Old Naval Customs and Expressions

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OLD NAVAL CUSTOMS AND EXPRESSIONS.

By CAPTAIN H. H. SMITH, D.S.O., R.N.

On Wednesday, 22nd March, 1922, at 3 p.m.

REAR-ADMIRAL H. W. RICHMOND, C.B., Royal Naval War College,
in the Chair.

THE CHAIRMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, the Lecture which Captain Smith is going to give this afternoon was originally to be delivered by Commander Calvert, but he was appointed to foreign service. He has gone abroad, and Captain Smith very gallantly stepped into his place and prepared it. He needs no introduction from me, and I will without further words ask him to deliver his lecture.

LECTURE.

ARTICLES OF WAR.

Black Book.—The articles of war are founded on a book at the Admiralty known as the Black Book. This book contains some ordinances previous to the reign of Edward III., but none of the writing in it is earlier than Henry VI.

Towards the end of the eighteenth century the Black Book suddenly disappeared and nobody seemed to know anything about it. There was, however, a modern transcript of the Black Book in the Admiralty Library and various manuscripts in the British Museum, by the collation of which it was possible to restore the text with reasonable accuracy by 1871.

In the meanwhile there was an English manuscript in the Library of the College of Advocates in the Doctors' Commons entitled "An Abstract of our Laws of Oleron and of the Ancient Black Book"; but this manuscript was not available after 1858, as the Library of the College of Advocates was dispersed and sold.

In 1874 the original Black Book was suddenly found at the bottom of a chest supposed to contain private papers belonging to a former Registrar of the Admiralty Court.

Laws of Oleron.—The laws of Oleron, on which the Black Book was based, were accepted by all the seafaring nations of the West, and were a code adopted, according to tradition, in Castile by Alphonso X. in the thirteenth century, and were introduced into England by Richard I.

In support of the tradition it may be stated that the island of Oleron furnished an important contingent to the Fleet which set forth in the second year of Richard I.'s reign to relieve the Holy Land, and among the five Commanders of this Fleet was William de Forcy, of Oleron, whom King Richard I. appointed as one of the justiciaries of his Navy.

The code was based on some old sea laws formulated in the Republic of Rhodes and received and conformed to by the Romans and all the States bordering on the Mediterranean.

The jurisdiction of the Admiralty was defined in the time of Richard II. "Admirals and their deputies should confine their jurisdiction to things done upon the sea, and in great ships being and hovering in the main stream of great rivers, yet only below bridges of the same rivers, nigh the sea."

The code of Oleron ordered that anybody who committed murder at sea should be bound to the corpse and buried alive with it. Theft on board was treated with boiling tar and feathers. Sleeping on watch was punished with dipping in the sea. When the Captain wished to discharge the crew, he was to give them notice of his intention by taking away the tablecloth three meals in succession. In certain circumstances the Captain was always to consult the crew and act according to the opinion of the majority, as, for instance, whether the weather was suitable for sailing. If the Captain went to sea against the advice of the majority of the crew, he had to make good any damage to ship or cargo.

DISCIPLINARY INSTRUCTIONS ISSUED BY THE LONG PARLIAMENT.

Courts Martial.—In 1645 instructions as to discipline were issued by the Long Parliament for the whole Navy. These instructions authorised General Courts Martial for Captains and Commanders, and Ships' Courts Martial for Officers of junior rank. The Boatswain and the Gunner were authorised to sit on Ships' Courts Martial.

Introduction of Civilian Members of Courts Martial.—During the reign of Charles II. an attempt was made to introduce Civilian Officials as members of Courts Martials for the purpose of trying Naval Officers. On two occasions Mr. Samuel Pepys received a temporary commission as Captain and was appointed to a ship so that he might sit on a Court Martial on a Naval Officer. On both occasions he withdrew from the court, as he considered that it might cause a dangerous precedent and one that might lead to the packing of Courts Martial with civilian officials.

Mr. Pepys apparently found that his position as Secretary to the Admiralty was not altogether a bed of roses, as on another occasion he was very much annoyed by the widow of a seaman whose husband had been discharged wounded and had afterwards died of starvation. The widow brought the corpse to Mr. Pepys's house and deposited it on the doorsteps, and Mr. Pepys was very much pained at this want of consideration for his feelings.

On another occasion Mr. Pepys had reason to be glad of his official position, for, being overcharged by two Thames Watermen whose boat he had hired, he sent the Press Gang after them the same night and had them both pressed and sent to sea. Of course watermen were supposed to be protected from the Press Gang, but apparently such protections weighed very lightly with the Secretary of the Admiralty.

CHAPLAINS.

It has been customary for ships to carry chaplains from very early times, one chaplain being carried for each division of the Fleet, and, in the reign of Charles I., a chaplain was appointed to each ship in the Fleet.

Pay and Duties.—Both chaplains and doctors were paid by the seamen, each seamen having to pay the parson fourpence a month and the doctor twopence a month. Prayers were read twice every day, and every time the watch was changed, either a psalm or hymn was sung. The chaplain was also authorised to reward any Midshipman who learned a psalm with sixpence. The chaplain was called either the Sky Pilot or the Devil Dodger.

Messing Arrangements.—Up to the end of the eighteenth century he did not necessarily live in the Ward Room. For a long time the Ward Room Mess was a mess for the Lieutenants only, though the master was generally also a member. The chaplain, the purser and the doctor generally messed in their cabins; but sometimes the chaplain messed with the Captain and, in 1671, Marine Officers were ordered to mess with the Captain.

Marryat's ex-Lieutenant Chaplain.—Marryat mentions a chaplain who had been a Lieutenant before he changed his rating and took holy orders. He was an excellent chaplain, but, as he had also been a very zealous and capable Lieutenant, he was apt in an emergency, such as an action or a gale of wind, to forget his holy orders and to take charge as a Lieutenant and to exhort the seamen in language which was less unsuitable to a Lieutenant than to a chaplain. After one of these occasions, a Midshipman discovered him dissolved in tears and stricken with remorse at the recollection of the language he had used. The Midshipman consoled the chaplain by assuring him that he was mistaken in thinking that he had damned the men, and further assured him that the only words he had been heard to utter were "God bless you, my men! God bless you!" For this act of Christian charity the chaplain rewarded the Midshipman with a bottle of rum.

A burial Story illustrating the Captain's Powers vis-à-vis the Chaplain.—About a hundred years ago a man-of-war was lying at anchor off a desolate island, or, as the sailor would say, a "Dissolute" island, when the Captain's coxswain became ill and died, and before dying expressed a wish that he might be buried on shore, and not be committed to the deep.

The Captain therefore ordered the funeral to take place on the island, but the chaplain objected that there was no cemetery or "bone orchard" on the island and that it was impossible to bury the man in unconsecrated ground. The Captain thereupon ordered the chaplain to go on shore and consecrate a plot of land, but the chaplain replied that he could not do so as only a Bishop could consecrate a cemetery. The Captain thereupon sent for his clerk and made out an order, rating the chaplain as Acting Bishop, which was read to the ship's company. The Acting Bishop then went on shore to carry out his duty.

The Captain then became nervous for fear that he might have become a second Frankenstein and have created a monster who might possibly destroy him, as he thought that the Acting Bishop might try and come the Senior Officer over him; so he made out a warrant disrating the Acting Bishop to the rank of Chaplain, and, as soon as the cemetery had been consecrated and the funeral completed, the ship's company was fallen in and the Acting Bishop formally disrated to the rank of Chaplain.

This anecdote illustrates the power of a Captain in the days before the telegraph and wireless telegraphy; but there is another anecdote on record which shows how a Captain, when co-operating with a Chaplain, could perform even more remarkable feats.

A Story illustrating the combined Powers of Captain and Chaplain.—A man-of-war had been anchored for some time at an island in the Pacific and the Captain and chaplain had succeeded in converting the whole of the population of that island to Christianity. The man-of-war sailed from the island early in November, but, before she sailed, the king of the island, who was anxious to show what a good Christian he had become, presented the ship's company with a number of pigs, and obtained solemn promise from the Captain that the pigs should be eaten on Christmas day.

Before the ship had been many days at sea the pigs began to die, and it seemed as if, by the time Christmas day arrived, there would be no pigs left. The Captain and the chaplain held a solemn conference, and agreed that the calendar must be temporarily rearranged and Christmas day antedated. The Boatswain's Mate piped: "D'y'e hear there, to-morrow will be Christmas day;" the mess deck was decorated, the pigs killed, and on the following day Divine Service was held, the Christmas hymns sung and pigs eaten, and the Captain's promise fulfilled.

While on the subject of Chaplains, the following Merchant Service story might be of interest.

An ecclesiastical Yarn from the Merchant Service.—The Captain of a certain mail steamer prided himself greatly on the manner in which he performed the funeral service. On a voyage a fireman died and it was arranged to hold the funeral service in the middle watch, so as not to depress the passengers.

At the appointed time, when everything was ready, the Officers all appeared on the scene; but the Captain was absent, as he was detained on the bridge by the weather. After waiting some time, the officers decided that the Captain was not able to attend and the Purser, in the Captain's absence, commenced to read the funeral service. He had just uttered the words, "I am the Resurrection and the Life," when the Captain's voice was heard shouting out of the darkness: "The devil you are, sir; I am the Resurrection and the Life" and the Captain snatched the prayer-book from the Purser's hands and continued the service.

METHODS OF BURIAL IN THE FRENCH SERVICE.

Up till late in the eighteenth century the French used always to bury the bodies of men, killed in action, in the shingle which was used as ballast, instead of burying them in the sea. I presume that this practice was due to some superstitious aversion among the French seamen.

DOCTORS.

Hauls off the Scottish Coast.—Apparently most of the doctors in the Navy came from Scotland. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the principal exports from Scotland were said to be "birch" brooms and doctors. It is also said that when the Navy was short of doctors a frigate would be sent to cruise close in shore off the Scottish coast. Whenever a group of the natives was observed standing on the beach, a jolly boat, filled with porridge, would be veered astern till it touched the beach. The natives would crowd into the jolly boat after the porridge, and then the jolly boat would be hauled off to the ship and would always be found to be full of doctors.

An unkind Medical Yarn.—A great many unkind stories have been told about the naval doctors of the past. One story relates how a certain doctor always kept down the number of men on the sick list by the following method.

Every morning he would enter the sick bay and in stentorian tones order the sick bay steward to bring him his knife with the long curved blade. At the sound of this order the vast majority of the men who were waiting outside the sick bay door would glide swiftly and silently away.

Another unkind Medical Story.—Another story relates how a doctor hauled a sailor, who was suffering from toothache, six times round the sick bay by means of a pair of forceps. A tooth then came out. "Please, sir, you have pulled out the wrong tooth?" said the sailor. "Why didn't you tell me I had got hold of the wrong tooth!" asked the doctor; "I couldn't, sir," replied the sailor, "you had got hold of my tongue as well."

Concerning an Engineer Doctor.—A certain Engineer officer once told me that, many years ago, he was the junior Engineer of a gunboat on the China Station: the doctor died, and the Captain ordered him to take charge of the dispensary. Then the Gunner died. The ship's company were all very suspicious that the Gunner had been poisoned by his Chinese servant, and expressed the opinion that a post mortem should be held on the Gunner before he was buried.

The gunboat was miles away from any doctor. The junior Engineer then suggested that he should hold a post moriem on the Gunner and that those organs of the Gunner which contained traces of poisoning should be preserved in rum till an opportunity occurred of submitting them to a proper medical examination.

The ship's company were satisfied with this proposal. The Gunner was post-mortemed and the necessary organs were placed in a bucket of rum. The bucket was covered over with painted canvas to make it airtight; the rest of the remains of the Gunner were committed to the deep.

A few months later the gunboat anchored close to the flagship, and the junior Engineer went on board in the dinghy carrying the bucket, so that the flagship's doctor might complete the Gunner's post mortem. Unfortunately for the interests of medical science the Commander-in-Chief met the junior Engineer as he came up the side and asked him what was in the bucket; on being informed he ordered the bucket to be immediately thrown overboard.

Economy in Medical Appliances.—The naval doctors of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were always complaining of the inferior drugs and appliances with which they were supplied. At one time the Naval Hospitals were ordered to use sponges for dressing wounds, instead of lint, sponges being more economical as they could be used over and over again. This economy vastly increased the number of cases of blood-poisoning.

During an action the wounded were attended to in the order in which they arrived in the cockpit, irrespective of either their rank or their injuries; this custom at first sight appears extremely democratic, but it often led to a badly wounded man bleeding to death, while a man, who had been wounded earlier in the action but whose wounds were less serious, was being attended to by the Surgeons.

Story of a Double Casualty.—There is an old yarn of a sailor being badly wounded in the leg during an action. He said to a man standing near, "Tom, my leg's gone; carry me down to the doctor." Tom picked up the wounded man and had started to carry him below, when a round shot took off his head.

When they got to the cockpit, the doctor asked what was the matter. Tom replied, "Bill Jones, sir, has had his leg shot away." "Leg?" said the doctor, "why, you fool, his head has been shot away!" "Well, sir," said Tom, "Bill said it was his leg, but he always was a damned liar!"

GREENWICH HOSPITAL.

Funds.—When Greenwich Hospital was started, funds had to be provided for its maintenance. Among other endowments, Greenwich Hospital received the estates of the late Lord Derwentwater, who had been executed for taking part in the Jacobite Rebellion of 1715, and also the property of Captain Kidd, the pirate, which amounted to over £7,000.

Many were the scandals connected with Greenwich Hospital when it first started and, on one occasion, the Chief Cook at the Hospital was rewarded with seven years' transportation.

RATIONS.

The Seaman's ration during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries appears to be very ample. He was allowed 2 lbs. of meat a day, a pound and a half of bread a day, and a gallon of beer.

Banyan Days.—But, then, Mondays and Fridays were banyan days, when no meat was issued. Cheese, salt fish and butter were issued in lieu.

The banyan days were abolished in 1824. I can only imagine that the reason for banyan days was to reduce the amount of salt meat consumed and lessen the chances of scurvy. There is a theory that the fast days were instituted by the Church in order to combat scurvy. Europe suffered severely from scurvy in the Middle Ages, on account of there being no roots to feed the live-stock in the winter, and the food of the majority during the winter months was salt meat.

Savings.—In order to make the stock of provisions on board last as long as possible, the sailor was nearly always on a reduced allowance while at sea. He was credited in money with the value of the balance of his allowance, and it appears to be the origin of the custom of "Savings."

Beer.—The gallon of beer was very necessary, as the water was almost undrinkable, and, until the beginning of the nineteenth century, there was neither tea nor cocoa. It was almost impossible to keep the beer good at sea and, as Lord Howard wrote to the Admiralty in 1588, "Nothing doth displease the seamen so as sour beer."

Rum.—So when a ship went to sea she carried beer for a few weeks only, and then half a pint of rum was issued neat to each man daily in two issues.

In 1740 Admiral Vernon started the practice of watering the rum before issue. In 1824 the half pint was reduced to one gill and tea was issued instead of the other gill. In 1881 the issue to Officers other than Warrant Officers was stopped. Before that, I believe, any Commissioned Officer could take up as many bottles of rum from the Paymaster as he wanted on repayment of one shilling a bottle.

Victualling.—It is interesting to note than in 1622 the contractors were paid 7½d. a day in harbour and 8d. a day at sea for each man fed. In 1914 the cost price of the seaman's daily ration was only 9½d., so the contractors of 1622 must have been well paid for their trouble.

The Purser.—The purser always appears to have been a very unpopular man and he was in a difficult position. Before obtaining his warrant he had to give surety for a large sum of money, and if he had not that money himself he had to rely on contractors to give surety for him, and this put him in their power.

I am afraid also that Captains sometimes insisted on a share in the Purser's perquisites, which obliged the Purser to invent all sorts of ways by which those perquisites might become large enough for two. In consequence, men who died had many articles charged against their pay which they had never drawn.

Proposed Combination of Captain's and Purser's Duties.—In the reign of Charles II. the Captains of the Navy petitioned the King that Purser's should be abolished and that Captains should take on the duty of Purser. The King asked, "To whom then should the men appeal when they think they are defrauded of their due?" The Captains replied that they would always be just. At this the King laughed heartily, and said he was afraid that the Captains' opinion of their own honesty was not shared by everybody; and that he would sooner that things remained as they were.

PAY.

Pay issued at End of Commissions.—All through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and even later, it was the rule never to pay anyone until the end of the commission. In some cases ships' companies and officers would go ten and fifteen years without being paid. Many of the men were so ignorant that they had little idea of the value of money, and it was very easy to impose on them.

How the Sailors' Pay went.—A Naval Officer told me that in about 1860 he had lunch at an inn on the road from Chatham to London. The landlord, who was a very old man, told him how one day during the Napoleonic wars a post-chaise stopped at the inn with two sailors and two women on their way from Chatham to London.

They went into a room and ordered a meal. Presently a tremendous row started inside the room. The inn servants ran in and found one of the sailors beating one of the women who, he said, had robbed him. The sailors declared that they had each been paid off at Chatham that morning with 13 fifty-pound notes.

The women were searched and one of them was found to have a fifty pound note. The sailor was asked for the numbers of his notes, and he pointed out that the Lieutenant of his division had painted the numbers on his flannel shirt. The number of the fifty-pound note found on the woman did not correspond with any of these numbers, and the sailor's roll of notes was found on the floor.

The whole party made it up and resumed their journey to London. That day week the same two sailors stopped at the same inn and begged for food. They were tramping back to Chatham from London and were absolutely penniless.

WOMEN AND THE NAVY.

Superstition.—In 1377 a sea expedition ended disastrously and this failure was attributed to the fact that women had gone to sea in some of the ships. At this period there was apparently a strong superstition as to the bad luck that would happen if women were taken to sea.

Wives on board.—However, this superstition died away and during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and even well into the nineteenth century most ships took the wives of a few Warrant Officers and Petty Officers to sea with them. In home ports the men's wives were invariably allowed to live on board during the whole time that the ships were in harbour, largely with a view to decrease the desertions, and also because the men were only paid just before the ship was due to sail.

"Show a leg."—Boatswains' Mates when calling the hands in the morning called out: "Show a leg, show a leg or a Purser's stocking." The origin of this expression is that, in the days when women lived on board, the women were allowed to lie in till Guard and Steerage and, if they showed a leg clad in a stocking outside their hammocks when the hands were called, they were not further disturbed.

HAMMOCKS.

Hammocks were introduced into the Navy just after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. They were always made of brown canvas until well into the nineteenth century. A ship prided herself more on the whiteness of her hammock cloths than on the appearance of her hammocks. After an action every effort was made to expend more sails than were actually damaged by the enemy's fire, so as to get canvas for new hammock cloths and also new white trousers for the ships' company.

RELATIONS BETWEEN ROYAL NAVY AND MERCHANT SERVICE.

Recruiting for Merchant Service.—The Royal Navy has always largely depended on the Merchant Service for recruits in war time, and also, up till quite recently, in peace time.

Up till the seventies of the nineteenth century a shirt hung on the forestay of a British merchant ship when in sight of a British man-of-war always meant that there were volunteers for the Royal Navy on board that merchant ship. Admiral Boyes once told me that he was in a man-of-war at anchor in Rangoon when an English barque hoisted

a shirt on the forestay. The man-of-war sent a boat on board and brought back three men, who joined the Navy. One of these men was so good that within three months he was rated captain of the fore top.

Yarns and Expressions in common.—It may be of interest to know that many of the stock yarns and expressions of the Navy have their counterpart in the Merchant Service. For instance, there is the naval yarn of the young marine officer who, coming on deck the morning after he had joined a ship for the first time, sees the Commander walking up and down on the starboard side of the quarterdeck. The young marine officer walks up to the Commander and says: "Good morning, sir;" to which the Commander replies: "Good morning be damned, walk the other side of the deck."

The Merchant Service version of this story places the scene in a boarding-house. A sailor has spent all his money, but still lives in the boarding-house on credit. The boarding-house master comes down to breakfast, and the sailor politely bows and says: "Good morning, sir;" to which the boarding-house master replies: "Good morning be damned, go and get a ship."

The Naval expression, "Different ships, different long splices," meaning that practices vary in different ships, is also, I believe, a common expression in the Merchant Service. The expression, "The devil to pay and no pitch hot," is derived from shipbuilding. The Devil was the plank nearest the ship's side, and the seam between the devil and the ship's side was larger than any other seam, and it required a much larger quantity of oakum to caulk it than any other seam, and a much larger quantity of pitch wherewith to pay it after it had been caulked.

The expression "As long as the main top bowline" was derived from the maintop bowline being always supposed to be the longest rope in a ship. A bowline was used to haul out the weather leach of a sail when a ship was sailing close hauled, so as to flatten it in order that it might catch as much wind as possible. When a person was observed to be listening very intently, he was described as having "his ears hauled out to a bowline."

When anybody was heard to remark that "his belly was flapping up against his backbone," it was generally understood that the person in question was extremely hungry.

I should very much like to know the history of the expression "to have cuts." I have frequently heard a sailor, when discussing an excitable and eccentric person with another sailor, remark: "He's got cuts;" and the other sailor reply, "Yes, extremely large gashes."

When any receptacle, such as a cask or a chest or a bottle, was found to be empty, it was always remarked that it had a southerly wind inside it.

I might remark that the terms "Port" and "Starboard" have been used when giving directions to the man at the helm ever since the sixteenth century; but the terms "larboard" and "starboard" were

used to designate the different sides of the ship, etc., and the different watches until well into the nineteenth century.

To place the yards "a portlast" was to lower them down so that they rested across the gunwales or portlasts of the ship. This was done when at anchor in bad weather so as to lessen the chance of the ship "driving" or "dragging."

ANCHORS.

Though it is rather outside the scope of the lecture, it is surprising to find how small and how few were the anchors before the eighteenth century. A first rate ship of 1,700 tons was allowed three anchors of 430 lbs., 150 lbs., 174 lbs.; a second rate ship of 1,500 tons was allowed three anchors of 315, 110, and 72 lbs.; and a third rate ship of 1,000 tons was allowed three anchors of 173, 96 and 68 lbs. The ship of that period, with her heavy spars and high freeboard, must have held the wind to a far greater extent than a modern ship, and yet her anchors were ridiculously small in proportion to a modern ship of similar tonnage.

Cables were of hemp and were 21 inches in circumference up till 1811, when iron chain cables were introduced.

TONNAGE MEASUREMENT.

The system of measuring a ship's tonnage was as follows:—The unit of measurement was a tun cask of wine, and the total tonnage of a ship was arrived at by calculating the number of tun casks of wine she could carry, by comparing her bulk with the bulk of a merchant ship engaged in the wine trade, and whose carrying capacity was known.

SALUTES.

From the reign of King John till the end of the eighteenth century English men-of-war always claimed the right to be saluted by all Foreign men-of-war and all merchant vessels between the North Sea and Finisterre. The salute consisted in the lowering of certain sails. If a British merchant ship failed to salute a British man-of-war a shot was immediately fired across her bows and the Master was made to pay 6s. 8d. to the Gunner of the man-of-war.

Story of "Handsome Smith."—Thackeray tells a story of a certain Lieutenant who commanded a brig in the early part of the eighteenth century during a period of peace between England and France. This Lieutenant's name was Smith, and Thackeray says he was known as "Handsome Smith" and that his picture is in the Painted Hall at Greenwich. Well, this officer was cruising in the Channel in his brig when a French Flagship sailed past without saluting him, and so Smith fired into her. The French Ambassador complained and Smith was dismissed the Service, but shortly after reinstated with the rank of Post Captain.

HIGHER PAY IN MERCHANT SERVICE THAN ROYAL NAVY.

Effect in Recruiting.—One of the principal reasons why service in the Navy was so unpopular with seamen was because the pay in the Merchant Service was so much higher. In the early seventeen-hundreds the pay in the Merchant Service was from £2 10s. to £3 a month. As an example of how large this pay must have appeared I believe I am correct in saying that as late as 1894 the pay for an Able Seaman in a British sailing ship was £2 10s. a month out of Liverpool. Continuous service was established in 1852; but a war scare in 1857 forced the Government into offering a bounty of £10 to Able Seamen joining the Navy and £5 to Ordinary Seamen.

THE PRESS GANG.

The Press Gang system of procuring men for the Navy originated in the year 1206. The word "Press" is derived from the "Prest" or Imprest Money which was paid to a man on entry as an earnest of his wages on enlisting in the King's Service.

EVOLUTION OF BRITISH NAVAL OFFICERS.

Boatswain the oldest title; Rector or Captain; Master.—Perhaps it might be of interest to trace the evolution of the British Naval Officer. The oldest title in the Navy appears to be that of Boatswain. In the days of the Saxon Kings men-of-war were commanded by a *batsuen* or Boatswain, the principal ship in a Fleet carrying a Rector or captain. As ships grew bigger and went more into blue water, each ship carried a Master in Command. The Boatswain became Second in Command and received the title of Constable and only carried out the duties of executive officer.

Admiral.—Early in the thirteenth century the official in command of a Fleet received the title of Admiral; sometimes Captain and Admiral.

Captain.—About the same time the rank of Captain was introduced, there being a Captain in Command of each Division of a Fleet. In 1417 King Henry V. sent a Fleet to sea under Lord Huntingdon to clear the Channel, before the troops were embarked for France. The French were defeated, and the King granted annuities to the master of each ship and the title of Captain.

Lieutenant.—In the sixteenth century ships became very much larger and each carried a Captain, who was not necessarily a seaman, and a Master who was responsible for the sailing of the ship, the executive officer of the ship being the Boatswain. During the sixteenth century also Lieutenants were introduced, as understudies to the Captains; but the Boatswain remained executive officer, although the Gunner's importance on board was rapidly increasing.

During the sixteenth century the proportion of seamen to soldiers on board was greatly increased, owing to the gun taking the place of the spear and bow and arrow. It was apparently found easier to teach naval gunnery to the seamen than to the soldier, as most Merchant Ships carried guns in peace time to protect themselves against pirates.

Midshipmen.—During the seventeenth century the number of Lieutenants to each ship was largely increased and the Lieutenants gradually assumed duties that had hitherto been performed by the Warrant Officers. During Charles II.'s reign Midshipmen were instituted, though, previous to this reign, it had been the custom for Officers to bring their young relations and friends on board as servants in order that they might be trained to become officers.

The title "midshipman" was derived as follows. It had always been the custom to station intelligent men amidships—that is, abaft the mainmast, to convey orders and messages from the officers to the ship's company, and the young friends and relatives of the officers were told off for this duty, as it was considered a useful way to teach them their profession.

Until a very short time ago, when orders were given forbidding boys to be used as messengers for officers, it always appeared to me that boys told off for this duty frequently developed considerable smartness and intelligence. They acquired considerable knowledge, and rose rapidly in the Service once they had become ordinary seamen.

In Marryat's time Midshipmen were always called "Reefers;" but I do not know when the modern term "Snotty" first arose, but I presume that it accompanied the institution of certain uniform regulations.

DISCUSSION.

After some amusing personal reminiscences, CAPTAIN MACILWAINE told the story of the captain of a ship who flogged his two trombone players because they did not keep stroke. Comparisons were made between the bluejacket's views of medicine of half a century, and more, ago, and the actual practices of medicine to-day in the Navy. Compliments were paid to the staff of Chatham Naval Hospital, where some time had recently been spent as a patient, also to the Headquarters staff for their courtesy. In support of the claim that the Navy can do anything, illustrations were given of a bluejacket lawn tennis player when that game was in its infancy; a coachman, who was discovered for the Admiral's horses on the China Station, and a Naval Officer—present at the meeting—who, from the same spot, and on foot, had shot five lions in fifteen minutes, in East Africa—an unprecedented performance.

ADMIRAL THE HON. SIR EDMUND FREMANTLE: Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen, I am sure we have all listened to this lecture with great satisfaction. I think the lecturer could have said a good deal more if he had liked, but of course it would have made the lecture too long if he had done so. There is one point on which he only just touched that I should like to refer to, namely, the question of punishment. The history of naval punishments is an extremely interesting one. The lecturer referred to one very ancient punishment that existed—that is,

tying the dead body to that of the live man and throwing him overboard. There were such punishments as keel hauling and many others of a barbarous nature, but I think very few people, except those who were in the Navy a great many years ago, are aware how much the systems of punishments and the orders connected with them have changed and consequently the systems of discipline in the Navy. I was serving in the Channel in 1858, and that, I think, was the time when the Admiralty introduced the new punishments and the new Articles of War. When I first joined the Navy, which was some years before that, I listened with great satisfaction and awe to the Captain reading the Articles of War every Sunday, or nearly every Sunday, on the quarter-deck, or on the poop of the three-decker in which I was serving. Most of the Articles of War in those days, as many people will remember, ended with "Shall be punished with death or such other punishment as the nature of the offence shall deserve or the Courts Martial shall think fit to impose." That was changed about the time I mentioned to something rather less than death, the sentence being used "Such other punishment as is hereafter mentioned in the Articles of War." When those new regulations were issued there was naturally much comment on them through the Fleet. I found that the Captains of the day were very much astonished, very much frightened, because many of them said that they would never be able to maintain any discipline at all. Before that period it was the custom more or less, within large limits, to consider that a ship was a Captain's freehold: he punished a man as he liked. Some of the ships were exceedingly good because the Captain was a wise man and a good disciplinarian; and some of the ships were exceedingly bad because the Captain was a bad disciplinarian. There is no doubt that in those days, as you can see from "Peter Simple," the Captain was able sometimes to make the punishment fit the crime, which he cannot do to the same extent now. I remember that in my first ship I used to see the men standing between the guns with buckets round their necks because they had spat on the deck, and every man used to go and spit in their buckets. It was not a pleasant custom, but I daresay it may have been rather effective. I am sure another very good lecture could be delivered on the subject of punishment. I have a little book now, which was quite confidential, which was sent to the Commander-in-Chief in 1859. I was then Flag-Lieutenant of the Channel Fleet, and my uncle, to whom I owed my advancement, was the Admiral, and he had this little book containing reports of all the commanding officers of the Fleet. They were bound up in a book which I think was quite confidential, but I have a copy of it. It was extremely interesting to notice at the time how the greater portion of the Captains said: "I am afraid it will be quite impossible to keep up discipline in future." I am happy to say that I think the discipline of the Navy has not materially deteriorated since those days, although it has certainly been regulated, and sometimes overregulated by the Admiralty. I think, if the lecturer can read up that part of the subject, he would be able to give us quite as interesting a lecture as the present one on a future occasion.

ADMIRAL W. H. HENDERSON: Apropos of the story of the Commander and the young Marine Officer, I should like to tell you something of my own experience, which shows that the same ideas were carried out at a later date. In 1891 I had the honour of serving as Senior Captain on the East India Station, under my friend, Admiral Sir Edmund Fremantle. When his successor came out, whom I knew a little, I wrote him a private letter congratulating him upon hoisting his flag, and telling him that I was pleased to have the honour of serving under his command and would be glad to help in the work of the station in any way I possibly

could. He wrote me a letter in reply saying that he did not approve of private letters and if he wanted any communications from his Captains he would ask them for them.

THE CHAIRMAN: It only remains for me to make one or two brief remarks in concluding the discussion. I think a lecture upon customs is one which it is very well worth having. It is not only a matter of archaeological interest, but has also a definitely practical interest and application. If people know more or less how customs have arisen and something of the history of them, I think they would take more kindly to them. It must have seemed very strange to those who had to join the Navy during the War to see the Captain walking up and down on the starboard side of the quarter-deck, and to notice how all the elderly officers who were there already flew over to the other side and got out of his way. I do not know what the origin was of the Captain having the exclusive use of the starboard side of the quarter-deck. I saw a book the other day that was published in 1706 which described how upon the Captain's first popping up, the Lieutenants sheer off to the other side, "for'tis impudence for anyone to approach him within the length of a boat hook."

Again, there is the question of manning the side. I should like to know the origin of that when the lecturer pursues his researches. The custom is evidently a very old one. In the same old book to which I have referred the statement is made that in Tromp's days it was quite enough for one officer to go and man the side, that that was a sufficient token of respect; but that in the later times of 1706, when the book was written, "every officer must run at midnight to receive his chief, though he came on board as drunk as a beggar." I should very much like to know what was the origin of every officer having to turn out to receive the Captain on board. I also very much liked the story which the lecturer gave about the Captain consulting the ship's company before he went to sea. That has a distinctly modern ring about it. The lecturer also referred to the Captain of a ship getting more stores than he was entitled to. An old word, of which I have never heard the origin, was always applied to stores which you got in that way, —capperbar. I have not heard it for a long time now; it is an old expression, which I think has quite gone out of use. The lecturer also referred to a man of his own name who fired at the Frenchman for not striking his flag. I think he refers to Captain Tom Smith, known as "Tom of Ten Thousand." The only other thing I have to say is that I think it might be profitable to quote Bacon's remark about custom. Bacon said that "Since custom is the principal magistrate of men's lives let men by all means obtain good customs." I think that is a very good rule, which everybody should observe.

It now only remains for me to thank the lecturer for his most interesting lecture. It must have involved a great deal of work, and incidentally it has kept him from attending the football match of his College at Greenwich to-day. I am sure you will desire to thank Captain Smith very much indeed for the interesting hour he has given us this afternoon.

The resolution of thanks was carried by acclamation, and the meeting terminated.