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THE NODAL CARAVELS OF 1618.

By H. S. VAUGHAN.

THE voyage of the two brothers, Bartolomé and Gonzalo Nodal, from Lisbon to Magellan's Strait, including the circumnavigation of Terra del Fuego, was performed in 1618-19. It was remarkable not only for its success in exploration, but because the two little caravels, practically sister ships, in which it was conducted, never parted company and never lost a single man from misadventure or sickness.

These vessels, *Nuestra Senora de Atocha* and *Nuestra Senora del Buen Suceso*, were of 80 tons each, were provisioned for 10 months, and carried crews of 40 Portuguese seamen. In the "Sailing Directions" to their remarkably concise narrative of the voyage (*Hakluyt Soc.*) the brothers says:—"They made such a pair when sailing that in all the rains and fogs we met with they were never separated one from the other. It follows that with ships of that kind the quickest voyages can be made."

The accompanying figure is a combination sketch made from the four representations of the vessels which occur in the narrative of the voyage, two of these being on the chart of the edition of 1621, and two on the title-page.

The type might be described as an early four-masted barquentine, lateen-rigged on all three after masts. I do not recall other instances of this rig, but perhaps the publication of this note may evoke further evidence.

De Courbes was the engraver of the chart and title-page, and although between the four representations there are slight variations, and some little difficulties as to perspective, etc., I think it may be assumed that the engravings show the principal details of rigging correctly, and, certainly, that the type was an actual one. The enormous lateen yard and sail on the mainmast must have proved, one would think, very unwieldy, and although this is not stated in the narrative, it may perhaps be inferred from references such as the following:—

"On Friday, 28th September, in the afternoon we found that the mainmast was sprung, from some rifts caused by the

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rolling of the ship. Nothing could be done that day because it was already late, so it was left until the next day, meanwhile shortening sail."

"At dawn, 29th September, the mast was very well fished with spare spars."

"19th December, 1618. Late in the afternoon the Captain's ship carried away her mainyard, and it was God's miracle that three men were not lost who were aloft and fell head foremost on to the broken part of the yard."

But, for the rest, Bartolomé de Nodal says, in his letter to the King, dated the first of December, 1618 :—"The ships were the most efficient that can be imagined, strong, and the sails so fitted that the spread of canvas was the same in both ships. I was well content and could find no fault, except that the ships were flush and wanting in freeboard, so that the sea was always washing over the deck even in fine weather. But the new bulwarks remedied this, so that we could pass through any sea."

The remark as to the bulwarks refers to the alterations which were carried out on their arrival at Rio, consequent upon the representations of the Flemish and Portuguese pilots, who "declared that under no circumstances could the caravels leave the port without having their freeboards raised." . . . "They all agreed that the vessels could not go to sea in their present state, having great openings and the decks being very low, as indeed was the case. Though the caravels may have been the best in the world when they sailed, they now had the decks much exposed. They had come in fine weather, but with any rolling the sea would easily find its way over the decks, and the crew would be much incommoded. For they had no chests nor change of clothes."

"Fore course and mizzen," seems to have been the usual sail carried in bad or doubtful weather, and this is mentioned frequently in the log : probably the big mainsail was only set in fair weather.

In all the four figures the caravels are shown head to wind ; fore course and foretopsail being the only sail set. The sheets are apparently "flown," and the yards braced up.

Under date 24th June, 1619, there is the following entry in the log :—"We hove to, *taking in all sail except those on the foremast.*"