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## PURCHASE IN THE NAVY.

BY DAVID HANNAY.

OUR habits of old being what they were, it is rather surprising that no recognised system of purchase ever became established in the Navy. It did exist, though never officially approved of, in the Marine Service of the East India Company. As much as £20,000 was known to have been given for the command of an Indiaman. The Company so far recognised the vested interest of captains as to pay over £300,000 to get rid of what was oddly called "the hereditary bottoms." The germs of a system of purchase can be detected in the Navy itself.

Clement Downing, who served with Mathews in the East Indies, and who wrote "a compendious History of the Indian Wars" (1737), shows that the beginnings of the thing did exist. When the squadron was on its way out some of the vessels put into Lisbon to repair damages. Mr. Woods, third lieutenant of the *Salisbury*, applied for leave to return home, on the ground of ill-health. He was succeeded by Mr. William Berkeley, nephew of Lord Berkeley, "a gallant and brave young man, though not much acquainted with our sea methods, but made a very good officer, and much exceeded his predecessor in goodness to the men, which good behaviour made him well beloved." Berkeley gave Woods "in consideration of his ill state of health and of his being poor" 80 moidores. The moidore was a Portuguese coin, worth £1 7s. By itself this would not prove a custom. But when the squadron reached Bombay an exactly similar case occurred. Mr. Walker, third lieutenant of the *Salisbury*, went home on the ground of ill health, and was succeeded by Mr. Blakeway, mate in the flagship, who paid him £100 for his expenses home. There cannot have been much the matter with Mr. Walker, for he worked his passage home as fourth mate in an Indiaman. As Blakeway was probably "a follower" of Mathews he may well have had the Admiral's consent to make an arrangement by which he paid Walker to provide a vacancy for him. Now this was the very essence of purchase. It is to be observed that Berkeley and Blakeway made a fair bargain. When rated lieutenants they would become entitled to half pay and pension. Woods and Walker did not sell their commissions, and therefore the sums they received respectively, £108 and £100, were small. But with a little encouragement a regular system of purchase might well have grown from these grains of mustard seed.