SEAMANSHIP.@@1

By this word we express that noble art, or, more properly, the qualifications which enable a man to exercise the noble art of working a ship. A seaman, in the language of the profession, is not merely a mariner or labourer on board a ship, but a man who understands the structure of this won­derful machine, and every subordinate part of its mechanism, so as to enable him to employ it to the best advantage for pushing her forward in a particular direction, and for avoid­ing the numberless dangers to which she is exposed by the violence of the winds and waves. He also knows what courses can be held by the ship, according to the wind that blows, and what cannot, and which of these is most condu­cive to her progress in her intended voyage; and he must be able to perform every part of the necessary operation with his own hands. As the seamen express it, he must be able “ to hand, reef, and steer.”

We are justified in calling it a *noble art,* not only by its importance, which it is quite needless to amplify or embel­lish, but by its immense extent and difficulty, and the pro­digious number and variety of principles on which it is found­ed, all of which must be possessed in such a manner that they shall offer themselves without reflection in an instant, otherwise the pretended seaman is but a lubber, and can­not be trusted on his watch.

The art is practised by persons without what we call *edu­cation,* in the humbler walks of life, and therefore it suf­fers in the estimation of the careless spectator. It is thought little of, because little attention is paid to it. But if mul­tiplicity, variety, and intricacy of principles, and a systema­tic knowledge of these principles, entitle any art to the ap­pellation of *scientific* and *liberal,* seamanship claims these epithets in an eminent degree. We are amused with the pedantry of the seaman, which appears in his whole lan­guage. Indeed it is the only pedantry that amuses. A scholar, a soldier, a lawyer, nay, even the elegant courtier, would disgust us, were he to make the thousandth part of the allusions to his profession that is well received from the jolly seaman ; and we do the seaman no more than justice. His profession *must* engross his whole mind, otherwise he can never learn it. He possesses a prodigious deal of knowledge ; but the honest tar cannot tell what he knows, or rather what he feels, for his science is really at his finger ends. We can say with confidence, that if a per­son of education, versed in mechanics, and acquainted with the structure of a ship, were to observe with atten­tion the movements which are made on board a first or second rate ship of war during a shifting storm, under the direction of an intelligent officer, he would be rapt in ad­miration.

What a pity it is that an art so important, so difficult, and so intimately connected with the invariable laws of mecha­nical nature, should be so held by its possessors, that it can­not improve, but must die with each individual. Having no advantages of previous education, they cannot arrange their thoughts ; they can hardly be said to think. They can far less express or communicate to others the intuitive knowledge which they possess; and their art, acquired by habit alone, is little different from an instinct. We are as little entitled to expect improvement here as in the archi­tecture of the bee or the beaver. The species (pardon the the allusion, ye generous hearts of oak!) cannot improve. Yet a ship is a machine. We know the forces which act on **it,** and we know the results of its construction ; all these

are as fixed as the laws of motion. What hinders this to be reduced to a set of practical maxims, as well founded and as logically deduced as the working of a steam-engine or a cotton mill. The stoker or the spinner acts only with his hands, and may “ whistle as he works, for want of thought;” but the mechanist, the engineer, thinks for him, improves his machine, and directs him to a better practice. May not the rough seaman look for the same assistance; and may not the ingenious speculist in his closet unravel the intri­cate thread of mechanism which connects all the manual ope­rations with the unchangeable laws of nature, and both fur­nish the seaman with a better machine, and direct him to a more dexterous use of it.

We cannot help thinking that much may be done ; nny, we may say that much has been done. We think highly of the progressive labours of Renaud, Pitot, Bouguer, Du Hamel, Groignard, Bernoulli, Euler, Romme, and others ; and are both surprised and sorry that Britain has contri­buted so little in these attempts. Gordon is the only one of our countrymen who has given a professedly scientific treatise on a small branch of the subject. The government of France has always been strongly impressed with the no­tion of great improvements being attainable by systematic study of this art ; and we are indebted to the endeavours of that ingenious nation for any thing of practical importance that has been obtained. M. Bouguer was professor of hy­drology at one of the marine academies of France, and was enjoined, as part of his duty, to compose dissertations both on the construction and the working of ships. His *Traite du Navire,* and his *Manoeuvre* *des Vaisseaux,* are undoubt­edly very valuable performances. So are those of Euler and Bernoulli, considered as mathematical dissertations, and they are wonderful works of genius, considered as the produc­tions of persons who hardly ever saw a ship, and were totally unacquainted with the profession of a seaman. In this re­spect Bouguer had great superiority, having always lived at a sea-port, and having made many very long voyages. His treatises, therefore, are infinitely better accommodated to the demands of the seaman, and more directly instructive; but still the author is more a mathematician than an artist, and his performance is intelligible only to mathematicians. It is true, the academical education of the young gentlemen of the French navy is such, that a great number of them may acquire the preparatory knowledge that is necessary; and we are well informed that, in this respect, the officers of the British navy are greatly inferior to them.

But this very circumstance has furnished to many persons an argument against the utility of those performances. It is said, that “ notwithstanding this superior mathematical edu­cation, and the possession of those boasted performances of M. Bouguer, the French are greatly inferior, in point of seamanship, to our countrymen, who have not a page in their language to instruct them, and who could not peruse it if they had.” Nay, so little do the French themselves seem sensible of the advantage of these publications, that no person among them has attempted to make a familiar abridgment of them, written in a way fitted to attract at­tention ; and they still remain neglected in their original abstruse and uninteresting form.

We wish that we could give a satisfactory answer to this observation. It is just, and it is important. These very ingenious and learned dissertations are by no means so use­ful as we should expect. They are large books, and appear

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