

## II.—THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ARMADA'S OVERTHROW.

If a deputation from the Historical Association, wending its way backward through the centuries on the magic carpet of curiosity, could reach the little port of Palos in the year 1492 and interview Columbus on board the *Santa Maria*, they would find that he quite agreed with them in dividing all sea-going craft into two main divisions—vessels built for purposes of war and vessels built for purposes of trade. But if they were thereupon to put this question: "Are we correct, sir, in supposing that vessels of war are *armed* vessels, and vessels of trade *unarmed*?" he would reply, "Certainly not! Fighting-ships are propelled by oars, and trading-ships by sails. That is the distinction. Mark it well! ALL vessels are armed."

We must not stop to ask when merchantmen ceased to carry armaments; the inquiry would betray a carping spirit in the middle of a U-boat campaign. It is sufficient for the moment to remember that the battleship of 1492 was propelled by oars; and that, as a warrior, she despised any sailing-ship as a wretched freight-carrier or bearer of burdens. The man-of-war and the merchantman could in 1492 make spiteful exchange of the terms "Long Ship" and "Round Ship"; for, supposing their greatest breadth to have been the same, and its measure fifteen feet, then the fighter's keel would have been at least seventy-five feet, and the trader's no more than thirty.

Now it is a singular thing that England reached the sixteenth century without possessing a permanent "fighting fleet," if by "fighting fleet" we understand a fleet of vessels built for purposes of war. This does not necessarily mean that mediæval England was not a maritime Power, nor does it mean that she never fought battles at sea. As both sides of the Channel were, after the Conquest, more often than not under one Crown, it followed that armies were not infrequently transported from England to France or from France to England. But they were transported, as they are transported to-day, in vessels built primarily for purposes of trade. Note, however, this difference! An army of to-day, finding itself afloat, does not expect to engage in battle until it disembarks. But the mediæval army was just as much prepared to fight in wooden floating towers upon the waters of the Channel as in wooden siege towers against the walls of a town. It is this factor which creates the false impression of English *naval* warfare in the Middle Age.

When an English mediæval army put to sea, the merchantmen that convoyed it were fitted with fighting-platforms above the level of the ship's hull. This fact is universally known. What is not sufficiently recognised is that the "fore-castles" and "aft-castles" did not affect the architecture of the vessel proper any more than anti-U-boat guns affect the shape of a modern merchantman. The quatrocento *Holigost* might carry 2,899 bows, 12,557 arrows, 5,000 spare arrow-heads, and 18,075 bow-strings. But all this fighting-gear made not an inch of difference to the framework of her hull.

The first hint of revolution came with the use of gunpowder. Some of Henry IV.'s ships were provided with little iron guns which we may call "serpentes." These pieces were very rudimentary, but they must have been found more efficacious than bows and javelins, for throughout the fifteenth century they became more and

more popular. Not only that, but they metamorphosed the fighting-platforms. These lost their temporary or "war-time" character, and became permanent and integral parts of a ship, the recoil of the guns, slight as it was, demanding nothing less.

A fresh stride forward was made by Henry VII. when (1486-1490) he created the *Regent*. The *Regent* mounted no fewer than 225 serpentines and piled up her fighting-platforms, forward and aft, into two or even three storeys. Yet the *Regent* was not (as one might suppose) a transitional craft. She was purely mediæval. She was intended, by the crowned merchant who built her, to corner the Levant trade in spite of pirates, and her armament, multitudinous as it must appear, was not of a kind to modify or change the architecture of her hull.

By the time that Henry VIII. ascended the throne the big gun had reached a point of development which was not materially improved upon until after the Crimean War. Henry VIII., tyrannising over his shipwrights, commanded that this new weapon should be carried afloat. When he did so he revolutionised marine architecture. For it goes without saying that it was impossible to mount heavy ordnance on the fighting-platforms. If big guns were taken to sea, they had to be mounted in the belly of the ship. Holes were accordingly cut in the vessel's broadside, and these gaping apertures were closed against the water's inrush by protecting doors called "ports." The *Great Harry*, though not the first ship so armed, is the accepted prototype of the transitional fighting merchantman. She mounted all the guns that the *Regent* mounted and in similar fashion, and, like Nelson's *Victory*, she had broadside batteries as well. Henry VII. would, like enough, have wept over her as a capacious freight-carrier ruined for her proper task by the cumbrous engines of war in her inside. As a matter of fact, she was not really a merchantman at all, but the precursor of an entirely new kind of battleship. Before the end of his reign Henry VIII. built a "Wild Beast" class of ships (*Tiger*, *Bull*, &c.), which dispensed altogether with a secondary armament of multitudinous serpentines in timber towers, and mounted heavy broadside guns and heavy guns alone.

Henry VIII.'s ships, however, were never tested by a pitched battle properly so-called, and when, in 1577, John Hawkins became the virtual ruler of the Crown navy, they underwent further improvement. Without a moment's delay the new Treasurer and Controller carried Henry's reforms to their logical conclusion. The heavy-gun ships were spoiled for merchandise. What use, then, in preserving measurements that were designed for the carriage of freight? He pulled out the keels of Royal Navy ships to something approaching galley-length, and the finer lines of the *Revenge* endowed her with qualities almost as valuable as her hitting power. After this there is no further change of equal magnitude to chronicle until we come to the launch of the ironclad *Warrior* in 1860; for the ships that Nelson fought with were simply "improved" *Revenues*. Hawkins built eight *Revenues*, but not all of them were ready by 1588. On the other hand, several of the older ships (e.g., *Bonaventure*, *Nonpareil*, &c.) had been rebuilt in the *Revenge* style.

When Philip II. resolved to subjugate England in 1588, he decided, for reasons which cannot be discussed here, to fight her not with his BATTLE-FLEET, but with vessels which he thought

were similar to her own; that is to say, instead of a naval battle of the Lepanto pattern, he elected for a land-encounter-at-sea after the English mode, such an affair as "Espagnols sur Mer" of August 29th, 1350. In such an affray his peerless infantry could not fail, he believed, to overpower the half-drilled hinds of Elizabeth. Accordingly he sent to the Channel nearly 130 sailing-ships, and the best of them resembled the *Regent*—that is to say, they creaked with the obsolescence of mediævalism. The English opposed to them a modern battle-fleet composed of ships similar to those which were to win all victories at sea for the next two and a half centuries. Sir John Laughton has counted up 197 English vessels that took part in the Armada campaign. Not all of these were in the fighting line, and many of them were not of the latest pattern. But it is not too much to say that if 163 of these had stood aside, the thirty-four Crown ships could by themselves have prevented an invasion of England by Philip's effete collection of mediæval sea-wagons with their overcharged "cargoes" of cannon-fodder. No nautical expert in this country would have recommended such a "purge," for it was not until the *Revenge* in 1591 defeated fifty-three Spaniards single-handed that the potentialities of the broadside capital ship began to be understood.

The nature of Howard's best ships being what it was, it is totally beside the mark to debate whether the Spanish or English ships were the bigger. The elephant is larger than man, but the elephant's bulk simply does not count after the elephant-gun has been invented. The English broadside capital ships drove from the ocean the mediæval *mastodon de mer* as mercilessly as Caxton's printing-press displaced the mediæval manuscript.

Of authorities upon the subject dealt with in this note it is difficult to compile a useful list. Illustrations afford the most valuable guides, but these, unfortunately, are all too few. For pre-*Regents* the best source is the "Warwick Roll" or "Rous MS." in the British Museum. This piece of pageantry has been reproduced in facsimile more than once, Mr. Emery Walker's edition of 1914 deserving special praise. Next we have the well-known *Embarkation of Henry VIII. at Dover, May 31st, 1520*, by Vincent Vulp. The ships in this picture, which is at Hampton Court, are Early Henrician or true transitional. It is only when scrutinised that they reveal the heavy ordnance mounted down below; at first glance they might very well pass for sister ships of the *Regent*, the upper works presenting by far the most noticeable feature. The "Roll" of Anthony Anthony, made at the end of Henry VIII.'s reign, shows what the *Great Harry* looked like after she had been rebuilt, and how far she was left behind by the ships of the "Wild Beast" class. Of the *Revenge* unhappily no portrait survives. The most commonly reproduced picture of an Elizabethan ship is the *Ark Royal* from the wood-cut in the British Museum; but with this print the higher criticism has not yet finished, and it would be a mistake to accept as typical of 1588 what may prove to be a reconstruction of thirty years later.

On the English mediæval navy Sir Harris Nicolas's *History* still holds its own, Mr. Oppenheim's *Administration* carrying on the work where Nicolas laid it down. Mr. Oppenheim has also contributed an interesting article to Barnard's *Com-*

panion to *Mediæval History*, and a valuable introduction to *Henry VII.'s Accounts and Inventories* for the Navy Records Society. For the Elizabethan ships the first chapter of Sir Julian Corbett's *Drake and the Tudor Navy* should be consulted, and the last chapter of his *Successors of Drake*. The best book in English on naval architecture (Charnock's) is unreliable on the matter dealt with in this note. Among recent writings the following deserve notice: *Blackwood's Magazine*, No. mclxxx., which contains a good article on the first and second phases of the *Great Harry*; and the *Yachting Monthly* for January, 1913, which has an illustrated criticism on the full-sized model of the *Revenge* exhibited at Earl's Court in the summer of 1912.

GEOFFREY CALLENDER.