



THE FASHIONABLE LENT

BY KATHERINE HOFFMAN.

SOME OF THE CURIOUS RITES AND CUSTOMS WHICH A STUDENT OF SOCIETY FOUND PREVAILING DURING THE FORTY PENITENTIAL DAYS—WHAT HE LEARNED OF SEWING CLASSES, MORNING LECTURES, AND OTHER SACRIFICES À LA MODE.

ONCE there was a student of the customs of the highly civilized and deeply cultured classes of society. He spent much time in investigating the Calling Custom, the Dining Out Custom, the Wedding Present Custom, and various other peculiarities of the wisest and greatest and best persons in the world—as much time as some students have spent in studying the ways of the Kalmuck Tartars or the Ashantees. He maintained, incomprehensibly enough, that his research revealed stranger usages and weirder rites than that of his brother students.

Eventually he reached the Keeping Lent Custom, which he afterwards called the most remarkable of all the habits of the interesting race into whose mysteries he delved. The normal mind may, or may not, find anything very remarkable in the instances he gives to prove his assertion.

There is the Hopkinson case, for example. Every year, in the late winter or the early spring, the friends of the Hopkinsons open wide their ears for the first faint rumor of trouble in that distinguished household. Their friendly listening is never vain. Colonel Hopkinson takes to drink, and, after a few hilarious days where all may see him, disappears to some more secluded spot where his hilarity may have even less check than it has in town. Tod Hopkinson adds to the gaiety of city life by having his engagement announced to some ornament of the dramatic profession whose histrionic fame is dimmed by her personal renown; or by losing more money in bets than he can pay. The white patience of Mrs. Hopkinson's face is accentuated, and every one says of Constantia: "How nobly she bears it! Poor girl, no wonder she's so religious."

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It is popularly supposed that Constantia's devotional exercises, which are conspicuous in these times of family adversity, are the result of the behavior of her father and brother—plus, of course, her own naturally pious spirit. As a matter of fact, the reprehensible conduct of these gentlemen is the result of Constantia's devotional exercises. It will easily be recalled by the followers of the family's fortunes that its catastrophes always occur in Lent.

The Hopkinsons are nervous. They are impatient. Their tempers sometimes wear thin; but they are, on the whole, affectionate and amiable. The colonel likes easy going comfort, and Tod likes easy going jollity. For forty five weeks in the year this home does not lack these attributes. Then, one morning in the forty sixth, they gather at the family breakfast



COLONEL HOPKINSON TAKES TO DRINK.



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table, according to a barbarous custom which the colonel enforces. Constantia is not present.

"Where's Con?" inquires her brother with solicitude. "Got a headache?"

The colonel looks over his glasses

anxiously for a reply. He is fond of Constantia and worries over her headaches.

"No," replies Mrs. Hopkinson. "She's gone to early celebration." Then before the look on her husband's face has time to crystallize into annoyance, she adds: "It's Ash Wednesday, you know."

At that information the colonel's frown always sends his glasses tumbling to his plate, while Tod dexterously changes an irreverent exclamation into a low whistle.

They know what Constantia's Lent means.

It means that she will come in by and by with the pale face and the set lips which are the outward and visible marks of a mind set upon higher things and also of a hunger headache. It means that as she sends her coffee cup back with the explanation, "You know I never take cream in Lent, mamma," she will assume a manner not unbefitting St. Lawrence on the gridiron. It means that she will accept her mother's apology for forgetfulness with grim tolerance, that she will not laugh at the colonel's facetiousness, and that she will rebuff Tod's jocosities in tones as crisply cold as breaking icicles.

It means that she will not be making tea in a cosy fashion when the colonel wanders in, in the afternoon, and that there will be no girls for him to compliment. It is well understood in Constantia's circle that during Lent she is at home to no one of greater social pretensions than a washerwoman's daughter. It means that she will sneer at a chafing dish

invitation from some of Tod's quasi Bohemian acquaintances. It means that she will meet her mother's little garrulous gossiping with monosyllabic rudeness, and that she will take great credit to herself for self restraint in not delivering a lecture upon the sin of idle conversation. In her Lenten mood Constantia is continually pluming herself upon her virtue in not adopting the graceful mannerisms of a prize fighter in her home, although in less spiritual states she has no desire to do so.

Lent means that she will early rise herself and kneel and fast herself into a condition of nervous irritability which she will interpret as the impatience of an uplifted soul with the sordid things of earth. And in a condition of nervous irritability, Constantia Hopkinson, albeit nearly ready for her halo, bears a strong family resemblance to any sulky, nagging woman who has never heard of a retreat except in connection with the Boers, and whose only idea of a celebration is connected with brass bands and barouches.

When her Lenten observances and her Lenten disposition have converted her home into a temple of gloom, and when her father and brother have made the customary masculine protest against sadness, Constantia's friends say: "What a blessing Constantia's church is to her!"

All of this the student of social usages in our best circles claims to find remarkable; but the average mind may see nothing odd in it, or in the further fact that Constantia, for her part, feels not only that her church is a blessing to her but that she is a good deal of an ornament to the church. The advantages, from her point of view, are distinctly mutual. She does not say so, of course, or perhaps definitely think so, but she cannot fail to see that there is a vast difference between her

Lenten attitude and that of the Wesley-Joneses around the corner, whose case is also noted in the student's memoranda. This is all the more virtuous on her part as Miss Hopkinson is in no wise personally related to the church, while the Wesley-Joneses are second cousins to the most dined rector in the diocese.

No sooner does Ash Wednesday ring its curfew command of festal lights out and festal fires covered, than the Wesley-Joneses flit south—or east, or anywhere where their churchly connection will not be a hindrance to them. Mrs. Wesley-Jones, who has moments of honesty which her daughters have striven in vain to eradicate, has been known to grumble over the situation.

"It is not," she says on these occasions, "as if we were really wealthy. I should not mind it at all if we were. But as it is, I assure you that I look forward to Lent with as great alarm as I do to the summer; even with more, for there are saving invitations in summer. It costs, I assure you it costs heavily, to transport three girls to the south of France or Florida or somewhere for Lent. But they are so lively, my girls, that they could never stand six weeks of utter dullness in New York."

Mrs. Wesley-Jones is reminded of the barbarians outside the fold, and of the backsliders within it, who do not permit the penitential season to restrict their amusements. But she shakes her head vigorously at the suggestion.

"No," she says with decision; "as long as we are related to Cousin Charles"—Cousin Charles is the very reverend diner out—"we will not scandalize him in his own parish. He's a very good sort, and his place at Mount Desert is charming in the summer. It's better to go away for six weeks, since my girls are really not up



SOME ORNAMENT OF THE DRAMATIC PROFESSION WHOSE HISTRIONIC FAME IS DIMMED BY HER PERSONAL RENOWN.

to this early service, sewing for the poor, Lenten lecture style of Lent. It would be cheaper, of course, to change to a less exacting faith, but converts have very little standing unless they go over to Rome, and set up a private oratory in the house and all that. And Rome would be more exacting, not less so. Free thinking is, of course, out of the question for a woman, so there's nothing for it but Florida this winter, I suppose."

The earnest student of things spiritual and things ecclesiastic, to whom the methods of Constantia Hopkinson and of the Wesley-Joneses had been revealed, was somewhat disillusioned. He had almost decided that the practice was a farce when he met a member of a Lenten sewing class and his fainting faith was revived.

"Of course you were discouraged," cried the member of the Lenten sewing class; "and indeed I do not blame you. You thought we were all make believes, didn't you—either running away from what we pretended to see as duty, or cultivating an acidulous asceticism for forty miserable days? But some of us are different. We do not flaunt our sacrifices, nor do we run away from our duties. We strive to use our Lent so that there may be Easter gladness for some who but for us might not have had it."

This, although dimly reminiscent of the devout spirit who thanked God that he was not as other men, was encouraging to the earnest student. He inquired eagerly into the practices of this new exponent of Lenten methods.

"Have you never heard of Miss Oliver's Lenten sewing class?" she asked, eyeing him with suspicion. Not to have heard of that organization would argue, to her mind, that he had spent the last half decade in prison beyond the enlightening influence of the public prints, in whose columns Miss Oliver's Lenten sewing class receives annual laudation.

"Oh, yes," said the student hopefully. "That's the one the Entwisle girls belong to."

"No, it is not," replied the member of Miss Oliver's. "The Entwisle girls—I think I have heard of them. They probably belong to—er—oh, I forget the name of the woman who tried to get up a class in imitation of Miss Oliver. She was some one of whom we had never heard

before. Strange, is it not, how persistently certain women will try to climb into the heaven of society by the ladder of good works? It would be laughable if it weren't pitiful; and it isn't really pitiful, for it's insolent. Anyhow, Miss Oliver's Lenten sewing class is not the one to which you had reference."

"Miss Oliver's is very—er—exclusive, then?" inquired the student of ecclesiastical customs as practised in good society.

"Oh, extremely! To be a member of it is to have a passport into any society—and one cannot be a member without having a passport to any society. We are considering now whether or not to invite a girl whose sister married a younger son of an English earl when it is well known that she might have married a marquis. Miss Oliver is determined not to have the tone of the class lowered by any laxity."

"Ah!" murmured the student appreciatively. "That is a wise resolution. And what a deep satisfaction it must be to the poor to know that their garments are sewed by such aristocratic fingers!"

The aristocratic jaw of the member of Miss Oliver's sewing class dropped in amazement.

"You didn't think we sewed?" she exclaimed.

"That was my stupid impression," replied the student apologetically. "An error due to the name, I suppose. May I ask what you *do* do—dance, perhaps?"

"Certainly not," she answered with asperity. "We meet at Miss Oliver's once a week at eleven o'clock, to give out rolls of cotton and flannel and linen to the seamstresses, who carry them to their homes, make them up as we direct, and the next week bring them back to us all made. Thus, you see, our Lenten work benefits two sets—the sewing women and the poor. We are very different, you see, from the mere ritualists and those renegades you mentioned."

In the sewing class which the member of Miss Oliver's august body of workers for the poor disdained, the student found further bewilderment.

"What do you do?" he asked one of the Entwisle girls whom his former interlocutor had recalled with painful effort.

"We are arranging," she replied with enthusiasm, "for a *mi-Carême* dance—a masquerade."



THE WESLEY-JONESES FLIT SOUTH—OR EAST, OR ANYWHERE WHERE THEIR CHURCHLY CONNECTION WILL NOT BE A HINDRANCE TO THEM.

"But don't you sew, either?" persisted the puzzled investigator.

"Sew! I should say we did. The club lunched at my house on Tuesday, and if you had seen the library floor simply covered with needles and thread and snippets and paper patterns, you'd think we sewed! And if you had seen every blessed one of those eighteen women attacking French chops and sweetbread croquettes at luncheon, you'd know that they had worked hard that morning. Sew! Well, rather."

"Then your club does not believe in fasting during Lent?"

"Fasting?" The Entwisle girl hastily swallowed a grimace. Then she allowed an expression of sweet womanliness to overspread her features.

"No," she said softly, "we don't. We believe in good works rather than in idle forms; and we women, you know, are not great, strong beings like you men. We must have strength for our work. We must have nourishment even in Lent—especially in Lent, I may say, when the

demands upon us are severest. Yes, our club meets for two hours' work each Tuesday, and then we lunch. What do we make? Oh, all sorts of things—shirts and skirts and aprons and mufflers. They go to the Home for the Aged. It doesn't matter whether things are fashionable for them or not, you know. And, oh," sighed the Entwisle girl, "you ought to see my *mi-Carême* gown! I'm going as—guess what?"

The student did his duty promptly, hazarding Helen of Troy, Cleopatra, and Mary Stuart. The Entwisle girl protested that she wasn't quite so vain—and said that her modest rôle was the Queen of Sheba.

"We are terribly busy," she said. "I've got to go to the dressmaker's now—my gown's gorgeous. All this talk about women taking Lent off to rest in seems idiotic to me. I never was busier!"

About this time it was recalled to the student's mind that he had received eleven invitations to take tickets for Lenten courses of lectures. He reviewed the subjects; there was one on "The Belles and Beaux of Colonial America"; there was one on "Parkman's History of the Jesuits in America"; there was one on "Christianity and the Zend Avesta"; and the other eight were on equally diverse subjects. In certain respects they all agreed, however. They were given by ladies of sonorous names, with whose apparently indisputable claims to scholarship the student had been, up to that time, mysteriously ignorant. All of them, too, were given under the auspices of a list of women whose husbands had good ratings in Bradstreet's; all were so expensive that one could have purchased an admirable library on any one of the subjects for the price of the lectures, and all were given in the blue or yellow or Syrian or Elizabethan rooms of exceedingly good hotels.

The student felt that he must at least sample the Lenten lecture. So he selected a Miss Guinevere Ashburton Worthington—the name won him—and found that he was booked for a lecture on "Goethe's Loves," in the Louis Seize parlor of the Hotel Alhambra. "A very Lenten combination," said the student as he set forth.

The little chairs of golden brocade were crowded with women in furs and velvets, women in tailored broadcloths, women with plumes drooping over their brilliant

hair and shading their eyes. Here and there sat a grim and grizzled dowager; and scattered sparsely through the assembly were a few men, either superannuated or blushingly adolescent. On the little gilt table at the front of the room stood a bulging glass vase spilling purple violets—the only spot of dark color in the golden furnishing of the apartment. Cherubs smiled and Cupids capered on the ceiling.

"Isn't it sweet of her?" demanded one woman sibilantly. "She won't have anything but violets on the stand because it's Lent."

"It's dear of her," assented another vigorously. "Ah, there she comes!"

She glided in—tall, fair, and pretty. Her black cloth gown made her figure look as if it were sculptured against the pale primrose panels of the wall. The violets on her bosom called violet lights into her eyes.

"She won't wear colors during Lent," whispered some one, and a little chorus of low toned "ah's" praised her for her saintly forbearance.

"Is she an authority on German literature?" the student asked one of the old gentlemen.

"She's a divine creature, sir," replied the old gentleman heatedly.

"Is she an authority on German literature?" the student asked one of the dowagers.

"She's General Worthington's orphan daughter," replied the dowager conclusively.

"Is she an authority on German literature?" the student asked one of the pretty girls.

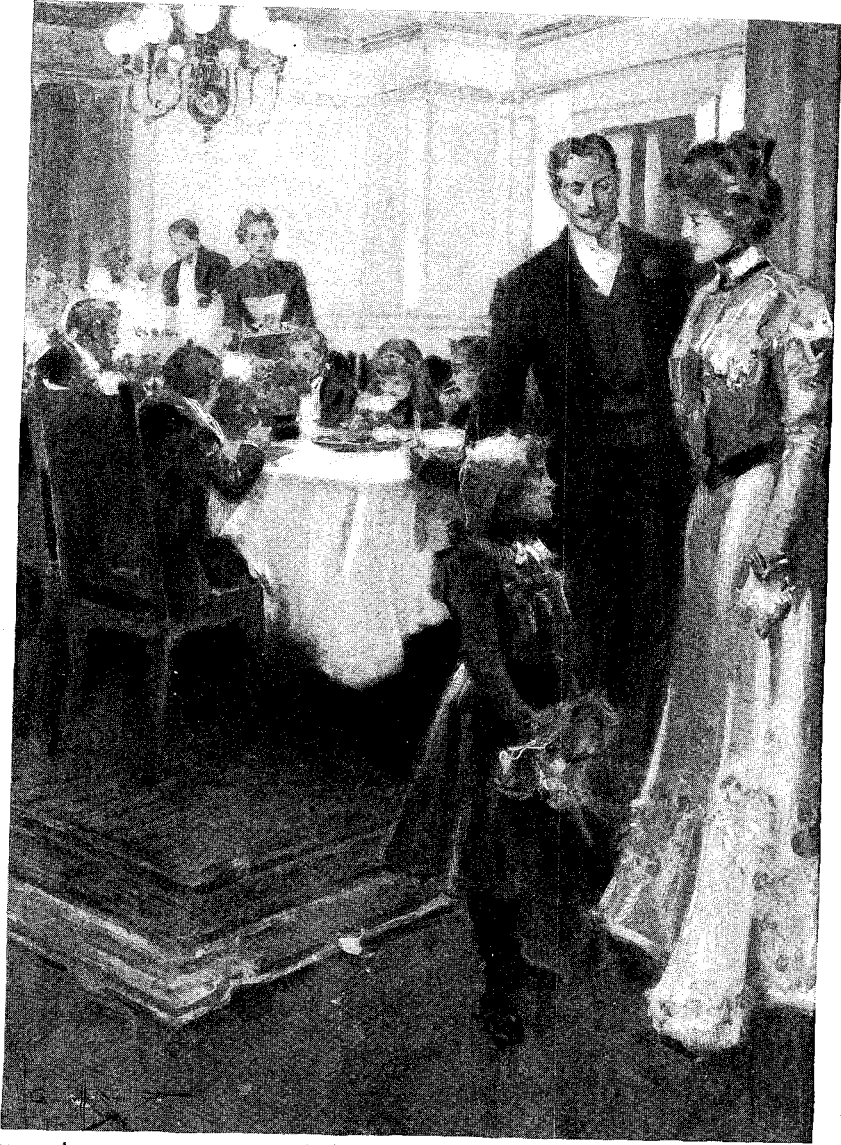
"I should say so!" replied the young woman. "You should have heard her last year on 'Egyptian Architectural Symbolism,' and the year before on 'Dante's Divine Comedy.' She's wonderful."

The student admitted that Miss Guinevere Ashburton Worthington's range of subjects was truly remarkable. She herself paused for a few minutes with her wide eyes fixed upon the audience. The buzz died down. One woman, unable to check her sentence in time, was heard to float upon the stillness the proposition that "giving up potatoes and sugar alone would do wonders."

When that information had passed into silence, Miss Worthington began to read in a beautiful voice of gold and honey, and



THE LENTEN LECTURER—"SHE BEGAN TO READ IN A BEAUTIFUL VOICE OF GOLD AND HONEY."



"REALLY, YOU'D BE SURPRISED TO FIND OUT HOW INTERESTING THE DEAR LITTLE THINGS ARE—HOW LIKE OURSELVES, YOU KNOW, AND OUR OWN CHILDREN."

the student saw that she was an authority on German literature—for who would deny the authority of the encyclopedias?

"Why do you come?" he asked one of the adolescents.

"It is a privilege to help such a gifted creature in her career," replied the youth.

"Why do you come?" he asked a plump matron.

"I always try to improve my mind in Lent," she answered him.

Whereupon the student of the Lent Keeping Custom made various memoranda

and went forth much enlightened in regard to the subject. In the course of time his investigations led him to the study of the woman whose strong point was sacrifice.

"I always keep Lent very strictly," she told him. "I give up any number of things."

"Why?" he asked her.

"I think it right," she replied succinctly.

"I give up butter, but that scarcely counts, for I ought not to eat it, any way, it's so fattening. And I give up sugar—it's fattening, too. And I go to service twice

every day, and I have a lot of slum children up twice to tea. Did you speak of the woman next door? I don't know her. Poor thing, one can't know her; her husband got himself mixed up in some fraud, and no one knows where he is—hiding, I believe, for fear his firm would bring some sort of a suit against him if he came back. But I ought not to be talking of that, for I always give up gossiping in Lent. Where was I? Oh, yes! Where I invited the slum children to tea. Really, you'd be surprised to find out how interesting the dear little things are—how like ourselves, you know, and our own children. What's that? Wouldn't I find the woman next door interesting? Really, my dear Mr. Student, your views are very curious. Didn't I tell you that her husband was a defaulter or something?"

The woman who sacrifices paused to consider, while the student made a note to the effect that in Lent one may, with propriety and distinction, entertain the slums, but that the middle classes and the unfortunate of the upper classes are, as always, under the ban.

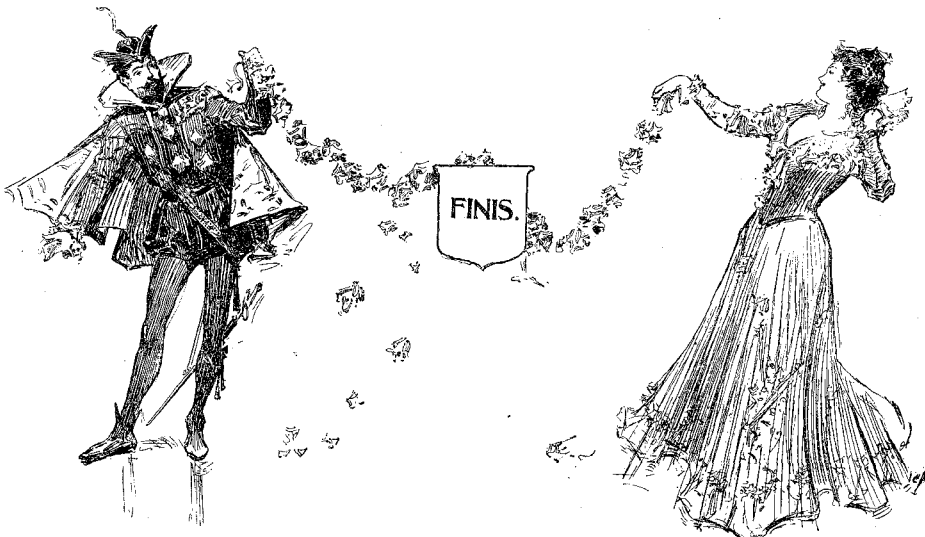
"Then I give up the theater," went on the sacrificial lady. "That is, I give up all the plays that I like. I go to see Ibsen or Shakspeare or any one like that—any one that it is a sort of penance to see, you know, in these days when there are so many good things—Henry Arthur Jones, and Clyde Fitch, and all those. And I don't wear colors at all; gray and black and violet are all that I permit

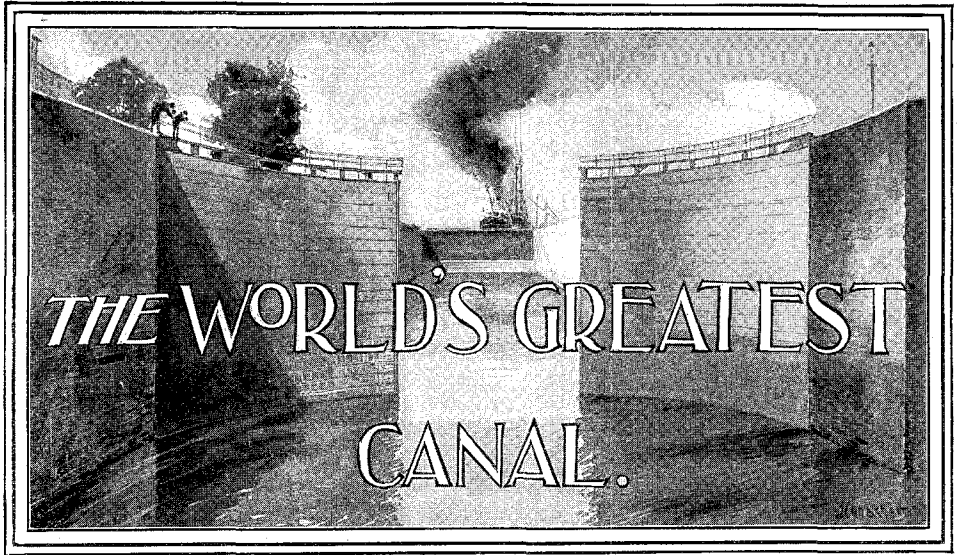
myself. Oh, yes, indeed! I keep Lent very strictly."

At first, when he had collected his notes on the Lent Keeping Custom, the student laughed, and then he frowned and then he sighed. He thought of them all—the hysterical ritualist, the cheap and light hearted seeker after mirth, the snobbish sewing class, and the club that called its revels by a high sounding name; the ignorant woman who found no dishonesty in selling her ignorance dearly, and the foolish women who found no ignominy in being cheated; the cold hearted formalist—all of them passed before his vision, and in contempt for them he nearly lost that philosophic calm in which alone can research be successfully pursued.

This touch of personal bitterness—as though it were an important matter to him that Miss Guinevere Ashburton Worthington was a fraud, and Miss Constantia Hopkinson a short sighted and nervous young woman—renders his conclusions less valuable than they would have been had he been calmer. And his summary on Lenten observances may be partly disregarded. It was as follows:

"The same vanity, ignorance, and unamiability that we have seen to characterize so many of the social customs of these people, prevail in their Lenten ceremonies. The due observance of the season seems at best a caprice of fashion, as some women wear the symbol of infinite sacrifice for a gaud and flash a jeweled cross among their laces."





BY WALDON FAWCETT.

THE "SOO," THE WATER GATEWAY OF THE NORTHWEST, AND ITS HUGE VOLUME OF COMMERCE, FAR EXCEEDING THE TONNAGE THAT TRAVERSES THE SUEZ CANAL OR THAT ENTERS THE PORT OF NEW YORK.

IN the old days of the fur trade, the "Soo," which is the colloquial name for Sault Ste. Marie, or Saint Mary's Falls, was the gateway through which pelts from the North and Northwest found their way to marts in the East. Now the wriggling ribbon of a river, narrowing at one point into the most wonderful ship canal in the world, is the portal through which comes the ammunition for the charging of the greater portion of the blast furnaces of America.

The ship canal is, after all, a surprise, not less in inherent characteristics than in the accomplishments which it has made possible. Almost a thousand miles from the nearest tidewater, there passes through this waterway, during the eight months which make up the navigation year, a tonnage far in excess of that which traverses the Suez Canal or enters the port of New York or London during the full twelvemonth.

It has ever been difficult, seemingly, for people remote from the chain of great lakes to appreciate the magnitude of the commerce of the waterways on our northern border. They have been told that upon these inland seas, holding more than a third of the fresh water on the globe, a fleet of more than four thousand

steam and sail vessels is regularly in service. Governmental reports have shown that in the aggregate of tonnage the lake craft exceed the whole fleet on our Atlantic, Pacific, and Gulf coasts. Finally, in the value of their yearly output the steel shipbuilders of the great lakes have frequently surpassed their brethren on the coasts. For all that, a realization of the magnitude of the inland water transportation interests of the United States has been of slow growth, and even more tardy has been the comprehension of the magnitude and value of the huge canal locks which enable vessels carrying cargoes of eight thousand tons to drop eighteen feet in half an hour.

In the distribution of the world's bread-stuffs, the Sault Canal has also been a revolutionary factor. For the wheat growers and flour producers of our Western States the provision of the present facilities at the Sault may be said to have offset, in great measure, the injury which their interests sustained by the construction of the Suez Canal. The ditch that joins the Red Sea and the Mediterranean brought the wheat fields of India and Australia closer to European consumers, but the American canal so cheapened transportation that the granaries of the United