

THE CAPTAIN'S WORK ON AN ATLANTIC LINER.

DURING the many voyages that I have made across the Atlantic, between Liverpool and New York, I have met a number of people who appear to have a very vague idea of the duties and responsibilities that rest upon the Captain of a transatlantic steamer of the present day. When in conversation with them, I have often heard the remark made that the position of Captain was a very easy and enjoyable one.

A lady, the wife of a prominent New York merchant, once said to me that she thought it a grand thing to be the commander of a large passenger steamer. "Why, Captain," she continued, "you seem to have nothing to do but to enjoy yourself; you have officers to look after the ship; you have servants to attend to your every want; you come in contact with the best of society, and you live like a prince. 'You are monarch of all you survey,' and what better or grander position could you desire?"

I attempted to enlighten her a little regarding the responsibility and care resting upon me; but, as she could only see one side of the picture, I gave up the task as hopeless. Upon our arrival in New York, she left the ship in the full conviction that my position was one ardently to be desired. Even among old travelers this same idea seems to prevail, as I have frequently been told by them, after the pilot had been taken on board, that my care and responsibility here now ended.

I have often felt inclined to enlighten the traveling public on this subject, but my time has been too fully occupied to do so. Now that the opportunity offers, I avail myself of it.

From the moment that the captain puts his foot on board his ship at Liverpool, until he returns and reports her safe arrival at the office of the company to which she belongs, he, and he alone, is held responsible for anything and everything that may

occur during the round voyage. No matter how slight an accident may happen, he must give written details regarding it.

I will briefly describe one of my winter voyages on board the White Star steamer "Germanic," and the public can then decide if the life of a commander is as princely and luxurious as many seem to imagine.

The hour of sailing was at four P. M. At 1:30 I took the tender and went out to my ship, anchored in the river, where I had left her, after taking her out of dock. It was a part of my duty to be there and receive the Board of Trade officials, who go on board every steamer, and see that all is right before she is allowed to proceed on her voyage. Shortly after four o'clock the passengers came out with the tender, and, after the mails and baggage were taken on, we were ready to start. The weather looked threatening, and it bid fair to be, in sailor language, a "dirty" night.

We were hardly out of the river, when a dense fog settled down on us. I decided not to anchor, but kept on at a reduced speed, with the lead going, and extra lookouts placed on the fore-castle. In this way we reached the bar, and I then remained solely in charge, as the pilot had finished his work, and left the bridge. As all vessels bound to Liverpool from the different ports of Ireland and Wales make for the bar lightship, we were continually meeting them; and it was necessary to exercise the greatest care to avoid collisions. I passed so closely to one, that I could distinctly hear the voices of the men on deck, but could see nothing. The sounds died away as they proceeded on their course up channel.

The fog increased in density, and I was compelled to go dead slow. In the event of a collision becoming inevitable I could bring my ship to a stand-still by reversing the engines. After passing Holyhead in safety, I shaped my course for Tuskar, on the Irish coast. At this point the fog cleared, and leaving the officer of the watch in charge with orders to call me if it came on again, I went to my chart-room and lay down on my sofa.

I had rested about two hours when I heard the electric bell above my head. I had not removed any of my clothing, and in a moment was on the bridge. It had come on as thick as before, and nothing could be seen. The compass and the lead were my only guides to our position, and the nature of the bottom and

depth of water told me whether I was on the Welsh or Irish coast.

Sailing vessels and steamers were constantly passing, but we did not see them, and could only hear the sound of their horns and steam whistles, which indicated to me their position, but gave me no information as to the course they were steering. Tuskar is another turning point in the Irish channel, and one is liable to meet vessels steering in all directions. As each attempts to get within sound of the fog signal placed on the rock on which the lighthouse stands, the danger of collision at such a time is very great, and the ship requires the strictest care, judgment, and watchfulness of the captain.

After passing Tuskar, I shaped my course for the Saltee's lightship—another danger on the Irish coast—using the lead continually to bring us within hearing of the syrene trumpet placed on the lightship. We passed this in safety; the course then is straight to the entrance of Queenstown. As we approached the land on the west side of the harbor, I kept the lead constantly going; for, if the distance is overrun, there is danger of getting on shore on a rough rocky coast, which would entail certain destruction to the ship, with a terrible loss of life. To find the anchorage near Queenstown lighthouse the lead was kept going, as fast as possible, until we got twelve fathoms of water, when I let go my anchor, and my ship was riding with forty-five fathoms of cable out.

As the steamer was expected, the pilot stationed at the lighthouse was on the watch; upon hearing the signal made by the steam-whistle, he came off in his boat and was heartily received by all on board; especially, when he pronounced the ship anchored in a safe place.

Making such a passage as this, which takes much longer time than in fair weather, there is but little opportunity for the captain to have any rest or sleep. The officers are relieved every four hours, which gives them ample time to recover from their fatigue. The captain must continue at his post, as no officer can relieve him of one iota of the responsibility resting upon him; no matter how long the fog may continue, he must remain on the bridge until it clears, or his ship is in safety.

I made one passage, from Liverpool to Queenstown, which lasted thirty-two hours; and during that time the fog never lifted

nor cleared away. I remained on the bridge the entire thirty-two hours, having my food brought to me by my servant. When I went to my room, after the ship was anchored, I was only too glad to take the rest I so much needed.

We arrived at Queenstown at 2 P. M. After taking on mails and passengers, the anchor was hove up, and we proceeded on our way to New York. As the fog had not cleared, and as nothing could be seen of the land, I again took my station on the bridge. When approaching Fastnet, the wind, that had been from the southeast, veered to the southwest, and the fog showed signs of clearing. After passing that point, it steadily increased, and we had fine weather. When well clear of the land, I left the bridge, with the usual instructions to the officer of the watch, and retired to my room.

I was very soon asleep, and slept soundly until near midnight, when I was aroused by hearing a vessel reported. Going on the bridge I saw a steamer passing south of us and bound for the Irish channel. All signs of fog had disappeared; the stars were out and there was every prospect of a fine night.

For the first time since leaving Liverpool, I felt that I could go to bed. I had good and efficient officers to leave in charge of the watches, and I knew that I could rely upon their vigilance. I slept until eight o'clock the following morning, and when I awoke found myself refreshed; but, upon getting up to dress, my limbs and body ached terribly, and it was several days before I had recovered from the fatigue that I had undergone.

During the night the wind had freshened, and it was then blowing hard from the westward. At noon it had increased to a strong gale from the northwest, with a heavy sea covering the deck fore and aft with spray, so that few of the passengers were able to appear.

The gale continued without intermission until we reached the Banks of Newfoundland, when it moderated, and the wind went back to the south. By the time we struck soundings on the east edge of the banks, we were enveloped in another dense fog, which compelled us to reduce the speed of the ship.

The fog lasted all the way across the Banks, which kept me constantly on the bridge, and did not clear away until after we had passed the entrance to the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The wind then shifted to the northwest and increased to a heavy gale, which

lasted for twenty-four hours. After passing Sable Island, it backed from northwest to northeast, and, when night came on, the barometer fell and it began to snow heavily.

Snow at sea is quite as bad as fog ; and, as I was in the track of vessels bound to the eastward, I had to remain on the bridge as long as the snow lasted. As day broke the next morning it cleared away, and left us with fine weather and a strong breeze from the northeast. All sail was soon set, and the ship went flying along toward New York. In such weather as this, I had to take a nap with all my clothes on when I could get it, and my meals in the chart-room, or on the bridge, as the case might be.

As we neared Nantucket the wind died away and got round to the southeast, which brought us another fog. This lasted until we got off Block Island, at the entrance to Long Island Sound. In a shower of heavy rain the wind shifted to northwest, which brought clear weather, although it blew a heavy gale. This continued until we arrived at Sandy Hook, where we took on board a pilot. As the tide was favorable, we crossed the bar and proceeded to Staten Island. After a short delay at quarantine we reached our dock, and landed passengers and mails, thus ending a stormy passage of ten days and a half from Liverpool.

During that time I had taken off my clothes three nights, and when I got to New York I was completely worn out with fatigue and anxiety.

The duties of a captain in port are light compared with those at sea. As soon as possible after arriving he must go to the Custom House and enter his ship. He is then at liberty to rest, and is very glad to do so. During some portion of each day he is expected to report at the office of the agent, and also to be on board the steamer, so that he has but little time at his own disposal.

As the ship is advertised to sail on a certain day and hour, her stay in port depends mainly upon the length of the passage out from Liverpool. In winter the time is usually much shorter than in summer, owing to the bad weather encountered on the Atlantic at that season of the year. On the voyage that I am now describing we were but four days in New York. During that period the cargo was discharged, the ship was again loaded, and we were ready to sail at the hour appointed.

The captain's last duty before leaving port is to clear his ship,

and he is then ready for his return passage. A few hours later he is again on his way to sea.

Although a pilot is on the bridge with the captain, the company hold the latter responsible for any accident that may happen. In thick weather—which is often the case when leaving New York—the sail down the harbor to Sandy Hook is anything but pleasant. After passing the forts, the channel is narrow and crooked. As there are so many coasting schooners moving about, some going to sea, others bound up to the city, the navigation is, in thick weather, very intricate, and requires great care and caution on the part of both captain and pilot.

On the return passage to which I refer, I left New York in a fog, with the wind blowing a strong gale from the southeast, but I could see a sufficient distance to find my way down the harbor to Sandy Hook. After passing the Hook it came on very thick. As the channel was too narrow in which to turn my ship round for the purpose of returning to the anchorage inside the Hook, I was compelled to continue on my course.

During the winter, the channel is marked with spar buoys, which cannot be seen until one is very near them, so that I experienced great difficulty in getting over the bar. Fortunately I had a good pilot, and with the aid of the lead I found the station boat and put him on board. I was soon in deep water. The sea was very heavy, and had the ship got out of the channel and taken the ground, the consequences would have been very serious.

With brief intervals of clear weather, the fog continued to the Banks of Newfoundland, when, after a heavy downfall of rain, the wind shifted to the westward, and I was thankful indeed for the change. From the time I left New York until we reached the Banks, I had not been in my bed; and the only sleep that I had was lying on the chart-room sofa during the short time that the fog lifted. I have felt so exhausted, while standing, that I have been compelled to send for a camp stool, and, seated on the fore part of the bridge, with the screen lowered on a level with my eyes, I have kept my lookout.

When the wind shifts from southeast to the westward it is followed by a heavy blow from that quarter; and it was so in the case I refer to. We soon had all sail set and were running before a heavy westerly gale, which lasted until we approached the Irish coast; the wind then moderated and got round to the southward

and brought thick weather again. A southeast wind is a source of dread to all commanders when nearing this point, as it is always accompanied by a dense fog, which makes the sighting of land and getting into the channel, a very dangerous and difficult undertaking; this is proved by the number of wrecks that occur every year.

To perform this duty successfully, one must be well up in the science of navigation, and well informed regarding the sets of the currents along the coast, besides having a thorough knowledge of the soundings. In fact, the lead, with dead reckoning, which I consider the true science of navigation, is what a captain has mainly to depend upon at such a time.

On this passage, I encountered the fog one hundred miles west of the Fastnet. Fortunately, I had obtained good observations in the morning for longitude, and at noon for latitude, which gave me my correct position. Knowing that my compasses were accurate and could be relied upon, I ran with confidence for the channel. Nothing was seen of the land, and I was obliged to depend entirely on the soundings, the compasses, and the patent log. The wind was light, so that there was no sea to interfere with the steering.

At six o'clock on Monday morning I was near Queenstown. As I wanted to relieve the owners of all anxiety about the ship, and knowing that I could find my way there with the lead, I determined to do so. I altered my course for the entrance of the harbor, and, at eight o'clock, I had anchored my ship in twelve fathoms of water in the same spot that I had anchored her on my outward passage.

The anxiety of the passengers was great, and many an inquiring look was directed to me as I stood on the bridge, or went into my chart-room to consult my chart. When the anchor was let go, and, in response to my signal, the pilot came on board, the expressions of doubt and dismay, plainly visible on their faces, were changed to those of relief and joy. As I came from the bridge after anchoring, I was greeted with loud cheers, and many congratulated me on my success in bringing my ship safely into port in such a dense fog.

After the tender had left with mail and a few passengers, the anchor was hove up and I started for Liverpool, with the fog as thick as ever, and no sign of clearing, so that I had to take my departure from Caunt's Rock lightship. I made every fog signal

along the coast without having to alter my course, and when I reached Tuskar I was surrounded with vessels of all descriptions. I could hear the horns of sailing vessels and the whistles of steamers in every direction. Several times, I was compelled to stop in order to avoid a collision ; but fortunately I escaped, and, hearing the fog signal on Tuskar Rock, I turned that point and set my course for Holyhead. The fog signal (a gun every fifteen minutes) was distinctly heard, and also the steam trumpet on the Skerries.

Just as I was shaping the course from that point to Liverpool bar the fog cleared away, and I made the Skerries on our star-board beam. Giving the ship full speed and leaving orders with the officer of the watch to call me if I should be wanted, I went to my room to rest. I was ill with fatigue, and could not endure the sight of food. My eyes were bloodshot, and appeared like coals of fire in my head. I found it impossible to sleep, although I had not lain down since the previous Saturday morning at seven o'clock.

I arrived safely in Liverpool, landed the passengers, baggage, and mails, docked my ship, went to the office and reported her safe arrival. I then entered her at the Custom House, and my duty was done for that voyage.

I do not intend to convey the idea to the public that all voyages are like this one that I have described. Were such the case, more ships than do at the present time, would enter port with the dead body of the Captain on board. But such voyages are of frequent occurrence during eight months of the year ; and the duty of a commander of an ocean steamer requires him to be constantly on the watch, and keenly alive to every sound. None but those who are experienced know the terrible strain to which the mind and nerves of the captain is subjected when passing through an impenetrable fog. He cannot tell what blunder may be committed by men in command of ships that he may meet ; and he must be prepared for any and all emergencies that may arise from such blunders.

Passengers traveling to and from Europe see only the bright side of the captain's life ; they are not on deck during a heavy gale ; and at night, when he is keeping watch on the bridge, they are sleeping in their berths unconscious of the perils to which they are exposed. It is not surprising that many should form the opinion that they do.

What, then, is a captain's work ? In a few words the question can be answered. To stand by his ship, taking care of her, and of the many precious lives on board ; and, with the help of God, bringing her through every danger, in whatsoever form it may present itself, in safety into port.

CHAS. WM. KENNEDY,
Late Commander of White Star Steamer "Germanic."

THE NEXT NATIONAL REFORM.

AS soon and as often as a result of a closely contested election is announced the cry of bribery and corruption is raised throughout the country by the defeated party or candidates. Less often, either in defiance or despair, is heard the question made famous by a "practical politician" of New York in answer to fierce denunciations of his own knavery, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" Yet this should be the paramount issue of the hour.

Men of both parties and all parties without doubt have perverted the spirit of the law even when they have not offended against its letter, and the honest historian will be obliged to record that the machinery of the purest parties, at certain times and places, has been alienated to unlawful and unworthy purposes, at variance with the "true intent and meaning" of the Constitution. How shall political corruption be prevented? I repeat there is but one efficient remedy for the evil—a radical reorganization of our machinery of election—a reconstruction having as its chief purpose to render fraud impossible. For without a strong and non-partisan movement that shall initiate a system of honest voting, making bribery unprofitable and knavery impotent, popular elections in America will become a farce, and Democratic institutions a prey to the same disintegrating forces that encompassed the ruin of earlier free governments.

It is a waste of time to discuss whether this or that party is the greater offender in any given election. What we need is not a victim or a verdict or a palliative, but a preventive. No temporary remedies will suffice. It should be an uncompromising crusade against political knavery—a war to the death—as it was a war to the death against American slavery.

No legislative remedy for the prevention of fraud at elections will prove effective unless it provides for two essential features: