

As the ancients used nothing but galleons, the lighter vessels easily broke the oars of the greater ones, which were then but as so many unwieldy, immoveable machines, like modern ships when they have lost their masts.

Since the invention of the sea-compass, different methods have been employed; oars (*a*) have been laid aside; the main ocean has been visited, great ships have been built; the machine is become more complicated, and the practices have been multiplied.

The discovery of gun-powder has occasioned a circumstance one would no ways have suspected, which is, that the strength of fleets depends more than ever upon art; for in order to resist the fury of the cannon, and prevent the being exposed to a superior fire, it was necessary to build great ships; but the power of the art must be proportioned to the bulk of the machine.

The small vessels of the ancients used often to grapple suddenly with one another, on which occasion the soldiers engaged on both sides: a whole land-army was shipped on board a fleet. In the sea-fight won by Regulus and his colleague, an hundred and thirty thousand Romans fought against an hundred and fifty thousand Carthaginians: at that time soldiers were looked upon as considerable, and artists the very reverse; but in these ages, the soldiers are considered as little or nothing, and artists the very contrary.

A strong proof of the difference is the victory

(*a*) Hence we may judge of the imperfection of the ancient navies, since we have laid aside a practice in which we had so much superiority over them.