

"Rumors of a Great Intellect"

As you know, this publication periodically seeks to illuminate the feats of some of the "best and brightest" aboard ship. To that end, this Thursday last, Jack Tar, a scruffy but indispensable ex-pat dockhand in Shanghai aboard for the day to load potatoes, and not known for anything resembling acumen or erudition (sorry, Jack!), cast his eyes up and remarked, "Oy! She's a steamer, right? What gives with the sails?" Good powers of observation, sir. One request, and voila! We have an answer, straight from your C.O. on the finest stationery:

Mr. Tar:

Steam power is almost synonymous with the Industrial Revolution, and by the mid-19th century many naval ships had discarded sails for steam power. Yet by the time the Olympia was built, most major naval vessels were still outfitted with auxiliary sails, as a backup. The fact that the Olympia boasts a major breakthrough in steam technology in its vertical reciprocating steam engine as well as vestigial rigging is indicative of a persistent mistrust among seamen and war planners in the reliability of machinery. And that's the Word.

Yours truly,

"The Bureau of Answers"

Here's a question for you, Jack:

"Why don't we ever have fresh potatoes?"

