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COLOMB, PHILIP HOWARD (1831–1899), British vice-admiral, historian, critic and inventor, the son of General G. T. Colomb, was born in Scotland, on the 29th of May 1831. He entered the navy in 1846, and served first at sea off Portugal in 1847; afterwards, in 1848, in the Mediterranean, and from 1848 to 1851 as midshipman of the "Reynard" in operations against piracy in Chinese waters; as midshipman and mate of the "Serpent" during the Burmese War of 1852–53; as mate of the "Phoenix" in the Arctic Expedition of 1854; as lieutenant of the "Hastings" in the Baltic during the Russian War, taking part in the attack on Sveaborg. He became what was known at that time as a "gunner's lieutenant" in 1857, and from 1859 to 1863 he served as flag-lieutenant to rear-admiral Sir Thomas Pasley at Devonport. Between 1858 and 1868 he was employed in home waters on a variety of special services, chiefly connected with gunnery, signalling and the tactical characteristics and capacities of steam warships. From 1868 to 1870 he commanded the "Dryad," and was engaged in the suppression of the slave trade. In 1874, while captain of the "Audacious," he served for three years as flag-captain to vice-admiral Ryder in China; and finally he was appointed, in 1880, to command the "Thunderer" in the Mediterranean. Next year he was appointed captain of the steam reserve at Portsmouth; and after serving three years in that capacity, he remained at Portsmouth as flag-captain to the commander-in-chief until 1886, when he was retired by superannuation before he had attained flag rank.

Subsequently he became rear-admiral, and finally vice-admiral on the retired list.

Few men of his day had seen more active and more varied service than Colomb. But the real work on which his title to remembrance rests is the influence he exercised on the thought and practice of the navy. He was one of the first to perceive the vast changes which must ensue from the introduction of steam into the navy, which would necessitate a new system of signals and a new method of tactics. He set himself to devise the former as far back as 1858, but his system of signals was not adopted by the navy until 1867.

What he had done for signals Colomb next did for tactics. Having first determined by experiment—for which he was given special facilities by the admiralty—what are the manœuvring powers of ships propelled by steam under varying conditions of speed and helm, he proceeded to devise a system of tactics based on these data. In the sequel he prepared a new evolutionary signal-book, which was adopted by the royal navy, and still remains in substance the foundation of the existing system of tactical evolutions at sea. The same series of experimental studies led him to conclusions concerning the chief causes of collisions at sea; and these conclusions, though stoutly combated in many quarters at the outset, have since been generally accepted, and were ultimately embodied in the international code of

regulations adopted by the leading maritime nations on the recommendation of a conference at Washington in 1889.

After his retirement Colomb devoted himself rather to the history of naval warfare, and to the large principles disclosed by its intelligent study, than to experimental inquiries having an immediate practical aim. As in his active career he had wrought organic changes in the ordering, direction and control of fleets, so by his historic studies, pursued after his retirement, he helped greatly to effect, if he did not exclusively initiate, an equally momentous change in the popular, and even the professional, way of regarding sea-power and its conditions. He did not invent the term "sea-power,"—it is, as is shown elsewhere (see SEA-POWER), of very ancient origin,—nor did he employ it until Captain Mahan had made it a household word with all. But he thoroughly grasped its conditions, and in his great work on naval warfare (first published in 1891) he enunciated its principles with great cogency and with keen historic insight. The central idea of his teaching was that naval supremacy is the condition precedent of all vigorous military offensive across the seas, and, conversely, that no vigorous military offensive can be undertaken across the seas until the naval force of the enemy has been accounted for—either destroyed or defeated and compelled to withdraw to the shelter of its own ports, or at least driven from the seas by the menace of a force it dare not encounter in the open. This broad and indefeasible principle he enunciated and defended in essay after essay, in lecture

after lecture, until what at first was rejected as a paradox came in the end to be accepted as a commonplace. He worked quite independently of Captain Mahan, and his chief conclusions were published before Captain Mahan's works appeared.

He died quite suddenly and in the full swing of his literary activity on the 13th of October 1899, at Steeple Court, Botley, Hants. His latest published work was a biography of his friend Sir Astley Cooper Key, and his last article was a critical examination of the tactics adopted at Trafalgar, which showed his acumen and insight at their best.

His younger brother, SIR JOHN COLOMB (1838–1909), was closely associated in the pioneer work done for British naval strategy and Imperial defence, and his name stands no less high among those who during this period promoted accurate thinking on the subject of sea-power. Entering the Royal Marines in 1854, he rose to be captain in 1867, retiring in 1869; and thenceforth he devoted himself to the study of naval and military problems, on which he had already published some excellent essays. His books on *Colonial Defence and Colonial Opinions* (1873), *The Defence of Great and Greater Britain* (1879), *Naval Intelligence and the Protection of Commerce* (1881), *The Use and the Application of Marine Forces* (1883), *Imperial Federation: Naval and Military* (1887), followed later by other similar works, made him well known among the rising school of Imperialists, and he was returned to

parliament (1886–1892) as Conservative member for Bow, and afterwards (1895–1906) for Great Yarmouth. In 1887 he was created C.M.G., and in 1888 K.C.M.G. He died in London on the 27th of May 1909. In Kerry, Ireland, he was a large landowner, and became a member of the Irish privy council (1903), and in 1906 he sat on the Royal Commission dealing with congested districts.

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