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A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY SEA-MONSTER

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A SIXTEENTH-CENTURY SEA-MONSTER.

BY R. MORTON NANCE.

WHEN compared with the usual forms of shipping that one associates with the Sixteenth Century, the monstrous type here illustrated seems strange indeed ; and were Bruegel our only, as he is our chief, authority for its strange features, we should be justified in rejecting it as a sea-nightmare of that demon-loving artist ; but others, less imaginative than he, have also preserved its memory.

Van Yk, a Dutch writer (1696), copies some ships of Bruegel, calling them carracks; Jal also engraves one of these, questioning if "carrack" might be its name, and there leaving it. From the available evidence it would seem, however, that the carrack differed from its fellow ships or *nefs* only in being greater, of deeper draught and with higher upper works than these. Such was the case in "W. A.'s" earlier "kraeck" certainly, and if one is right in assuming that certain ships, with the colours of Portugal and lying in oriental ports, in the *Orbis Civitates Terrarum* of Braun and Hogenburg (1572), are indeed carracks, the same holds true of these also.

The name "galleon" has also been applied to these vessels, and in one respect fits better, for they sometimes carry Spanish flags, and in many cases they bear upon their round bows the galley-beak or spur that was, at the date of Bruegel's designs, probably a feature of the galleon. In Braun's volume, cited above, are some Portuguese vessels that would seem to be early galleons (Fig. 13). They are longer, better armed, and less castellated than the *nefs* that enrich the same pages, and instead of the overhanging mediæval forecastle of these, they have the round-fronted forecastle and beaked bow of a Venetian galleass, precisely as these are seen in Martin Rota's print of the battle of Lepanto (1572) or in the galleas (copied one may guess from a Lepanto *ex-voto*) that Bartolomeo Crescentio gives in his *Nautica Mediterranea* of nearly fifty years later (Figs. 15 and 14). Beaked ships like these are seen also in the Madrid tapestries (and in the original designs by Jan Vermayen from which they were slightly altered) that commemorate the siege of Tunis (1535), and at this siege a Portuguese galleon is recorded to have been present. But such beaks were by no means confined to the galleass and galleon; caravels thus armed are shown both in the tapestries above-mentioned, and also in the *Orbis Civitates Terrarum* (Fig. 11). The latter, too, gives us a small beaked sailing vessel, galley-rigged, but with broadside guns, possibly a *zabra* (Fig. 12); while in its northern views we have, besides ill-drawn beaked ships at Goricum, Riga and Königsburg, an excellent specimen of our beaked sea-monster type at Stockholm (Fig. 6). The idea of crossing the sturdy round-ship or *nef* with the galley in order to produce the perfect ship was much in men's minds at this period, and under its influence the shipyards of Europe, our own included, were producing many hybrid forms, so that we need not at once conclude that these ship-rigged, galley-nosed mongrels are Spanish galleons. Judged by the scanty and poor Spanish

and Portuguese drawings of their own galleons and by the sea-fight pictures of the Dutch, who certainly had an eye for ships, they would seem to have differed very little in form from the fighting ships of other nations by the end of the sixteenth century. Ships and galleons all alike had adopted the shelving, narrow poop and harmless, but beautiful, beak-head of the period. Their assimilation was complete in all but size and proportion: and yet we find associated with them these strange ships for which we seek a name.

It will be seen that our authorities for the existence of this type of ship are all, if not Netherlanders, at least northern draughtsmen. The Spaniards never seem to have had ships enough of their own to supply their requirements, and while Flanders had a ship left, their mutual relations were such that that ship would be at Spain's service. It may be worth while, then, to consider the possibility that these ships, with their Dutch-looking, round bows, may have hailed from Flanders. Fig. 8 lends a little colour to such a view. This ship stands in the foreground of a low-relief carving of Antwerp city, c. 1490; her high bow, her simple sterncastle, and the strengthening cleats, or skids, on her sides, are not in themselves unusual for her period, but when combined with the stumpy forecastle and back-curved stem, they mark her out from other ships of her time, and, allowing for the trend of the changes that took place in ship-fashions during the half-century between this and the ship (Fig. 1) of Bruegel, we find some striking points of likeness which may be worth following up. The mediæval aftercastle has become a poop; the forecastle, modest before, has now almost vanished; the stem is even more curved; the bow skids are still there, while those at the stern have increased until they give the poop its strongest note of character. The waist, too, has its skids that strengthen the sides beneath the battery that is there. The placing of the ordnance, and the incongruous beak join in suggesting that both are later defensive additions to a ship of tried usefulness as a trader.

The form of merchant ship that we have learnt to consider typical of the Netherlands is the round-sterned *flûte* or fly-boat; but although the name itself seems to be ancient, we hear little or nothing of *flûtes* during the first years of the sixteenth century, and during this period the hulk seems to have been the typical trading ship of the northern counties. Antoine de Conflans, writing at this time of the ships then in use, tells us nothing of *flûtes*, but of hulks he says that great numbers of them, of from two to six hundred tons burden and more, came in fleets from

Russia, Norway, Denmark, Friesland, Holland, Zealand and Brabant. The hulk (called *hulk* or *holk* by the northern peoples and *oulque*, *hourque*, *urca*, and *orca* by the Latins) is constantly referred to during the century as a large merchant ship. Thus we read of "Hulkes of Dantsick," "Easterling Hulks," "Hulks of Flanders," and Crescentio even writes of "*Urche Inglese*," referring to the ships of our sea-rovers. By the middle of the following century, however, the hulk seems to have vanished, leaving but a suggestive name that soon became applied to the dismantled remnant of a ship, to the obsolete ships preserved in heraldry and in church windows or, from similarity of sound probably, to ships hulls, to hookers (see vol. I, p. 296, 297) and even to hoys; while the place formerly held by the hulk was everywhere filled by the flute.

This displacement of hulks by flutes will be found to synchronise remarkably with the rise of Holland and its trade and the consequent ruin of the hulk-owning ports of Flanders and the Baltic; it seems, therefore, not unlikely that the capacious flute was a new Dutch conception, an enlarged, ship-rigged barge contrived to carry as much merchandise as possible with the smallest possible crew, typical of the businesslike methods of the nation that had wrested practically all their trade from the owners of the hulks. We find indeed, that the names "flie-boat" and "hulk" are occasionally used as synonyms by sixteenth-century authors, which seems to oppose this theory, but as being northern merchant vessels of similar use and both less ornamented than ships they might well be confounded. The pictorial evidence available gives us no *flute*-like vessels of countries other than Holland during the century. The ships that we may tentatively call "hulks" are, on the contrary, well represented. Stockholm, as pictured in *Orbis Civitates Terrarum*, provides us with two varieties, one beaked, the other with a slightly projecting forecastle (Figs. 6 and 16). Antwerp gives us two more, one a stern view. These are taken from the title page of a navigation book published at that city in 1580 (Figs. 3 and 4.) Again, we find the type represented in Adam's charts of the Armada, 1588. In these prints the ships are drawn with great attention to character, a fact which increases the value of those selected as evidence. Firstly, we have a beaked vessel, her large mainsail decorated with the ragged-staff saltire of Burgundy (Fig. 7). Next is an English ship (Fig. 10), her bow is not unlike that of our "hulks," but there the resemblance ceases. It is allowable to suppose that this may be a portrait

of the fly-boat *Yongc*. Lastly, we have the ship (Fig. 5) with her main topsail bearing the device of a haloed figure. The Saint Andrew's cross behind hints at his name, but, lest this should not be sufficient, beneath saint and saltire runs the legend "S: AND:." Why should the artist have been thus careful, if not to identify a particular ship? Of ships named for Saint Andrew there were three in the Armada, a small zabra or patache of two guns; a larger vessel, originally Scottish, of twelve guns, but still classed as a patache or zabra; and, lastly, the hulk *Santo Andres*, of 14 guns, 400 tons, 28 mariners, and 150 soldiers. The guns, as listed, could not obviously have included the many small breechloaders that at this time defended the cage-works; deducting then the four of these that are in the poop, we find four great guns low in the hull and two more, carried, as they had been prior to the introduction of port-holes, in the waist; doubling these and adding the two that would certainly be in the stern ports, we have the exact tally of guns. The large poop would lend itself well to the stowage of troops and, apart from the false idea of size that is given by the figures of sailors introduced, the tonnage would seem to be in proportion. It seems then not unlikely that we have here a fairly faithful portrait of the hulk *Santo Andres*. Most of the guns in this, as in our other examples of the type, lie so perilously near the water line that it is difficult to see how their shot, as we read of the galleon's missiles, could have flown high over the English ships during the Armada fight. In rough weather indeed, the greater number of their big guns would be out of action, and one is forced to admire the greater discretion of Raleigh's "Easterling hulkes, who were wont to paint great red portholes in their broadsides where they carried no ordnance at all." It will be seen, however, by a reference to our illustrations (Figs. 1, 4 and 6) that usually no guns are shown in the broadside amidships and beneath the waist-battery, and it may be that Raleigh intended only to say that such a gap in the line was filled with painted ports.

The persistence of this antiquated type to the days of the Armada was remarkable, but there is good reason to suppose that it may have lasted for many years longer. Fig. 9 is taken from a *Mercator's Atlas* of some decades later. It may be merely a bad copy from an earlier original, some of Bruegel's gallies being recognisable in the same collection of maps, yet it seems to have developed beyond our other specimens in respect of the abandoned waist battery and the completed and raised line of guns. She still has the broad continuous poop with upright

skids, and in appearance her beakless bow brings her nearer again to the fifteenth century ship of Antwerp. (Fig. 8).

Parallel with these " hulks " we have, in Bruegel's works, in Hoefnagle's designs for the *Orbis Civitates Terrarum*, in some old maps and even in the design used as cover for this journal, a closely related type that combines the poop of a " hulk " with the bows of either galleon or *nef*. The galleon combination is well shown in Figs. 17, 18 and 20, all from Mercator, the last two from a map dated 1631, and the *nef* bow in Fig. 19 from the view of Messina in *Orbis Civitates Terrarum*. Those drawn by Hondius in *Mercator's Atlas* seem to be the last recorded specimens of ships with the heavy skidded poop, and already, in 1631, the beaked bow would seem to have finally disappeared.

Apart from changing fashion, an explanation for the extinction of this school of shipbuilding may be sought in the history of the period. The defeat of Oquendo in the Downs (1639) was a heavy blow to the naval power of Spain, but yet, one would think, not a sufficient cause for this disappearance had the ships been Spanish ; on the other hand, the merciless opposition of Holland in trade as well as war had already by this time brought ruin to the port of Antwerp ; and when, by the treaty of Münster (1648) its implacable foes closed the Scheldt to traffic, the end had come. Had these ships been Flemish hulks they must, if not already extinct, have then vanished.

These vessels, apart from the doubtful question of their identity, for it must be owned that the " Flemish hulk " may yet prove, on further evidence, to be something quite different, have many points of interest. The mediæval character of their hulls has already been touched upon ; with this they have, too, a tendency to preserve the mediæval proportions of mast and topmast, while their rigging shows a variety of curious details. Among these, the furled mizen top-sail in Fig. 1, its sheet leading to an outlicker on the half-top, its ship-style lift contrasting with the galley-fashioned vang of the mizen yard and, in Fig. 6, a galley or mizen-style half-top on the square-rigged fore-mast are especially noteworthy.