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QUERIES

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QUERIES.

16. PRAAM.—A letter from Shetland, 8th August, 1736, to one of the "Doers" of the Earl of Morton (who then had the rights of Admiralty in Shetland) makes mention: "I no way grudge the Earl's complimenting Quendale with the pramm fors'd on the Fair Island, but was not pleased with his having told Mr. Mitchell that he would give the Admirall none of it."

The modern praam is usually a small undecked boat. Was the eighteenth century one a larger vessel? Of course this "pramm" might have been washed off some passing Scandinavian ship.—R. STUART BRUCE.

17. JACK AT THE FORE.—When did the custom arise of H.M. Ships flying the Union Jack at the Foremast Head, on entering or leaving a Naval Port? Has it ever been officially ordered, or has it like Topsy "growed"? Is it a salute or a signal?—E. A. DINGLEY.

18. RATING OF SHIPS.—When were ships first classed under rates? Sir Julian Corbett states:—"With the ship money fleets appears the germ of the modern system of rating. A Navy List showing the fleet divided into six rates exists as early as 1641." (England in the Mediterranean, i., 171.) Derrick also states that ships were first distinguished by rates in the reign of Charles I. probably between 1633 and 1641 (Memoirs of the R.N. p. 68). The information that is available, however, points to a slightly earlier period. A Navy List of 1624 shows the ships arranged under 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th *ranks*. (Oppenheim Administration of the R.N., p. 207), and in a list of "His Majesty's Ships Royal, etc., riding in the . . . Medway, and in the dry dock at Chatham, surveyed 1626," the ships are arranged under the numbers 1, 2, 3 (S.P. Dom. Ch. I, xlii., 127). Are these the earliest instances?—G. E. MANWARING.

19. ARMADA SHIPS AT SHETLAND.—In the *Shetland News* of 19th May, 1906, appears an extract from *The Geographical Journal* of May, 1906, and there is added:—"All the ships were now short of water and provisions, though some were better off than others. Numbers of men were sick, and the small relief that was gained at Scalloway, from the trading vessels captured, did little to alter the deplorable state of the crews."

Apparently Don Baltazar de Zuniga

was landed at Scalloway, with despatches for Spain.

Does all this come from Spanish or English sources? What is known of the stay of the ships at Scalloway, and how many were they?

Can Sir Julian Corbett give us any information?—R. STUART BRUCE.

20. COMMANDER DE KAY.—I have a photogravure after a painting of J. O. Davidson, published by D. Appleton, New York, which bears the title "Com. de Kay taking the 'Cacique.'" The picture shows a brig of war flying the Argentine colours alongside the starboard quarter of a frigate flying the Brazilian colours. A boarding party from the brig is shown in the act of boarding the frigate led by a man in a cocked hat (presumably Com. de Kay), who has just leaped into the fore-chains of the large vessel. Both vessels have sail set, but the frigate is shown with her starboard anchor down and the sails on her mainmast aback. In the distance a small topsail schooner is coasting past a town built on the side of a sugar-loaf shaped hill.

I presume the incident occurred during the war between Buenos Aires and Brazil 1826-8, but I have been unable to find any details of the engagement in any work of reference available here. Can any of the readers of the MIRROR supply the information or tell me anything of Commander de Kay.—E. P. KAY.

21. SIDE-SCALES.—When were side-scales introduced for Naval guns? The side-scale was a flat piece of wood—usually mahogany—in the shape of a small printer's letter "h." It was about 13 or 14 inches long, about 5 inches wide and about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch thick. It was marked on the face near the longer side in degrees from 0 upwards and downwards. On the right side of the cascabel there was a notch called "the Line of Metal." To give the right elevation or depression to the gun when the object was obscured the breech was lowered or raised until the Line of Metal notch was abreast of the necessary degree on the side-scale. This instrument was superseded before 1860 by the "marked quoin." All quoins for broadside guns were made of wood. Those of the latest dates had a strip of iron let into the upper face and into one side to resist the wear of the gun on them, which was considerable.—CYPRIAN A. G. BRIDGE

22. THE SOVEREIGN OF THE SEAS.—

[An American correspondent who is making a model to scale of the *Sovereign* of 1637, an heroic task, puts the following questions.—A.M.]

1. A.—Where did the runners of the boat-tackles make fast when not in use, and where was the lower or single block of the falls thereof fastened?

B.—Was the said block fastened by means of a hook in the ring of an eye-bolt, or strapped to the bolt or to its ring?

2. A.—If the sheaves of the tyes of the lower yards were in the hounds, did the upper jeer blocks fasten to eye-bolts in the lower side of the trestle trees, or were they strapped about the mast, as was the later practice?

B. In such a large ship as the *Sovereign* were the upper jeer-blocks, single or double blocks, and, if double, where on the yard were the complementary lower or single blocks of this tackle made fast?

C.—Were there two ends to the falls, as is often the case nowadays, or was the standing part made fast to a becket on the single block or to the yard itself?

D.—Where did the fall make fast after passing through the leading block at the foot of the mast?

3. A.—Ships of the later seventeenth century were sometimes fitted, at the fore and main masts, with two top ropes passing through sheaves set diagonally in the foot of the topmast, one above the other, the standing part of the top ropes being made fast to eye-bolts in the topmast cap. After passing through blocks also made fast in the opposite sides of the topmast cap, the top ropes (really ties) came down through the lubber hole on each side of the mast and had large double blocks turned into their ends through which the falls were rove. The lower or single blocks of the falls hook into eye-bolts in the deck well aft of their respective masts, so that the tie and falls form an angle of about 30 degrees with the mast. In early seventeenth century ships it seems that the end of the top rope (only one being employed on each mast),

after passing through the sheave in the topmast and through the block on the cap, fastened to a large double block or fiddle block; the single block of this purchase hooked (somewhere) to an eye-bolt in the deck near the foot of the mast—or in the channel? And the fall passed through the fourth sheave in the knight head or sep-de-drisse and belayed on the main deck?

B.—Where did the top-gallant rope make fast, and how was the power applied? And was it always kept rove ready for use?

4. As to the marnett falls leading through blocks on the yard, the picture of the *Great Harry* by Volpe at Hampton Court shows them leading through (presumably) blocks close under the tops. To have led them through blocks on the yard would have prevented them from being hauled up far enough to bring the leach of the sail even with the yard, which seems to be just what they were intended for. How about this?

5.—Where and how did the standing back-stays make fast? To eye-bolts with or without rings?

6.—In the Payne print there are unmistakably shown shrouds leading from the beak over the bolt-sprit, rattled so as to make ladders. How about this?

7.—Making fast falls :—Did most of the several falls, braces, haul-yards, etc., make fast to pins placed in a board lashed along the inside of the shrouds just above the rail? Were there any pin rails close abaft the masts?

Were there any cleats of conventional form fastened or lashed along the rails, in addition to the quaint shaped cleats for belaying the sheets, tacks, and braces which were placed in board, of course between the port-holes along the sides?

8.—Where did the blocks for the fore, main and mizzen topsail lifts fasten? On the cap, or between the topmast shrouds as was the practice later? There is a very good reason for the latter practice, but perhaps that had not been thought of in 1637.