

# THE MASTER-GUNNER

1685

The office of the Master-Gunner of a ship of war is to take into his charge all the ordnance that the ship carries, and to see that they be serviceably mounted and sufficiently supplied with their sponges, ladles, and rammers. He is to take special care in any foul weather at sea that all these great guns be traversed and haled within board, and chiefly those of the lower tier, and that the ports be sufficiently caulked up; and this not only in foul weather at sea, but I shall advise also that the same be done in all turnings up into a river or harbour for the prevention of any sudden mishap by the heeling of the ship upon the bringing of a tack aboard, and the freshing of the wind, whereby the ship may on the sudden take in so much water by her ports as may overthrow her. It is most necessary also that all the great guns of the ship be at all times so thoroughly breeched and made fast as that none of them may break loose; to the eminent peril of the foundering of the ship, by the springing of the head of some plank or the forcing out of her sides by the weight of the gun running against it. The Gunner is also in all times of fight to take order that every several gun be sufficiently manned for her traverses, charges, and discharges. He is likewise to be very cautious in the guard of the powder in the powder room, and by no means to suffer any fire to come within the place unless it be a candle upon special occasions, and then also fixed in a close glazed lantern. And he is to take and give an account of all the powder in the ship, and of the remainder thereof at all times; and to that end is to keep a reckoning in writing of every great shot that has been made up on any occasion, nor is he to make any shot without the command and licence of the Captain, or in his absence the Lieutenant. He is likewise to take into his custody and charge all the provisions and necessaries belonging to the gunroom (which also is the proper rendezvous for himself, his mates, and gang), and is there to have ready, and conveniently laid up, a due number of cartridges fitted to the cylinders or bores of all his great guns, the which upon any present use, are to be filled with powder. he is likewise to have latten cases, wherein, in a fight, these paper cartridges are to be carried to avoid the peril of being fired by the way. And in this his gun room also are to be ordered and kept fixed all the small shot belonging unto the musketeers of the ship's company, together their bandoleers and proportions of powder and shot; the which he is to see filled, and to give an account of the expense.

This office had need to be officiated by a person of honesty, care and skill. And I am in doubt that as we are become somewhat defective in our sea officers in general, so in none more than in this....

Nathaniel Boteler. *Six Dialogues about Sea Services*. (London: 1685).