

AMERICAN ARTILLERISTS COMPANION

OR

ELEMENTS OF ARTILLERY

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## SECTION VI.

### *Service and Exercise of Ship Cannon.*

The art of working the guns with skill, prudence and precision is the ultimate and essential perfection of the science of naval gunnery, or *du canonnage*, which is not merely confined to the knowledge of the parts, appendages, and all that relates to cannon. In order to attain this end, gunners of all ranks should be frequently exercised in the preparatory practice of managing the artillery, in order to make them perfectly skilled therein, so as to direct its execution successfully in the time of battle, either on board the ships of war, or in the batteries erected on the sea coast for that purpose. The words of command ought to be simple, and their explanation rendered easy to their understanding. We will begin our instruction on these exercises by mentioning the number of men which are necessary to work the pieces, either for fighting, or the practice, exercise.<sup>1</sup>

The captain of a gun *{chef de piece}* is stationed behind the breech, having the priming wire and powder horn; (in the service of a twenty-four pounder and calibers above, the English have one first and second captain, the last fires the piece;) two of the most active and intelligent men are appointed to load the gun, they are called first and second spungers; the fifth is the shot and wad man, who is the *chargeur*, and receives the cartridge from the boy; the sixth and seventh are called first and second boarders, and stand on each side of the piece, one with a crowbar, the other with a handspike, both attentive and ready to execute the orders of the gunner; the eighth is the fire man, who attends the fire bucket; the ninth is the *bontefeu*, and stands to the left of the piece, which he fires at a signal; the tenth and eleventh are called first and second sail trimmers; and lastly, a boy. Two sail trimmers are added for the service of a thirty-six pounder. A twenty-four pounder is manned with eleven men and a boy; an eighteen pounder with nine men;

a twelve pounder with eight men; an eight pounder with seven men; a six pounder with five men; and a four pounder with four men. But, in practice, this calculation is not strictly adhered to, and is rather subordinate to the number of men who compose the crew; as one man may perform the duty of two or three men when working pieces of small calibers.

The men, when attached to a piece, ought not to be changed; each of them should know his gun, and repair to it when ordered to quarters. If it is for an exercise, every man being at his cannon, the captain of the gun disposes all his men, in equal number, on the right and left, informing each of them of the duty he is to perform; 2dly, he sees all the apparatus and implements placed in order by the side of his

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<sup>1</sup> \* The exercises of cannon and small arms are frequently ordered by the captain : the first is commanded by the first, the last by the junior lieutenant. On this occasion the master gunner, on the order of the captain, issues, once a week during the two first months, and afterwards once a week, six musket cartridges to every man, and five gun cartridges for every gun of the upper battery.

cannon, and that none are wanting; 3dly, either during an exercise, or fighting, he sees that all his men are doing their duty, and cautions those who may be remiss in the execution of their service.

These preparations being completed, the exercise begins with the following words of command. The exercise is directed either by the lieutenant, artillery officer, or gunner, and performed either by battery, or by four guns, or by a single gun.

## EXERCISE.<sup>2</sup>

*Gunners and Matrosses—To your posts!* Every man repairs to his post.<sup>3</sup>

*Attention to the "word of command!*

All remain silent and ready to execute the orders.

*Take out—tompions !*

Those who are to perform this duty, step briskly, take the tompion from the mouth of the gun, hold it up, and wait for the next word.

*March!*

Those who have taken out the tompion, march together towards the middle of the ship, place the tompion in the carriage, and resume their places.

*Cast loose—the guns!*<sup>4</sup>

The captains of the guns loose the apron, fasten their lashings on the apron itself, passing them through the apron loops; see that the gun tackles are loose, their fall stretched to the recoil of the guns, and their ends lashed with ropeyarn: the two tackles are then placed on both sides of the guns, one foot from the ends of the fore axle-trees, touching the board.

*Take off the aprons !*

The captains of the guns raise the aprons with both hands, and place them on the first reinforce before the touch-hole; they take out the small plug which was placed in

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<sup>2</sup> This exercise is combined with that practiced in the American and French navy, and will prove more useful to all classes of seamen in this country, than the exercise we have already given in Vol. I.

<sup>3</sup> This command is different from that of *all hands to quarters!* inasmuch as it relates only to the service of cannon.

<sup>4</sup> The guns are always loaded at sea.

them to stop the vents.

*Handle your powder horns !*

The captains of the guns, who have the priming wire and powder horn hanging from their left shoulder, seize the second with the left hand, take off the cork, holding it so that the smaller end be near the touch-hole.

*Handle your priming wires!*

They seize the priming wire with the right hand, holding it up.

*Prick the cartridge !*

They introduce the priming wire into the vent to the bottom, and pierce the cartridge three or four times. If the priming wire does not meet the cartridge, the wad and ball ought to be wormed out, the cartridge rammed down, even the gun should at once be discharged, to avoid accidents.

*Try your priming wires !*

They withdraw the priming wires from the vent, pass its point over their hand to ascertain whether it has pierced through the cartridge, which will appear by a black trace of powder on the hand.

*Prime!*

They bring the small end of the priming horn close to the vent, striking on it with the priming wire to cause the powder to pour in until the vent is filled; then lay a train of powder from the opening of the touch-hole along the cavity on the breech to the base ring, cover the priming, and return the priming wire to its place.

*Bruise the primings!*

They roll the priming horn with both hands on the powder until it is made fine, which makes the powder take fire more easily.

*Secure your powder horns !*

They return the same to their left side.

*Lay on your aprons !*

They execute this order holding the apron with both hands.

*Handle crows and handspikes !*

The two men on the right and left, who are destined to perform this duty, stoop briskly; take hold of the crowbar and handspike with both hands; raise together; turn to the right, and place the claws of their implements behind the hinder part of the carriage and wheel.

*Handle your match!*

The matrosses on the right and left, or *boutefeux* who have the charge of it, take hold of the lintstock with the right hand, extend their arms so that the lighted match be one foot and a half from the breech, face to the ship's side, keeping their eyes to the touch-hole.

*Blow your match!*

The *boutefeux*, keeping their arms extended, wheel to the right, bring the lighted end of the match near their mouth, blow upon it in the direction of the midship, resume their posts, and turn to the left.

*Point-your gun!*

The captains of the guns place their two thumbs on the base ring, at an equal distance from the axis of the gun, to point and fire with precision.

The different commands for pointing are

*One point before the beam!*

The matrosses, who hold the crowbars and handspikes, throw the breech of the gun a-strrn, and obey the order of the captains of the guns, who aim at firing a-head of the enemy's ship.

One point abaft the beam !

The same matrosses throw the breech of the gun ahead, and obey the order of the same, who aim at firing astern of the enemy's ship.

Level the gun!

The same matrosses bring the breech so that the captain of the gun may aim to strike into the hull within point-blank of the enemy's ship; or abreast towards her main mast.

Elevate the gun!

The same matrosses heave the breech that the captain of the gun may withdraw the bed and pointing coin, so as to be able to aim at her mainmast-top, or a little below it: in this they are attentive to execute the orders of the captains of the guns, who must be careful to observe their own and the enemy's ship's headway, and the most proper time to give the command for firing.

Depress the gun!

The same matrosses heave at the breech, and the bed and pointing coin are pushed on in the carriage, that the captain of the gun may point five or six feet below the water line of the enemy's ship. The same precautions are observed as in the preceding command.

Point the guns to the object!

The same matrosses heave the breech; the bed and pointing coin are withdrawn, so that the piece be most level, and the captain of the gun points to the extent of the apparent right line the shot is intended to describe.

*Lay down crows and handspikes!*

The same matrosses wheel together to the left and lay down their implements at their place, that is to say, both sides of the carriage, one foot from and without the wheels.

*Swifter the train tackle !*

All the matrosses, exclusive of those who hold the lint-stock, man the tackles, which they swifter in the rear of carriage, ready to prevent the guns returning to the port-holes.

*Take off the apron !*

The captains of the gun take the apron from the touch-hole with the right hand, and withdraw briskly on the .right of the piece.

*Fire !*

The boutefeux present the lighted end of the match close" to the train of mealed powder on the base ring, and as far as possible from the touch-hole: and as soon as the gun is fired return the lintstocks to their places, that is to say, stick them on the deck one foot from the board in the middle between two port-holes. When the guns run in, the train tackles are hauled in, and, if to the windward of the enemy, the wheels are choaked before with coins, to prevent the guns running out of the port-holes.

*To your posts!*

All resume their posts: the captains of the guns behind the breech, and lay the aprons on the first reinforce; the spungers by the port-holes to the right of the cannon^ face; the chargeurs to the left; and the others where they ought to be to handle the rammer, shot, wads, crows and handspikes.

*Serve the vent!*

The captains of the guns stop the vents with small plugs of ropeyarn, which they keep steady with their thumbs while and until the guns are loaded.

*Handle the crows and-handspikes!*

This is executed as mentioned in the same command.

*Trim your guns!*

The captains of the guns trim the guns by the middle of the port, the guns being often too much to the right or to the left.

*Lay down your crows and handspikes.*<sup>f</sup>

This command is executed as before.

*Handle your sponge!*

The matrosses who have the charge of the sponge, handle the same to the spungers, who hold them close and level with the bore of the gun.

*The sponge into the gun !*

The spungers press the sponge to the bottom of the bores.

*Sponge your gun!*

They withdraw the sponges one foot from the bottom and press them again; turning the sponges three times, so that every particle of fire may be extinguished, which might otherwise have remained with the bottom of the cartridge, or some lighted threads of the wad.

*Take off your sponge !*

He executes this order turning the sponge into the bore, and when out, holds it underneath the swelling of the gun in a line with the bore.

*Strike your sponge on the gun!*

He strikes the sponge on the chace in Order to shake off whatever may remain on the sponge.

*Secure your sponge!—Handle rammer !*

The matross who has them in charge receives the sponge from the spunger and puts it in its place; handles the rammer to the same, who holds it with both hands in a line with the gun so that the head bears on the trunnions.

*Handle your cartridge and wad!*

The boy who holds the cartridge box presents it to the spunger, who opens it, and takes the cartridge out, takes a wad.

*Load with cartridge !—Wad to cartridge !*

The spunger puts it into the gun, places the wad upon it, and the boy runs quickly for another.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> If the boy brings the cartridges faster than is required, the spunger, or shot and wadman takes it and

*Ram home!*

The spunger introduces the rammer into the bore, and rams home both cartridge and wad when the captain of the gun sings out *home !*

*Ram the cartridge three times !*

He rams three times strongly on the cartridge in order to press the powder to the bottom.

*Try your cartridge!*

The chief of the piece introduces the priming wire into the vent, ascertains that the cartridge be at the bottom; in this case he pricks it three or four times; then passes it over his hand, and knows, by the black trace of powder, whether it has pierced the cartridge or not.

*Take off your rammer !*

The spunger withdraws the rammer, and holds it in the same position as he did the sponge, the head bearing on the trunnion.

*Shot and wad!*

The shot and wad man provides himself with both.

*Load with shot and wad!*

He introduces both into the bore.

*Ram the shot!*

The spunger introduces the rammer into the bore, and rams the shot on the cartridge.

*Ram hone!*

He rams the shot with one single stroke.

*Take off the rammer!*

As in the same command.

*Secure the rammer !*

The spunger returns the rammer to the matross who lays it in his place, while the first marches to his post towards the midship.

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puts it into the .salt box, which is a box made to contain two or more cartridges, and hung up to the sides of the ship between the guns.

*Secure the Vents !*

The captain of guns put the aprons on the vent.

*Man the side tackles !*

The men hook the side tackles, which are in the rear of the piece, to the port rings on each side of the gun, and man the fall equally hand over hand.

*Run out the gun !*

By means of the tackles they force the muzzle of the gun out the port, while the captain of gun holds the cascable to give the gun the proper direction.

*Trim the gun.*

The first and second boarders, who have the charge of the crows and handspikes, trim the gun through the middle of the port-holes, and lay down their implements.

*Secure the guns!*

The men take out the beds and coils so as to let the gun down as much as possible; the breechings are hauled well taught and a seizing clapt on each side; the gun is then levelled, which brings the breeching taught; the tackles are also hauled taught and their falls expended by taking turns round the pomiglion; the train tackle is hooked on each side of the gun and hauled taught; the gunner lashes the apron without any further command.

*Coil up the tackles !*

With the running part of the tackles turns are taken round the trunnions, then coiled with ropeyarn, or small lashings,

*Secure the tompions!*

The gunner who has taken out the tompion takes it again from the carriage, fixes it to the gun, and resumes his post.

*Return the implements.*

They are all taken back to the plane from whence they were taken. VOL. **II**.