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THE SHIPS OF MASO FINIGUERRA.

(Continued.)

BY GEOFFREY CALLENDER.

[N.B.—Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9, to which reference is made below, were published in the preceding number.]

THE shape of the fore-stage, or forecastle, varies in Maso's different sketches. In Figs. 3 and 7 it is obviously square. But in Figs. 1 and 5 it appears to be triangular, and in Fig. 4 hexagonal, like the stages of ships in the mediæval gold coinage of England. I think that in his desire to do justice to a striking feature Maso over-accentuated the height of the forecastle archway. Certainly other pictures of a slightly later period, such as the frescoes in the Piccolomini Library at Siena, or the St. Paul's ship in King's College window, conflict with the evidence derivable from Figs. 5 and 6. It seems more probable that above this archway there was room for a middle deck with accommodation for offices of various kinds and cabins for the "boteswain" and his mates. Such quarters would need light, and Figs. 4 and 5 show lesser apertures which should scarcely have been needed if the archway were as lofty as Maso makes it. There must have been some hatchway from here to the forecastle, seeing that there is no vestige of a ladder from the maindeck; and as we see in Figs. 1, 5, 6 and 7, the forecastle was walled in on every side. The aft stage, stern-castle, or poop was similar in this respect, as may be seen in a very interesting drawing at present in the Uffizi.

This drawing (1505?) is either a study by Pinturicchio for one of his frescoes in the Piccolomini Library, or (as seems more probable), a study by Raphael from his master's work. The study, exquisite in its detail, represents the embarkation of Æneas Sylvius (Pope Pius II.) on his journey to the Council of Basle. The great ecclesiastic and his retinue fill the foreground of the picture, and in the middle distance is a three-masted bowspritless vessel, in dock (Fig. 10). The artist with

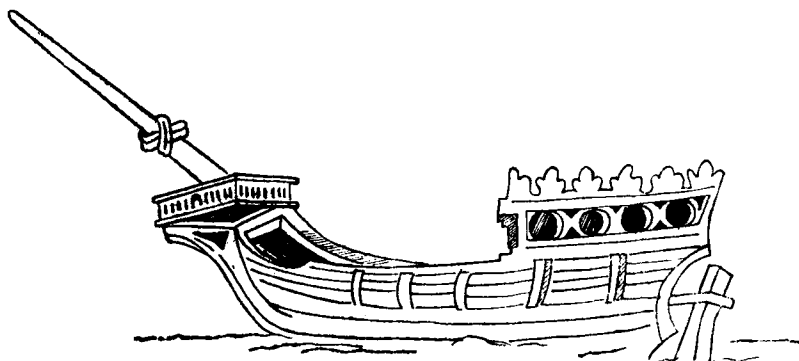
minute and scrupulous care has attempted to show the size of the ship by including the figures of dockyard hands and seamen. Two of the latter stand on the port side of the poop. They cannot lean over the side of the ship, but their heads and shoulders can be seen over the edge of the rail. And the rail goes from one side of the poop to the other, cutting them off from the waist.

It will be noticed that Maso's ships on the whole are richly decorated. We notice first of all the prevalence of the Fleur de Lys pattern. It occurs in Figs. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. It appears to have been universally employed at this period for the embellishment of the poop, though not of the fore-stage. It may be traced in the illuminated MS. of Marco Polo's travels ("M. M.," Vol. II., plate opposite p. 167) and again in Mr. Brindley's picture of the early sixteenth century glass in the window of Malvern Priory ("M. M.," Vol. I., p. 45, Fig. 4). This last example would almost suggest an iron railing, very perilous to mariners in a seaway. But Maso's drawings make the matter quite clear. Fig. 2 shows the edging very plainly indeed. It does not bear the slightest resemblance to fleurs de lys, though the impression occurs in Fig. 7 and elsewhere. Evidently the edging was made of good stout planking, perforated and scalloped to please the eye at a distance. If the drawing by Raphael mentioned above may be trusted, if the scalloped border was some four feet high, then the ship in Fig. 2 pretty obviously had cabins between the main deck and the poop.

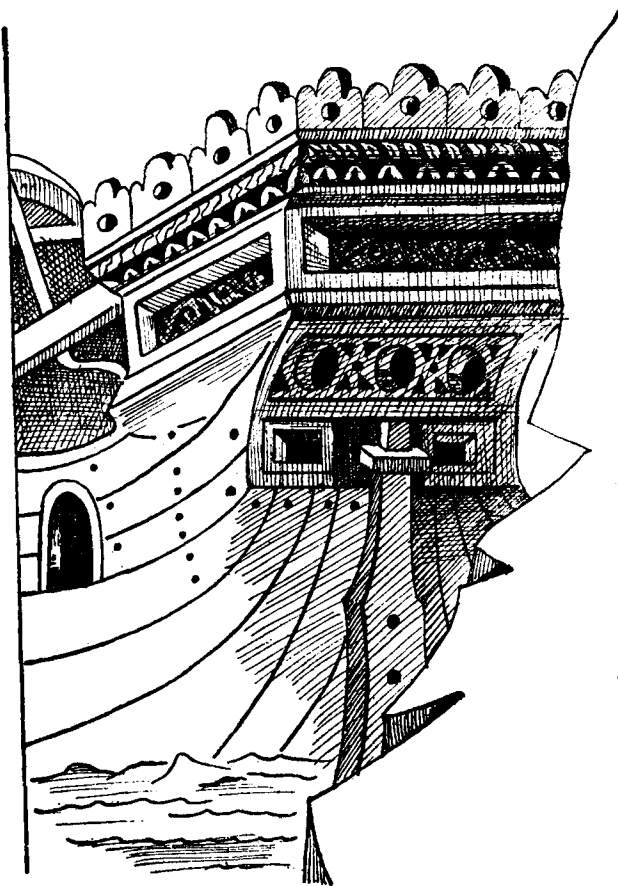
In this same Fig. 2 may be seen the "egg and dart" moulding typical of the period under review. Other attempts to beautify the stern works show that the taste for ornament of this description was not the exclusive property of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. But perhaps the most interesting embellishment of all is the figure head (Figs. 5, 6, and 9). There is indeed no diversity of pattern. The serpent-like head is almost exactly similar to that in an illustration to Rous's *Life of Warwick*, reproduced by Laird Clowes, *Royal Navy*, Vol. I., p. 376, save that Maso's figurehead is better drawn. It is not without interest to note in this connection that the figurehead first appears in the inventories of the English fleet just about the time that Maso drew his ships. Oppenheim, *Administration of the Royal Navy*, p. 15, writes, "The *Trinity Royal* had a painted wooden leopard with a crown of copper gilt—perhaps as a figure-head." The *Trinity Royal* was built in 1416.

I think it is more or less clear from Maso's drawings that the figurehead did not grow out of the bowsprit trophy. For

1



2



S.E.

in Fig. 5 we have both. Rather the figurehead appears to have originated in a natural desire to decorate the blunted finial of the stemhead when the stemhead was purposely elongated to support a triangular forestage. My meaning will be made clear by comparing Fig. 1 with Fig. 5.

But after all the most striking feature of Maso's ships are the portholes. There are large ports and small ports. There are ports square, circular, and oblong. They are cut in a multitude of shapes as if the device was a new one, and its novelty a thing to toy with. Maso is careful to show the thickness of the scantling in which they are pierced, not perhaps in the case of the round ports with complete success, but always with the same object (Figs. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6). And here we may ask whether or no our artist intended to represent an Entry Port. Judging by Figs. 1 and 7, one would certainly answer in the affirmative, for there is in the port quarter of the vessel what can only be an arched doorway. But in Figs. 5 and 6 this has changed its shape to that of a window, and in Fig. 9 (an engraving be it noted, and not of necessity from Maso's hand at all), it has shrunk to the merest indication of a horizontal hole or slit. Perhaps in any case it would be misleading to refer to it as an archway. Perhaps it was a man-hole through which returning seamen might struggle up a rope ladder let down to their boat from the deck. And yet if the aperture were roomy enough to admit a man at all, surely it would be made sufficiently commodious to admit the ship's commander without obliging him to bend his head.

Of the window-ports, holes pierced primarily for light and air, it will be remarked that they have, so far as we can tell, no port-lids or any form of substitute for port-lids. And yet some of these openings are enormous. Those in Figs. 5 and 7 may of course, be carelessly drawn. If truthful representations, one would imagine that the poop cabins would be quite uninhabitable in stormy following seas. Probably the early popularity of these windows led to over-production, and the resulting discomfort and inconvenience diminished in time their number and size. Certainly the ships of the second half of the fifteenth century are hardly comparable to Maso's in this respect, and in the British Navy the use of gun-ports was not adopted till the following century, although, of course, this does not mean that ports were not pierced for purposes other than artillery. It will be noticed that in Fig. 2 the large oblong port in the stern is filled with a fanciful decorative scheme. At first one might suppose this to be wood-carving ; but the depth of the surrounding framework almost precludes the

possibility of this. It seems more likely that the artist was intending to represent ornamental metal work. If this was intended to beautify the officers' quarters it would certainly be in keeping with the general scheme for the embellishment of the stern.

Among the most interesting ports are the two shown in the end-on view of the ship, presented in Fig. 4. From their size it is quite evident that these like the others are intended for light and ventilation. Yet the question instantly arises, were they used for anchor work? The seal of Winchelsea (1290) shows us quite clearly that the forestage was not used for hauling in the cable. The seamen are hauling away over the bulwarks somewhat forward of amidships. Now if apertures such as those in Fig. 4 are faithfully drawn, their usefulness for anchor work would immediately suggest itself. At least one would think so. Perhaps as the first novelty of big windows wore off, and the ports all tended to diminish in size these forward windows shrank into hawse-holes. Some authorities, I know, trace hawse-holes back to antiquity. Mr. Cecil Torr, I believe, though I have not his book beside me as I write, identifies them with the human eye represented on ancient ships. This, I always thought, was the symbol of watchfulness. At any rate, in regard to mediæval ships, the state of our knowledge at present leaves room for the supposition put forward above. For there are no hawse-holes in the Bayeux Tapestry, nor in the seals of the Cinque Ports, nor in pictures of ships in illuminated MSS. nor in stained glass windows.

Maso does not give a very clear notion of the rudder. In fact, the steering-gear seems different in every sketch (Figs. 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9). After comparing the drawings one with another we may, however, presume that the rudder itself was shaped like a church buttress. It is safe also to argue that it was hung upon the stern-post by pintles (Figs. 2 and 7), and that its component parts were riveted together by iron clamps (Fig. 6). Fig. 2 shows the tiller passing through the midmost of three square ports on a level with the rudder-head. But the most interesting particular that Maso supplies about this part of a ship's furniture is his sketch of the Whip Staff in Fig. 2. Our evidence as to this fitting is exceedingly meagre. It is known to have been in use in the Royal Navy by the end of the sixteenth century, but Maso, I think, puts its introduction earlier than any investigator of inventories has yet dared to do. Another interesting feature in connection with the Whip Staff is the cross-plank or helmsman's bridge. One would gather from Fig. 2 that the vessel was un-

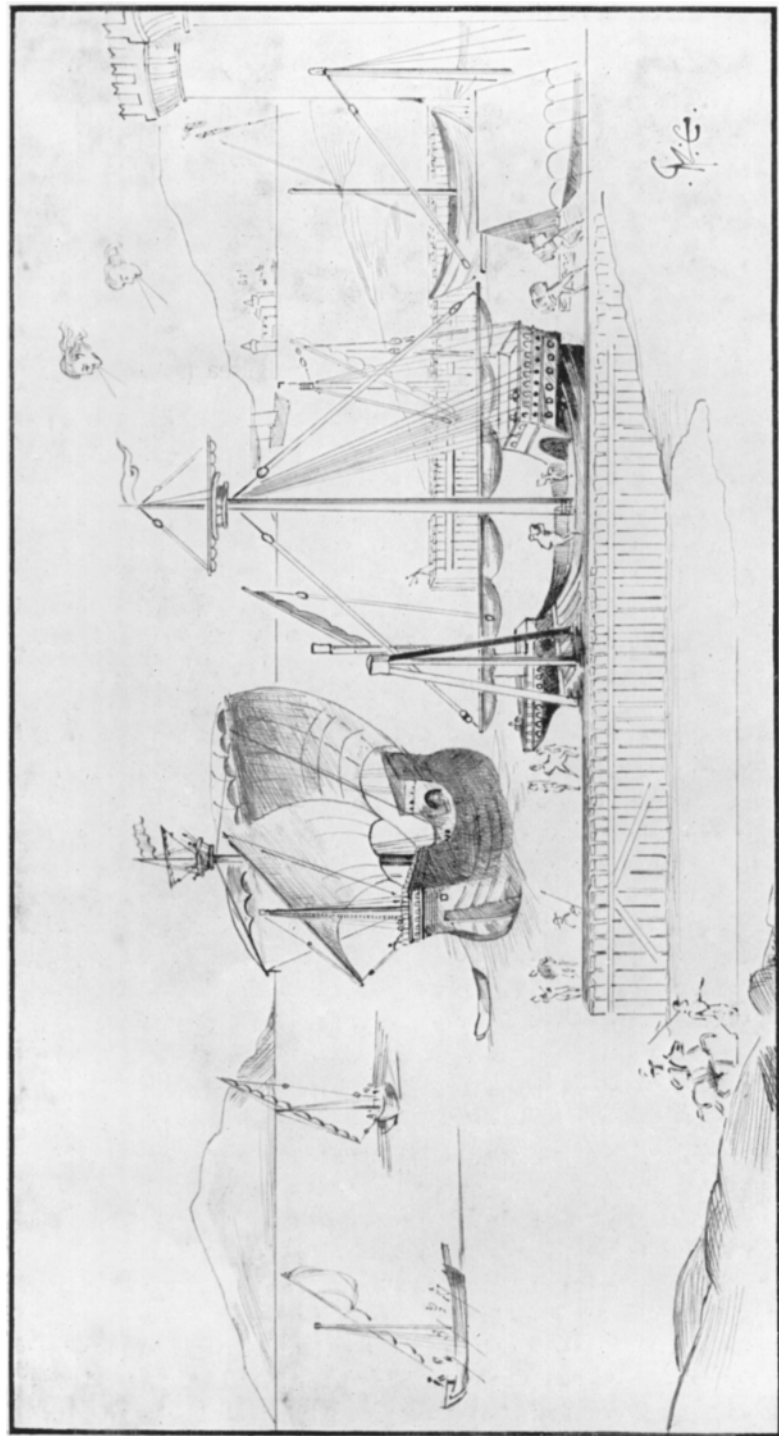


FIG. 10. THE EMBARKATION OF PIUS II. [DETAIL.]
(Drawn from a photograph of the original.)

decked. And if this were the case we should have a motive for the bridge. But the impression is corrected by Fig. 7 in which the relative positions of bridge and main-deck are shown. If the helmsman had been on the deck itself he would have lacked the leverage necessary to hoist the Whip Staff before putting it over to starboard or port. But apart from this there is another possible reason for the bridge. Does it not appear from Fig. 7 that without some elevation the helmsman would not have been able to see anything owing to the height of the bulwarks? If this surmise is correct, then I think it follows with something like certainty that the capacious opening on the vessel's quarter (Fig. 2) is, after all, a full-sized Entry Port, and that its sill gives the level of the Main Deck. The drawing of the forecastle archway in other pictures lends considerable support to this idea (cp. "M. M.," Vol. II., Fig. 9, page 167). For even the least skilful of draughtsmen suggests that the base of the archway is situated at some depth below the gunwale.

These ships of Maso lend no countenance to the theory that three-masted vessels were common in the first half of the fifteenth century. In only one of his drawings (Fig. 6) does the artist show a two-masted ship, and even here the additional spar does not seem to indicate any corresponding increase of tonnage. It is stepped very far forward and carries a very small sail. In this connection we may note that Henry V.'s *Grace Dieu* of 1418 "had one great mast and one mesan or foremast" (Oppenheim, p. 14), a description which exactly accords with Maso's drawing in Fig. 6.

Certainly, the "great mast" was tending at this time to become disproportionately taunt, and the peculiarity we know prevailed until after the beginning of the sixteenth century. In Fig. 5 we are shown wooldings, but these are drawn in a manner that suggests that the artist did not quite understand what he was drawing and inserted the feature purely for its decorative effect. The great mast is surmounted by a top and the top, as we should expect, is filled with spears, some of them (Fig. 6) very carefully drawn.

So far as one can judge, there is in Maso's ships no single example of a topmast. In Figs. 5 and 7 for example it is impossible to believe that the artist intended anything but a flag-staff. In Fig. 7 the flag-staff appears to be quite separate from the mast, but its very slenderness precludes the idea that it could support a yard and sail. In Fig. 6 the matter is more doubtful. Here we find repeated in a careless way a peculiar fitting which Maso drew with loving care in Fig. 5, a network or mat of ropes

encircling the mast and shrouds. What this is I cannot say. It appears to be intended as some kind of chafing-gear, perhaps to protect the standing rigging from the yard. But if so, then we should expect to find a topsail yard in Fig. 6 to account for the repetition of the chafing-gear. Of course, it may be argued that the upper mast in Fig. 6 too closely resembles the flag-staff in Fig. 7 ever to be mistaken for a topmast proper, and that as this same diagram shows the manner in which the mainsail was set it would have been quite impossible to have sheeted the topsail in the manner in which we know that it was sheeted in after times. But as late as the second decade of the sixteenth century it is possible to point to examples of ridiculously small main topsails sheeted in the tops. In the map of Constantinople drawn by Giovanni Andrea Vavassore, and published in Venice in 1520, we find an example of this. Of great ships Vavassore represents four galleys and two round ships. Of the latter, one has all her sails furled and the other all her sails set.

(To be continued.)

