or important acts or measures leading to the independence of the thirteen colonies. Of Vergennes or Beaumarchais, on the other hand, few, if any, Americans have ever heard a word of praise or appreciation. But, in fact, the influence of Beaumarchais was incomparably, one may boldly say, immeasurably, greater than that of Lafayette. Flattery to Lafayette does not imply the serious reduction of American merit which recognition of Beaumarchais would unmistakably entail.

As with Lafayette, so with the decisive military movements of the war. The Americans who, single-handed, won only one important battle, that of Saratoga, have naturally enough no strong interest whatever to dwell on the decisive and clinching naval

manœuvres of the summer of 1781, which were conducted solely by the French. As in the case of the contemporary Italians, who won their unity at the hands of the same nation that drove the English from the American colonies, the new nation feels only a cold gratitude towards its savior friend, and would wax very indignant were it to be told that it was, one in the period from 1775 to 1783, the other from 1859 to 1866, the godfather rather than the father of its own liberty and independence.

As to English narrators of the great war, it is needless to prove that they have never been over-eager to admit that in 1781 they met, at the hands of the French, with a Waterloo far more destructive of British interests than was the last battle of Napoleon to the interests of France. Moreover, the documents in the Record Office in London are, as a rule, not accessible after the date of October 20th, 1760.

Finally, the French, the real victors in that great struggle, have never cared to go into the details of an "*affaire*," all the actors and events of which were soon obscured and overshadowed by the gigantic tragedy of the French Revolution. It is only some thirteen years ago, that the French have, in H. Doniol's *Histoire de la participation de la France à l'établissement des Etats-Unis*, received many of the official documents bearing on the interference of France in America; and to be quite correct, Doniol's great work was terminated only five years ago. As to the then allies of the French, the Spanish and the Dutch, their important interference has as yet not been written up in a satisfactory historical work.

These are the peculiar circumstances rendering a fair view of all the factors in the War of American Independence a matter of great difficulty. On the other hand, the historian must necessarily look for consolation to the just remark, that the larger, the more comprehensive, the waves of historical events, the smaller is the number of their controlling causes.

It will accordingly not be impossible to discover, in the immense maze of persons, events and measures filling the canvas of time from 1775 to 1783, a few of the causes shaping events, directing their currents and covering their undercurrents.

The War of American Independence is held to be, more particularly with the English-speaking nations, a matter pre-eminently of English or American history.

It is in reality and *par excellence* a European, an international event. It happened in a period when, for almost exactly two hundred years, all the great wars were European wars. From 1618 to 1815 Europe was ravaged, with few important exceptions, by international, or inter-European wars only. In strong contrast to this broad fact we note, that Europe has, since 1815, carefully avoided such international wars, and always succeeded in localizing combats that threatened to set ablaze the whole of Europe, such as the Crimean war, or the Franco-German war. This desistance from international wars has, it may be advanced, little or nothing to do with the progress of ethical ideals, the realization of which has not yet left the precincts of pious hopes. It is due to the fact that since 1815 each of the Great Powers of Europe has long secured its territorial self-contentedness. Unless, therefore, one of these countries is attacked directly, it has no serious interest in meddling with the affairs of the other nations.

In the eighteenth century the case was quite different. The war of the Spanish Succession, 1701-1713; the war of the Austrian Succession, 1740-1748; the great war ("Seven Years' War") of Frederick the Great, 1756-1763; the wars of the French Revolution, 1792-1815: all of them were international wars proper. In all of them substantial, *i.e.*, territorial, interests of all the Great Powers of Europe were engaged, and all of them were settled by international treaties of peace, such as the peace of Utrecht and Rastadt, 1713 and 1714; the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, 1748; the treaties of Hubertsburg and Paris, 1763; and the treaties of Basle, 1795, Campo Formio, 1797, Lunéville, 1801, Amiens, 1802, Pressburg, 1805, Tilsit, 1807, Vienna (or Schönbrunn), 1809, and the Congress of Vienna, 1814-1815.

The American War of Independence is one of those international, or inter-European events of the eighteenth century, terminated by the (second) treaty of Paris, 1783. As in the case of Italy, in the second half of the nineteenth century, France and Prussia and England had strong political interests to promote the unity of Italy, so it was in the sixties and seventies of the eighteenth century a vital interest of some of the Great Powers of Europe outside England to wrest the American colonies from the British. This is the essence of the whole struggle extending over eight years, and fought in all the seas of the four continents.

But while this inter-European interest is undoubtedly the chief motor and cause of the ultimate success of the colonists in America, we must, on careful investigation of the facts, take into consideration the interests of those colonists themselves. Much as France, Spain and Holland desired to weaken and humiliate England, their combined efforts would have proved inefficient, had the colonists not been induced to persevere in the attempt at severance from the mother-country in the teeth of all the misery and despair that a struggle with mighty England could not but entail. In order, therefore, to seize adequately the home or American cause of the Revolt and its ultimate success, we must, before going into the details of inter-European policy, study the *vera causa* of that powerful discontent that urged the colonists first into adverse reflections, then into threatening petitions, riotous acts, half disloyal conventions and congresses, overt acts of rebellion, and finally into open war against England.

The current view of the causes of discontent is centred on the indignation of the colonists at the various measures of unconstitutional, or, at any rate, unwise taxation of the American colonies proposed, in turn, by Grenville, Townshend, North, and, chief of all, by George III. The Stamp Act of 1765, the taxes on various commodities in 1770, 1772, and 1774—these and similar measures, although in no way financially oppressive to the colonists (the taxes never yielded more, or could yield more, than a paltry sum), are said to have, in addition to single and isolated acts of high-handed autocracy, so exasperated the fine moral or legal fibre of the colonists as to drive them into rebellion. This explanation has the advantage of being pleasing both to the British and the Americans. The British, with a smile of parental pride enjoy the spectacle of their own kin rushing into revolt for ideal motives of Right and Law that animated the breasts, it is held, of the barons on the field of Runnymede in King John's time (1215), or in the clouded age of the Oxford Provisions (1258), let alone in the classic period of the "Nineteen Propositions" (June, 1642), or the "Bill of Rights" (1688). Or, as Tennyson says:

"O thou, that sendest out the man  
To rule by land and sea,  
Strong mother of a Lion-line,  
Be proud of those strong sons of thine  
Who wrenched their rights from thee!"

The Americans again, with a distinctly British passion for ethical beating of the breast, delight and thus believe in the deep moral indignation of the men and women of the colonies as the main cause of the deep-seated discontent that broke out in 1775.

Without in the least trying to minimize the value and theoretical beauty of moral indignation, it may be intimated that such ethical shivers do not, as a rule, prove of long duration, unless supported by abiding considerations of material profit. Ideal motives are no doubt at work, stealthily or openly, in all the greater historic achievements of white humanity; but from their very intensity it must be inferred that their power of extension in time and space is always somewhat limited. The profound wisdom of the Christian Religion has manifested itself in few things to a greater advantage than in the firm, if not original, establishment of one ideal day in seven, this being about the true ratio of the force of ideal motives to motives savoring more of terrestrial and mundane sources. In historical investigations, at any rate, it will be wiser, if not nobler, to search, in any long and wearisome struggle, for causes less ethereal and more compact and concrete.

Nor is it a matter of inordinate difficulty to point out that compact and concrete cause which, in all human probability, did infinitely more in stiffening the hearts and minds of the colonials, than could ever be done by the abstract reasonings or constitutional questions of James Otis and Bland, or by the moral uprising of the Puritans of New England. History, in Europe, and still more outside Europe, is written largely, if not wholly, in characters of that geography, or, as we prefer to call it, geopolitics, that has, as the true base of the harmonic and enharmonic melodies of history determined the trend and tenor of decisive events. Undoubtedly history is not a mere game of chess, in which man figures only as an insignificant pawn. Yet, with all due recognition of the influence of men, and especially of historic personalities, we cannot but arrive at the conclusion that man is inclined, precipitated, or retarded, by that Great Constant, the Earth and its physiographic configuration. To use the language of the scientist: in history man represents the *ordinatae*, Earth the *abscissae*. It is evident that for a true construction of the curve of events, we must have the *abscissae* first, and then the *ordinatae*.

There can be little doubt that the abiding, material, and yet, prospectively at least, also ideal cause of the deep-seated antagonism of the colonials to the British Government was caused by the fatally wrong policy of the Court of St. James's with regard to the vast *Hinterland* of the colonies. It was for the possession of that vast *Hinterland*, theoretically stretching from the Allegheny Mountains to the Mississippi—practically, however, to the Pacific—that the colonials had cheerfully joined in the British war against the French from 1755 to 1762. It was already then well-known, from the writings of French Jesuits and other explorers, that the colonies were surrounded, or rather supplemented by the most fertile and at the same time the vastest *Hinterland* in history. Neither Central nor South America, neither modern Egypt, nor South Africa, let alone Canada or Australia, is endowed with a *Hinterland* at once so vast and so easily accessible or amenable to purposes of cultivation. In that *Hinterland*, fully described in the works of Jonathan Carver, Robert Rogers, James Adair, William Smith, and of other colonials long before the battle of Lexington, the colonials were conscious of having the possibility and the guarantee of indefinite progress and unlimited prosperity. As modern Russia, instead of wasting untold treasures of men and money in barren wars with Prussia or Austria, has consistently preferred to occupy and utilize its immense *Hinterland* from the Ural to Manchuria, even so the colonials in British America consciously or subconsciously felt that their real and great destiny was in their *Hinterland*, and not in their connection with Great Britain. So clear was this, the all-decisive factor to most thinking men of that time, that men as different in every other respect as were Montcalm, French governor of Canada; Turgot, philosopher and economist; and Vergennes, French ambassador at Constantinople,—all predicted the secession of the colonials as soon as the French were driven out from the Ohio valley and the Lakes district—that is, as soon as the question of the *Hinterland* was made a problem of actual politics.

King George III. had, however, no sooner concluded peace with the French in 1763, than he issued, on October 7th, 1763, a proclamation, in which the king's "loving subjects" in the colonies were forbidden to make purchases of land from the Indians, or to farm any settlement west of the Allegheny Mountains. Nor did this proclamation remain a dead letter. As late

as 1772 a colonial's petition for settlement on the Ohio River was categorically refused by the Lord-Commissioners for Trade; Lord Hillsborough holding that the proclamation of 1763 was too explicit to be interpreted in any other sense. This proclamation did not, of course, prevent numberless colonials from making repeated attempts at the occupation of the forbidden *Hinterland*. There are still numerous legal and administrative documents in the Record Office in London, referring to the incessant encroachment of the colonials upon the territory west of the Allegheny Mountains. It is in these documents that we can feel the real pulse of the time. Nations, like individuals, are as a rule not clearly conscious of the prime motive prompting their actions. We cannot, therefore, expect the pamphleteers or *mémoire* writers of that time to tell us in set terms what was at the bottom of all that curiously persistent ill-will shown by most of the colonials to any kind of measures that the British Government proposed or decreed. Any kind, we say. For it is now well known, that the British Government repeatedly, and after 1774 almost invariably, behaved with all the conciliation that a loyal colony can fairly expect from its metropolis. It was all in vain. Neither the moderation of Chatham, nor the wisdom of Burke; neither the cold imperiousness of King George or Lord North, nor the ingenious argumentativeness of Fox could alter matters. The colonials were, and had long been, but too well resolved to accept no other solution than that of a complete rupture. Once carried away, and justly too, by the great destiny awaiting them at the bidding of the powers of the very soil they occupied and legitimately desired to extend, they were naturally unable to listen to or accept any possible offer short of one securing for them, undisturbed and uncontrolled by British statutes or British capitalists, the vast expanse of fertile *Hinterland*, at once the inexhaustible source of their material, and the safe guarantee of their national greatness.

It is customary to condemn George III., Lord North, Townshend and Grenville. But did Lord Chatham, Burke or Fox discern the true causes of the American revolt any more clearly? Did they seize the real, the ultimate cause of the colonials' discontent any better? In fact, harsh or strange as it may seem, if guilt there must be, there is little doubt that Lord Chatham had a greater share in the loss of the colonies than had either George

III. or Lord North. The colonials may have had, as they actually had, very potent motives to wish for a separation from England. From such a wish, ever so legitimate, to its realization there was, however, a very far cry. England had never been more powerful, more enterprising, more dreaded, than from 1763 to 1775. Her navy had had great and decisive successes in European, American and Asiatic waters; and her armies had shown great fighting powers in Germany, America, and India. For the first time in her history she found herself constituted as a real empire. Bengal, Behar and Orissa in India were hers, since 1764; the French were driven out of America, and their vast colonies conquered; in Europe her prestige was very great. Last, not least, together with that unprecedented expansion of power—political and military—England just then started on her imposing career as the first industrial power of the world. Inventions in technology, such as no other nation could boast, were made in Great Britain almost daily, and the resources of British industry and commerce created a national wealth that bade fair to outstrip that of all other nations put together. Under such circumstances it was by no means easy to start a revolt against England with any sound hopes of ultimate success. Had Lord Chatham, in 1766 or 1767, practised the wise moderation of Bismarck in 1866, he could have, by depriving the American colonials of French help, so isolated them as to render any decisive military success on their part practically impossible. Bismarck in 1866 suddenly, and in the midst of the most signal military triumph over Austria, abandoned the secular policy of Prussia towards Austria. He clearly perceived that that policy had, after Sadowa, no *raison d'être* any longer. Far from yielding to the Prussian military party, which loudly clamored for triumphal entry into Vienna, Bismarck threatened rather to commit suicide than to consent to any unnecessary humiliation of Austria, whose friendship he knew he would need later on, after having neutralized or paralyzed its hostility. Lord Chatham, after 1763, was placed in exactly the same position to France that Bismarck held towards Austria in August, 1866. Hitherto, *i.e.*, up to 1763, France had been in reality, for various reasons, the hereditary enemy of England. After 1763, that enmity, had, on the part of England, lost all its *raison d'être*. England had no more colonies to take from France; and no Continental possession (Hanover) to

dread from either Prussia or France. Scotland had definitely accepted its place within Great Britain since 1746, and Ireland was quiet; French intrigues could stir up neither.

It was, then, the evident policy of Chatham to irritate France as little as possible, in fact, to obtain her friendship. France, from her position in the very centre of all the Great Powers of the west, and also from her geographical configuration as both a sea-power and land-power, was almost more dangerous when on the defensive than when taking the offensive. In the latter case, France always roused (under Louis XIV. as well as under Napoleon) the hostility of the surrounding nations, and was obliged, even when unbeaten in the field, to give up her excessive ambition. When, however, France was on the defensive, she always could and will be one of the most formidable factors in war. She can strengthen both the naval and the land forces of her allies on the most considerable scale, and thus contribute decisively to the final result. From this evident lesson of French history, together with the consideration mentioned above, Chatham had all imaginable motives of good policy to abandon the secular idea of France as the hereditary enemy of England.

But Chatham, "the only man," to use Frederick's saying, to whom England had given birth at that time, before and after the treaty of 1763, invariably viewed France as *the* great enemy of England. He never tired of rousing the British national feeling against the "hereditary enemy." He could not but be aware that one single article of that treaty (Article XIII.) was alone sufficient to fill the French with an undying thirst for revenge. In that article France consented to the destruction of the fortifications of her harbor at Dunkirk, in the most humiliating fashion. It is said in that article: "*La Cunette [at Dunkirk] sera détruite immédiatement après l'échange des ratifications du présent traité, ainsi que les forts et batteries qui défendent l'entrée du côté de la mer; et il sera pourvu, en même temps, à la salubrité de l'air, et à la santé des habitants par quelque autre moyen à la satisfaction du Roi de la Grande Bretagne.*" A high-spirited nation will never accept such arrogant dealing with a harbor and place of arms on her immediate territory. And if one considers, that England, by the acquisition of Canada and the vast American *Hinterland*, had then acquired a territory more than sufficient for the widest imperial expansion

of the British nation for generations to come, and all that at the expense of France, it is rather difficult to comprehend why Chatham should still persist in the rancorous hatred of France, a country no longer in a condition to either hurt or thwart the most ambitious hopes of Great Britain.

Yet so he did. It may be that his grave bodily infirmities reduced the clearness of his mind. At any rate, instead of pacifying France by all possible means, he never ceased to widen and envenom the wound from which France and the French were smarting.

Under these circumstances it is only a matter of course that the French, a nation whose energy may be slackened but never suppressed, were eagerly on the lookout for an opportunity to avenge the treaty of 1763 on the English. Nor did that opportunity fail to turn up. It was, in the first place, one of a more academic character, but it soon transformed itself into a chance of resorting to the gravest military and political measures. The academic interference of the French with the immense American colonies of the English proceeded in the shape of the impression exercised by the French Encyclopædists on the colonials.

The influence of Diderot, Rousseau, Montesquieu, Voltaire, Holbach, Condorcet, d'Alembert, and the other great authors of the famous *Encyclopédie Méthodique*, on the whole mental attitude of Europe and America in the latter half of the eighteenth century, seems rather puzzling to the modern mind. On reading the articles of the *Encyclopédie* (articles, it must be admitted, artfully garbled by the timorous publisher) one cannot but be amazed both at the mildness and inaggressiveness of their tone, and at the relatively small originality of their ideas. In our times, we have seen articles and books propounding doctrines infinitely bolder and more radical. The novelty of the *Encyclopédie* was not in its doctrines; its historic position was determined by the marvellous effect it had on its contemporaries. Doctrines formerly discussed in Latin folios meant for recluse scholars, such as the political views of Spinoza, or of Althusius, were now for the first time placed before the general public in a form at once solid and attractive. To this the personality of the Encyclopædists contributed not a little. The brilliant men meeting in the salons or *bureaux d'esprit* of those famous female *virtuoses* of tact and charm, Madame Geoffrin, Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse,

Madame d'Épinay, and others, were one and all men of intense powers of personal fascination. Their conversations were listened to, reported, and read all over the civilized world, and it is probably understating the reality when we compare the influence of the conversations, letters, and pamphlets of the Encyclopædists to the moral and intellectual influence exerted nowadays by the "leaders" and articles of the great representatives of the press.

One of the most impressive of the works of the Encyclopædists was "*Le Contrat Social*" of Rousseau, published in 1762. Written in language the splendor and clearness of which have rarely been equalled, it contains a body of political teaching appealing with a passionate warmth to the deepest political cravings of the masses. It was inevitable that a political work by the author of "*La Nouvelle Héloïse*" and "*Emile*," then the most famous novels of the day, should rapidly find their way into the colonies in America, where the latent and unavowed wishes of the people made them only too prone to views such as Rousseau propagated in language aglow with all the inspirations of passion and truth. It is certain, and can easily be proved in detail, that the political views of the wayward Genevese and of his colleagues of the *Encyclopédie* had a very considerable effect on the colonials, amongst whom they were eagerly read and discussed. The "imponderable" influence of these French ideas must not be undervalued, although it cannot be credited with a force of the first magnitude. Far greater was the second, or more material interference of France in the great struggle of the colonials against Great Britain.

That material influence was set in motion chiefly by a man whose entire moral and literary personality seemed to destine him for exploits of a totally different kind. We mean Beaumarchais. A Parisian *pur sang*, full of the inexhaustible verve and dash of his own immortal creation, "*Figaro*" in his "*Le Mariage de Figaro*," Beaumarchais was watchmaker, inventor, harpist to the court, promoter of interminable and vast business enterprises, publisher of Voltaire's works, author of an immortal comedy, incomparable pamphleteer, involved in endless intrigues, duels, adventures, and political secret missions to England and Germany—in short, a man of the most astounding vitality and resourcefulness. His wit and superb literary gift irradiated the most commonplace of his actions, and his fundamentally honest and generous nature

ennobled his life with the glory of true manliness. Bold, intrepid, a battler and fighter of a thousand combats legal or political, he was all through his life a warm-hearted, true man.

It was this "frivolous Frenchman" who had long made up his mind to avenge his country on England, and to wipe out the shame of the treaty of 1763 in the most terrible loss ever caused to Great Britain. He clearly foresaw the war long before it actually broke out, and by means of incessant memorializing the French, and later on the Spanish Government too, he inspired Vergennes, the great foreign minister of France, and likewise Aranda, Vergennes' colleague in Spain, and prevailed upon them to join his vast plans. At first two, then more, million francs were placed at the disposal of the author of "Figaro" by the two Bourbon Governments, and Beaumarchais, almost two years before France and Spain openly declared war against England, established his headquarters at Le Havre, under the name of *Rodrigue Hortalès et Cie.* It was from Havre that Beaumarchais sent to the Americans vast stores of tents, provisions, and equipments of all kinds, amongst others, 30,000 rifles, over 200 cannon, etc., in 1776 and 1777. "His fleets," as he called them, were in constant connection with the colonials, and his lieutenants, more particularly de Kalb and the indispensable Steuben, were organizing the army of the colonials. His correspondence with his captains, officers, and his home government; his dealings, frequently far from pleasant, with Arthur Lee, Silas Deane, and the stately and prudent Franklin in Paris, were numberless. He never was at a loss how to meet the countless emergencies of financial or military embarrassment, and it is only the sober truth to say, that without his genius and energy the Americans could not have carried on the war in the first two years. With all the stanch vigor and honesty of Washington, the American army, as is now well-known, suffered very severely from desertion, treachery, indifference, pusillanimity. It was France, it was, previous to the summer of 1778, Beaumarchais, who never flagged, never despaired, never failed to send help where help was most needed. His merit was never recognized by the government of the Republic, and when, many years later, reduced almost to indigence, he asked for partial reimbursement of his undoubted personal losses in the service of the United States, he and his children met with the coldest and, let us confess it, most unjustified ingratitude.

No statue to his honor has ever been erected in any public place in America; to most Americans he is either quite unknown, or known only as a clever playwright. The Americans have, very late it is true, but at last, raised a statue to Rochambeau, one of the two Frenchmen to whom the clinching victories in 1781 are due. One would like to entertain the hope that they will see their way to raise several similar monuments to the man who, more than any other single non-military man, helped them to raise the noble fabric of their national independence.

The war itself, although its extent both in time and space was one of the most considerable dimensions, is in reality a very simple event. It lasted for eight years, and was carried on in the eastern territory of the United States, and in nearly all the seas. The strategic problem was reduced to the question of sea-power. As long as the British were able to hold the Atlantic, they could easily pour over new armies (if mostly hired ones) into the colonies. Once the British lost the command of the sea, their hold on the American colonies was practically lost. The colonials, by their victory at Saratoga in October, 1777, where less than 4,000 British soldiers, under Burgoyne, were forced to surrender to 14,000 colonials, under Gates, had practically secured the possession of the northern colonies before the third year of the war was over; but New York, the central, and the southern colonies were still controlled by Clinton, Cornwallis, and other British commanders. However, in August and September, 1781, the French, under the Comte de Grasse, baffled all the attempts of the British admirals, Hood and Graves, to enter Chesapeake Bay for the purpose of relieving Cornwallis, who was besieged in Yorktown by a Franco-American army consisting of about 7,000 men each under Rochambeau and Washington. The naval engagements of de Grasse lasted for five days, and were fought off Cape Henry. This all-important battle, or series of battles, which definitely deprived the British of the command of the sea in the middle Atlantic, and which sealed the fate of Cornwallis—this naval Waterloo of the British—is one of the least noticed military events of modern times. Not one Englishman or American in ten thousand has ever heard the name of the battle of Cape Henry. The details of that clinching victory have never been published, and in books on the American War the battle is, as a rule, given neither its precise name, nor placed in the right his-

toric perspective. It was, in reality, not a very dramatic affair. This, however, need not deceive any one into a false construction of its fundamental importance. Battles, like men, are important, not for their dramatic splendor, but for their efficiency and consequences. The battle off Cape Henry had ultimate effects infinitely more important than those of Waterloo. Even the naval victories won by Le Bailli de Suffren in the seas between Madras and Ceylon over the British fleet in 1782 and 1783, cannot, in point of effect, compare with the decisive advantage obtained by de Grasse off Cape Henry. Suffren's victories remained barren; de Grasse's action entailed upon the British the final loss of the thirteen colonies in America. What the French Encyclopædists had done by suggestion, and what Beaumarchais had set in movement by ingenious personal exertion, de Grasse had brought to a final termination by a successful naval engagement.

It is customary to accuse Napoleon of having foolishly overreached himself. It is likewise a commonplace to blame Louis XIV. for an ambition striving for the absurd idea of subjugating Europe. It is less known that George III. failed in his attempt of retaining the thirteen colonies within the British Empire chiefly because of an ambition essentially identical with that of either Napoleon or Louis XIV. King George did not, it is true, try to dominate Europe, he only attempted to defy the leading Powers of Europe. While fighting the Americans, he had the boldness to fight the French, the Spanish, and the Dutch too, at the same time rousing the hostility of the Baltic Powers. As Louis XIV., for a similar defiance, suffered the defeats of Blenheim, Turin, and Malplaquet; and as Napoleon, for the same crime of *lèse-Europe*, was crushed at Leipsic and at Waterloo; so King George, committing the same fatal error, lost England's principal force, her sea-power, and thus the vastest and most fertile colonies ever possessed by an empire. Europe, the heir of Hellenic intellect and Roman military strength, can be defied neither by any one or two European Powers, nor by the rest of the non-European countries put together. Persia fell for defying Hellas; Carthage sank for opposing Rome; the United States arose mainly owing to England's unwise defiance of Europe in the eighteenth century.

EMIL REICH.