

Sails and the Sail-Maker



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From Falconer's Dictionary of the Marine - 1815 Edition:

A

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A VOCABULARY

OF

FRENCH SEA-PHRASES AND TERMS OF ART,

COLLECTED FROM THE BEST AUTHORITIES.

**ORIGINALLY COMPILED BY WILLIAM FALCONER,
AUTHOR OF THE SHIPWRECK, &c.**

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SAIL-CLOTH, (*toile à voile*, Fr.) a cloth of strong texture, made of hemp, for the purpose of supplying ships with sails. Although considerable quantities of this valuable article are annually manufactured in Britain, yet as they are not adequate to the demands of the navy, but being subject to mildew, are consequently less durable than the sail-cloth imported from North America; we shall state the following expedient, adopted in that country, by which the cloth may be considerably improved:- it simply consists in moistening the warp in the loom with a decoction, or gelatinous substance, prepared from the refuse of neat's-feet (after the oil is extracted), which is boiled in water till it is converted into a kind of glue: the weavers of this article in Britain employ a paste made of flour and water, which renders the cloth brittle; whereas, by using the animal-preparation above-mentioned, the sail-cloth will not only be rendered more durable, but the expense may be lessened: and an article that is at present thrown away, may thus be usefully employed.

British sail-cloth may be exported duty-free, and all new ships are to have a suit of sails of British cloth.

Every maker of British sail-cloth shall stamp his name and place of abode, in words at length, on every piece, on pain of forfeiting 10l.

SAIL-HOOK, in sail-making, a small iron hook, with an eye at one end, to which a cord is spliced; it is used to confine the work, while sewing, by hooking on the canvass, the cord being fastened to some convenient place.



Sail-maker's tool kit - 18th Century

SAIL-LOFT, (*voilerie*, Fr.) in dock-yards, a large room or apartment wherein the sails are cut out, made, repaired, and kept, in readiness for his Majesty's ships and vessels.

SAIL-MAKER, (*Voilier*, Fr.) a person appointed by warrant from the Commissioners of the navy, to repair the sails that may at any time be damaged in action or otherwise.

He has a mate to assist him in his several duties.

He is to examine the sails when they are received on board; and, if they are defective in quality, or deficient in number, to report the same to the boatswain immediately.

He is to see that all the sails are correctly tallied, and so disposed of in the sail-rooms, as to enable him to find directly any that may be wanted.

He is also to inspect frequently the condition of the sails in the sail-rooms, to see that they are not injured by leaks or vermine; and to report to the boatswain, whenever it shall be necessary, to have them taken upon deck to be dried: he is to repair them whenever they require it, and use his best endeavours to keep them always fit for service.

The sail-maker, before he shall be allowed to receive his wages, is required to produce a certificate, signed by the captain, of his sobriety, obedience, and attention to his duty.

SAIL-ROOMS, (*soutes aux voiles*, Fr.) are places on the orlop-deck, inclosed for the reception of sails; they are distinguished according to their relative situation: as, the fore sail-room, the after sail-room, &c.

PALM, (*paumelle de voilier*, Fr.) in sail-making, &c. an instrument used instead of a thimble in sewing of canvas, sails, &c. It is composed of a flat round piece of iron, an inch in diameter, whose surface is full of cavities, to receive the head of the needle, and is fixed upon a piece of canvas or leather, which encircles the hand, keeping the iron in the palm of the hand, whence it has its name.



Sail-maker's palm

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