

to make laws for those who walk his waters. They themselves must agree upon regulations for all seamen to observe. The President of the United States has invited the nations to unite in the Conference, and their representatives will meet at Washington in October.

What they will decide upon no one can say. But whatever the fog-signal may be, it should be so very plain and simple that whoever hears it, however unlettered he may be, can instantly and unmistakably comprehend its meaning. Various plans, more or less complicated, have been proposed, but as yet none free from objection. Some favor long and short sounds on the principle of the telegraphic alphabet—excellent in quietude and for educated ears, but indistinct amid the tumult of an ocean storm, even if understood. At the best, sounds seldom penetrate far to the windward in the teeth of a tempest. Some advocate electric signals, and Edison's magic may, perhaps, yet solve the problem. Inventive genius is seldom behind in the race with necessity, and in this case will doubtless come out ahead.

F. W. H.

SINCE the number of steamers trading between the continents of Europe and America has increased, there has also been an increase in the number of collisions. In some cases these have resulted in the total destruction of one of the ships, with a lamentable loss of life. Each time a collision occurs, the question immediately arises, Can nothing be done to avert these terrible disasters? This has caused many a thoughtful man to make it a subject for study; and the result has been that several codes of compass fog-signals have been brought out and laid before the public.

Several years ago, Captain Griffin, of the American Pacific Mail Steamship Company, published an admirable code; but, after being before the shipping interest for a time, it was, like many other useful inventions, laid aside and forgotten. Ten years ago another code of signals for use in fog was brought out by Captain Barker, of this country, which was even better than that arranged by Captain Griffin. I first saw it exhibited in Liverpool, and gave it my particular attention and study. Being then in command of the White Star steamer "Germanic," I was instructed by the company to inspect it and make my report ac-

cordingly. I did so thoroughly, and, being convinced of its utility, I strongly favored its adoption. The same code was laid before the British Admiralty and the Board of Trade. Although it was approved by these bodies, nothing was done towards introducing it into the mercantile marine, and again the subject was allowed to drop. Several codes have since been introduced by others, but they were too complicated, and more liable to cause mishaps than to prevent them.

Every year the number of collisions is increasing; and the travelling public are now asking if something cannot be done that will lessen, if not entirely do away with, these terrible disasters that are becoming too frequent. The steamship companies all acknowledge the necessity of such a code, and, I am convinced, would willingly adopt it, if the Government would take the matter in hand, and make its use compulsory on board all steamers.

At last, after years have been wasted in fruitless agitation, the American Government has taken hold of the matter, and has issued an invitation to all maritime nations to send representatives to a Congress to be held at Washington for the purpose of selecting and adopting a code that will prevent collisions at sea.

In selecting a code for general use, the fact should be borne in mind that the fewer the signals, and the more simple they are, the more effective and useful they will be, and the less liable to cause mistakes. In my opinion, eight signals are all that are necessary; viz., a signal for every fourth point of the compass—N., N.E., E., S.E., S., S.W., W., and N.W. In addition to these eight signals, I would advise a separate signal for ships bound eastward and westward, to be used when a fog is first encountered. In this way two ships sailing in opposite directions could tell by the first sound of the whistle which way each was bound. Then the compass sound-signal could be used to denote in which direction each ship's head was pointed.

By using such a code, if the officers in charge acted promptly, it would be next to impossible for two steamers to come into collision.

I would suggest that the steam-whistles used should be of a uniform size and tone, and not, as they are at present on many small ships, so inferior that they can scarcely be heard a distance of half a mile. When in command of the "*Germanic*," I had a steam-whistle made in New York of the latest pattern—viz., one

twelve-inch cylinder, with one eight-inch on each side; these gave three distinct tones, which, when blended into one, produced a sound that could be heard, in ordinary weather, eight miles away.

I would advocate that large steamers of high speed should have whistles of large dimensions and great power, and that all should be subjected to a Government test before leaving port on either side; for I believe that a good whistle on board a steamer is as essential as a good chronometer.

That such a code is necessary is proved by the number of collisions that have occurred during the last few years, and these will be more frequent as the number of steamers increases. Had a code been adopted ten years ago, very few, if any, of the collisions that have happened in that time would have been heard of.

Another subject of importance is that the officers of every steamer should undergo a thorough examination as to their acquaintance with the code.

For the benefit of seamen and the public at large, I hope that the Congress that is to meet at Washington will be largely composed of nautical men, who are far better able to judge of what is necessary than landsmen.

CHAS. WM. KENNEDY,

Late Commander White Star steamer "Germanic."

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IN my opinion, a code of fog-signals, to be efficient, must be of the simplest kind. I have seen many propositions, some of which would require a large number of blasts to show the course a steamer is steering by compass; but all that I have yet seen have been too complicated to be of use in a sudden emergency. Two steamers approaching each other at the rate of nearly forty miles an hour (combined speed) would not allow their commanders sufficient time to act, if they had to make use of such compass signals, and nine times out of ten, in cases of sudden danger, the signals would probably be misunderstood, and thus lead to disaster. I would, therefore, strongly recommend the adoption of the same signal which has been used for many years by the New York ferry-boats, namely:

One short blast—"My helm is to port."

Two short blasts—"My helm is to starboard."