

# SPANISH FIREMEN ON COASTWISE STEAMERS

## They Held Almost a Monopoly on Liners Running Out of New York.

### EXCEL IN THE STROKEHOLE

#### Conditions Against Which They Went on Strike—Ten Thousand of Them.

ONE of the curious pieces of information brought out by the present strike of coastwise firemen and seamen is the fact that men from the north of Spain have a practical monopoly of the work in the stoke holes of the coastwise steamships sailing out of New York. The reason they have the monopoly is that experience has shown that they can stand the hard work and the high temperature of the stoke hole better than the men of other races.

One of the grievances of the striking firemen is that they form the subject of another monopoly. It is alleged by them that the keepers of the boarding houses where they stay while in port have a virtual monopoly of supplying firemen and coal passers to the steamships and that they charge excessive rates of board and excessive fees as a condition of furnishing employment to the men.

The number of these north of Spain firemen and coal passers engaged in the Atlantic coast trade is estimated at more than 10,000. Sometimes they form a transient population of 4,000 in New York.

About the time of the Spanish-American war the coal passers and firemen on certain steamships were divided into three watches—one Spanish, the second English-German and the third Greek-Italian. A record was kept of the steam making ability of each watch. It was found that the Spaniards far outclassed the other watches.

The companies investigated further and learned that men from the provinces of Coruna, Viscaya and Barcelona seemed to be stronger than men of other countries and better able to withstand the heat of the stoke hole.

The close of the Spanish-American war brought an influx of Spaniards from Cuba to New York in search of employment and they rapidly took the places of the English, the Germans, the Italians and the Greeks in the labor of handling the coal from the docks to the furnaces of the coastwise ships. Thus came about a sort of monopoly in employment.

The people of Coruna, Viscaya and Barcelona are among the hardest in Europe. Many of the men spend their summers in the vineyards that surround their villages and in the winter they are fishermen. The spirit of adventure is strong in them. Their roving disposition naturally took many of the young men to Cuba when the island was the pearl of Spain's possessions abroad, and they moved on to New York when the defeat of Cervera ended Spanish rule on the island.

The men who came from Havana were only the forerunners of thousands who were to follow. The steam making tests having opened to them a sure source of employment, it was only natural that the word should go back to Bergondo, San Laidro and Sada and other villages in Coruna that there was much money to be made in America—more than could possibly be earned in the vineyards or with the fishing fleets.

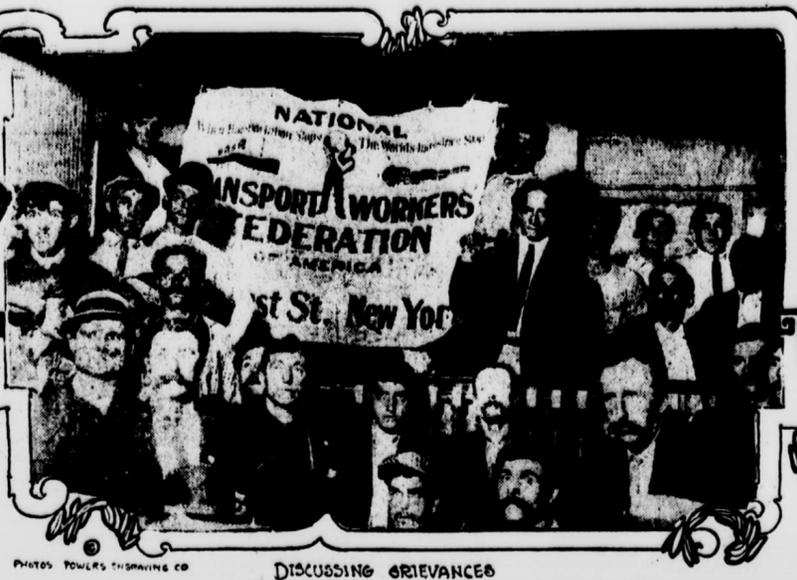
As always when there is a demand there springs up some one to supply that demand at a profit and even to nurse it along—also for a profit. So it happened in the case of Spanish coal passers and firemen. Here may be told the story of one of these men whose experience is typical of that of thousands of others.

Felipe Capistrano was born in Maninos, Coruna. He worked, as the others did, in the vineyards and with the fishing fleets. Like the others, too, he earned about \$12 a month for one half of the year and probably \$25 a month for the other half. Fifteen years ago his father came to America, and soon word reached his family and neighbors that he was drawing from \$35 to \$40 a month all the year around, working as a fireman for the steamship companies.

It wasn't the, to him, high pay alone that lured Felipe. He also wanted to see the world. So one day he bade farewell to his mother and sisters, his friends and neighbors, and last of all to the girl he



TYPE OF SPANISH FIREMAN



DISCUSSING GRIEVANCES



TYPE OF SPANISH FIREMAN

hoped some day to wed, and sailed as a coal passer in a Spanish ship for Havana. In Havana he chose his own boarding house and soon found employment as a longshoreman. After three months he shipped again as a coal passer on a vessel plying between Havana and Porto Rico. Then he came to New York.

His father met him, and here begins the story of the monopoly which the striking firemen allege exists among the boarding house keepers and employment agents. His father had to advance to a boarding house keeper \$20 in behalf of his son. That \$20 provided Felipe with room and board for three weeks and admitted him to the exclusive circles of the Spanish coal passers and firemen.

Through this landlord Felipe got a job as coal passer at \$30 a month. Part of his wages went to the landlord as a fee. Felipe went to work at 7 A. M. while in port and labored until 5 P. M., cleaning the machinery of the vessel in preparation for the next trip. At sea he worked in watches passing coal, six hours on and six hours off.

"That trip, she was hard," and Felipe smiled the reminiscent smile of the alien who had taken his hard knocks. "I call for my mother a hundred times." But if the trip was hard, there was more trouble waiting for him on his return. Seeking a boarding house, he found that he must return to the one to which his father had taken him on his arrival from Havana. Otherwise no job.

Felipe is emancipated now. He no longer pays tribute, because after ten years of hard work he is pretty much his own master. But most of the other 10,000 who by turns make up New York's 1,000 temporarily resident coal passers and firemen are not so fortunate.

When this Spanish influx began there were no staid boarding houses to which the followers of the trade must go. They roomed and ate where they pleased. But the opportunity for making money out of them was quickly realized.

Along West street and South street Greeks had established oyster and banana stands. The Spaniards patronized them and a Greek saw his chance. He opened a coffee house. Other coffee houses were later opened by others.

Then the owner of one of these coffee houses had a brilliant idea. He would open a boarding house and get these Spaniards as boarders. But how was he to make sure of them? The easiest way obviously was to control the employment of the men.

According to the men the keepers of the coffee houses and the other boarding houses that sprang up later secured an agreement to act as employment agents for those who hired coal passers and firemen for the steamship companies. The men do not say that the companies themselves were parties to such an agreement.

At first these boarding house keepers of West and South streets confined their attention to the rooming and boarding business. They charged \$14 for two weeks and \$20 for three weeks. It is alleged that often a fee was charged for furnishing employment to their boarders.

It was only another step to establish agencies in the Spanish provinces through which the increasing demand for firemen could be met. Letters were sent back to the villages telling of the high wages to be made here and of the ease with which a competence could be saved. From the letter to the circular stage was only another step, and following the circulars, so the men here say, went

agents, who painted the opportunities of the coastwise trade in glowing terms. Old firemen and coal passers in New York say the response surprised them. They declare that even boys who could not stand the labor or the heat of the stoke hole left the vineyard and the fishing boat and came to New York via Havana and Liverpool. Some worked their way over. Others paid for their passage with their savings, and in still other cases when labor was scarce here the agents advanced them money or helped them to work their way over for a fee.

Arrived here, the prospective coal passer entered one of the boarding houses. When the keepers' business became so flourishing and the organization so compact that they could afford to take a chance the keepers no longer required the advance payment for board. Instead they took in the newcomer and permitted him to remain for twenty days, in which time they figured on getting him to work.

Once at work he must pay back his room rent and board bill at the rate of \$1 a day, together with a fee of from \$5 to \$10 for getting his job. If he kept his job on the ship he had to pay 75 cents a day; if not the charge was \$1 a day. His voyage over he must return to the boarding house that staked him. He could not go to another of the boarding houses without a card from the one he had first entered. If he failed to pay what he owed the first boarding house he could not get another job on the waterfront. This at least is the story told by the strikers. They also say that in the boarding houses all drinks are 10 cents and that all sorts of devices are employed to induce them to spend whatever pay they have left after paying their debts.

As many as twenty-five men sleep in one room and often there are 100 men living in one house. Cots are placed in every available space. Three meals are served daily. The following is said to be a fair sample of the bill of fare:

**BREAKFAST:**  
Bologna sausage (one thin strip).  
Eggs (two, if they are cheap).  
Bread (no butter).  
Coffee.

**DINNER:**  
Spanish soup (potatoes, cabbage, beans).  
Sew (meats, potatoes).  
Bread (no butter).  
Coffee.

**SUPPER:**  
Soup (swarmed over from dinner) with macaroni added (if they are cheap).  
Fish or pork and beans or meat.  
Bread (no butter).  
Coffee.

The men complain that that's pretty poor living for 75 cents a day or \$1 a day if you are not working. They contend that one can live much better in New York for \$7 a week. They say they wouldn't mind the price so much if the food was only half eatable.

"I cry for my mother on Havana ship," said Felipe. "That was bad, but that food was worse. I cry always for my mother." Felipe will tell you that he doesn't like American ships, with some comfortable exceptions. He will say that they are built to carry the last possible ounce of freight, that this cuts down the size of the boilers and that therefore he has had work in keeping up steam. He calls these ships "heavies" and the others "easies," and he says that most of them are "heavies."

Now, Felipe hasn't the consolation of returning from a voyage to his family.

The wives and the children and the sweethearts of these Spanish firemen and coal passers are all or nearly all back in Coruna and Viscaya and Barcelona. Only about 200 of them have brought their families here.

"Felipe," you may ask him, "why don't they stand for all this, this 'how do they quit and try something else'?" "Well, he will answer slowly, and he speaks very fair English, 'where else can they do? They just keep on and hope.' Felipe doesn't hope any more himself. He won't tell you why, but you may learn that the girl who was to have waited for him is dead if you ask the others who do hope.

Hope for what? Why, to return to Spain to the wife and the children or to the sweetheart waiting for the fortune that was promised so confidently a year ago, or it may be it was ten years ago—time goes so fast and the money doesn't pile up so rapidly as one was led to believe.

There are so many expenses besides the room and the board and the employment fees. There are clothes to be purchased and some of the boarding house keepers demand that the profit be theirs. There is tobacco, and sometimes the keepers even profit on that.

The coal passers and engineers are seldom heavy drinkers. True, wine is one of their native beverages, but the stokehole is too hot for alcoholic blood and so they leave hard liquor alone as a rule.

The coal passers and firemen who are on strike want to abolish the present system of securing employment, which they have come to believe is taking their earnings and delaying their return to their families. They also are asking for better accommodations aboard ship, both in the matter of food and of sleeping quarters.

Meantime many of them are piling up debts in the boarding houses, and the vista of Spain is receding at the rate of \$1 a day.

### A GREAT PERUVIAN FESTIVAL

Beautifully Decorated Floats in a Religious Procession.

From the Christian Herald.

Semana Santa, or Holy Week, is a week of preparation. Booths dedicated to different saints are erected and arches built at intervals from the church to the foot of the Calle de las Palmas, or Street of Palms. On Saturday the arches are decorated with fruit, vegetables, live fowls, kids, etc., and everything is got in readiness for the great day, Palm Sunday.

Early Sunday morning the few remaining things are added to the arches and the procession leaves the church, taking its way to the booth at the foot of the street, where they remain for the faithful to make their offerings until between 5 and 8 at night, when the procession again forms at the booth and is accompanied by soldiers, the band and a crowd of people.

After they form there is a song by the musical professor or singer of the church, music by the band and they start slowly all carrying plants (young branches of sugar cane) in their hands and waving them. All the music played during this time was dirges.

On Friday night was the great event of the week, the great procession, beginning at 10 o'clock and headed by three men, one of them carrying the crown of thorns, the second, the nails which nailed the Lord to the cross, the third, the cock that crowed. This was followed by a float beautifully trimmed and lighted containing the image of our Lord so painted that blood appeared to be on the forehead and face. Very realistic it looked in the semi-darkness.

Next was a float containing the Virgin Mary beautifully dressed in purple velvet trimmed with ermine, lace and jewels, her long train held up by angels. As the streets were dark only for the lights on the floats and torches carried by the crowd, who were all dressed in black, and the procession moved so slowly, appearing to mark time and away from side to side, they were more than two hours going around two blocks.

On reaching the church the floats were put within to remain till the resurrection at 9:30 o'clock Saturday morning. No train started, no bells rung, no teams were in the street from Thursday noon. Even the children were told not to talk for "the Senor (Lord) is dead," till 9:30 o'clock Saturday, when the image is restored to its niche in the church and the Lord is risen.

### A FOUNTAIN OF PUNCH.

Provided by a British Officer for the Entertainment of 6,000 Guests.

From the Caterer.

### COLOR BLIND, BUT HE PASSED OFFICIAL TEST

#### English Expert's Remarkable Demonstration Told in the "Lancet."

#### SERIOUS DANGER SHOWN

#### Locomotive Engineers and Others May Pass and Not Know Colors Apart.

Serious doubt has been cast upon the validity of the accepted test for color blindness by a writer in the *Lancet* of June 22. He is F. W. Edridge-Green of the Institute of Physiology in University College, London. In addition to the doctorate of medicine from Durham and fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons, Dr. Edridge-Green is a fellow of his college and one of the great authorities upon this disorder of the eye.

In his paper he presents exhaustively the record of his examination of a man for color blindness. Examined by the official test of the Board of Trade, which scarcely varies from the official examination required in this country, the man was able to pass a satisfactory test, he picked out and matched all the wools easily and correctly in all five test colors, green, rose, red, purple and orange-yellow. Any examiner would have certificated him for railway employment.

Yet in an examination with the lantern occupying less than one minute Dr. Edridge-Green established that the man was wholly and dangerously blind as to the colors which are most in cautionary use. Red he called no color on an exhibition of it and green the next; yellow he pronounced red; red was reported white; a neutral tint he said was green, and green he recorded as white on one showing and as red on the next. The official wool test would have passed this man as fit for railway service, yet the more delicate examination made it clear that he could not read a single track signal properly and that disaster would inevitably follow his employment.

This subject was tested by eight methods in addition to the official wool test and seven of the tests proved his color blindness which the official test failed to discover.

In commenting upon the danger to the community which inheres in a test so faulty as that which the law requires, Dr. Edridge-Green remarks:

"This case, which is similar to many that I have examined, shows how completely the official Board of Trade test fails in detecting a very dangerous case of color blindness; the lights used in my lantern are bright and definite colors and similar to those used on the railway and at sea. The Board of Trade still uses the Holmgren test, which in addition to rejecting many normal sighted persons, allows half or more of those who are dangerously color blind to pass."

For all practical purposes the invention of color blindness has a history of about one-third of a century. Men who were in attendance at the Eastern colleges in the late '70s will recall Dr. Jeffrey's of Boston who subjected the student body to what seemed the kindergarten task of matching skeins of colored wool. From senior down to freshman each student after his stint with the wools was informed that he was a datum in a most important research. To some, of course, the unfamiliar singular was obnoxious, such formed themselves into groups so that they might be data and parse.

The result of this inquiry in this country conducted upon many thousands of subjects in all classes of life, similar investigation being prosecuted in England and upon the Continent, was to establish beyond doubt that color blindness was of such frequent occurrence as to constitute a menace to the smooth conduct of life in its economic relations.

The danger was all the greater since the person affected by this blindness was wholly unaware that he was unable to distinguish colors as seen by the normal vision. This danger was particularly felt in connection with the transportation service, since at sea as well as on land the factor of safety must rest upon the ability to recognize the color of the signals which give warning of danger ahead or serve to assure the engineer in his cab or the quartermaster at the wheel that his path is clear.

Protective legislation slowly came into being, but in time the various transportation agencies came to recognize the importance of protection of their property and the lives of passengers against this form of blindness. At the present time each of the civilized nations prohibits the employment of the color blind in situations where the ability to distinguish signals by color is essential. The examinations are conducted with slight modifications after the method employed by Dr. Jeffrey in his preliminary research, the test is the ability to match skeins of colored yarn.

This simple test has been considered satisfactory. Optical laboratories possess instruments of precision by which more delicate tests may be applied, but the law

# AUTOGRAPH HUNTING HIS LIFELONG HOBBY

## Ludwig Barth Was Travelled All Over the World as a Collector.

### ROYALTY IN HIS ALBUM

#### Signatures of Famous Men and Women Which Have Cost Him \$50,000.

LONDON, June 28. The most interesting autograph collection in the world is coming to London for a brief visit. He is Ludwig Barth and he is a resident of Berlin. He commenced working on his hobby when he was a very young man. Now he is well along in years and the little fat volume bound in red cloth which contains the fruits of his labors, has inscribed in it the names of the great men and women of his time.

Barth has had offers of large sums of money for his book and has refused them all. "The album is his pride and joy. He has spent over \$50,000 on his hobby and has travelled all over the world to secure desired signatures. He has carried his album from throne to throne, from one embassy to another, into the libraries of scientists, the homes of poets, the studios of artists.

Prince Roland Bonaparte has called Barth the king of autograph collectors, and the old man is very proud of the title. In the book are inscriptions in forty-four languages. There are quotations, original poems and epigrams and even little pen and ink sketches.

One of the most recent autographs is that of King Frederick of Denmark, and it was secured just two days before the King's death. Emperor Francis Joseph of Austria received Barth at his palace in Vienna not long ago. The Pope had a conference with his last winter and the Kaiser has sent for him several times to come to the Royal residence and show his collection. Both the Kaiser and the Kaiserin have added their signatures to the others in the album. King Edward's name was secured without much difficulty, and King George, Queen Mary and the Prince of Wales have also written in the book.

The King and Queen of Italy, ex-King Manuel of Portugal, the King and Queen of Rumania and the Emperor and Empress of Russia are some of the other royalties who have inscribed their names and a few sentences in the red book. The King and Queen of the Belgians sent for Barth not long ago that they might see his album. As they were turning over the leaves the Queen suddenly exclaimed, "Thee's my dear aunt," as her eyes fell on a certain page. "Then she asked, 'Who did that excellent picture of her?'"

It was a pencil sketch of the late Empress Elizabeth of Austria done by the Viennese painter Alexander R. Pavlovitz. Barth feared for a moment that the Queen might ask for the portrait, but to his great relief she did not and she and the King and the little Crown Prince all signed their names for the collector.

A trip to Devil's Island while Dreyfus was in prison there was one of Barth's journeys for his album. He found Dreyfus a feeble man with snow white hair whose trembling hand could hardly hold a pen. When Barth addressed the ex-Captain in German Dreyfus said, "I do not speak that language." In the book he wrote:

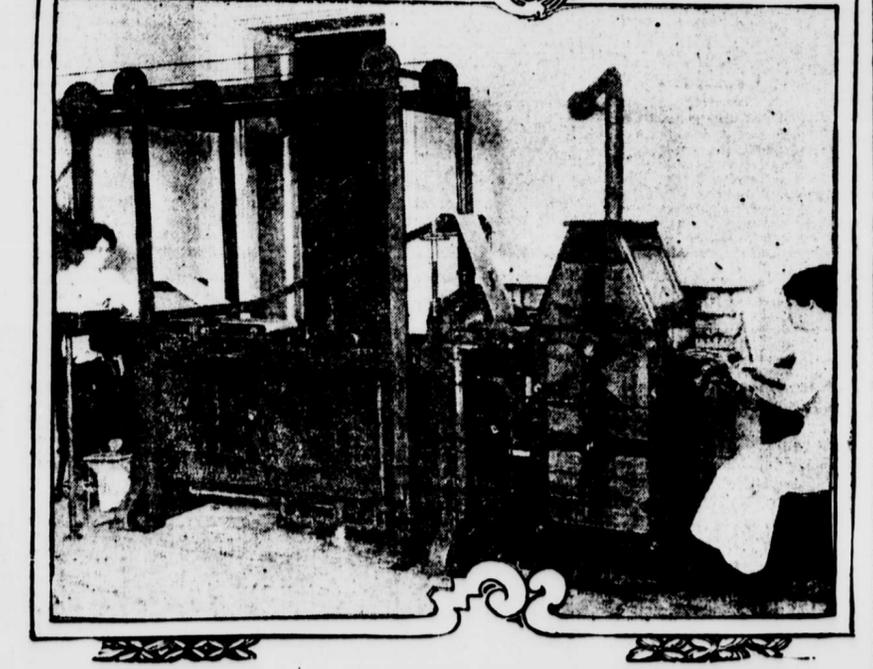
"Every man should hold fast to the principles of justice and truth."

Masterlinck and Verberren have both written in the album. Verberren's lines are:

Homme tout affronté vaut mieux que tout empenné.  
La vie est un métier, et non pas a descendre.

Barth tells little of his adventures as an autograph collector. He collecting has never been undertaken for financial reasons. Indeed, it is a matter of pride with him that he has spent large sums to get the great names he has managed to secure in different parts of the world.

# THE TREASURY'S MONEY WASHING MACHINE



United States bank notes of any denomination may be washed, starched and ironed as clean and smooth as linen by means of the machine invented by Burgess Smith of the Bureau of Printing and Engraving. The machine is still in the experimental stage and has not yet been adopted by the Government, although it is installed in the Treasury, where it is undergoing a test as a money saver. The machine is intended to be of value, for it costs \$13,300 to print a thousand notes, while they can be cleaned for only fifty cents. The soiled paper currency is started at the left and comes out at the other end as clean and crisp as new bills.

# MAJOR-GENERAL W. W. WOTHERSPOON



Gen. William Wallace Wotherspoon, who has been selected by President Taft for appointment as a Major-General in the army to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Gen. Fred D. Grant, is regarded as one of the best authorities in the service on infantry tactics. His present post is in command of the Department of the Chief. He has served as a member of the General Staff and as head of the War College. He began his career as an ensign in the navy. Gen. Wotherspoon will retire for age on November 16, 1914.