THE MAN UNDER THE BED

By CHARLES B. LEWIS

When Colonel Northrop retired from the army at the age of fifty, and set up in bachelor apartments in town, he had several things to pride himself about. He had made an honorable record; no one in the Northrop family had ever disgraced the name; his windows were provided with burglar-proof locks of his own invention, and he had a sang froid which nothing could startle him out of. The Colonel was well satisfied with himself and the world at large, and those who knew him best said he ought to be. Army life had given him good health, and he boasted that nothing could disturb his slumbers when he once fell asleep.

At midnight one night Colonel Northrop came home from his club in his usual good humor, and finding a couple of letters on his table, sat down to read them before going to bed. When finally ready to retire, he was half asleep, and he was no sooner between the sheets than he departed for the land of Nod. Just one hour later by the clock he opened his eyes and sat up in bed, a thing which hadn't happened since his boyhood days.

Some sound had disturbed him, but just what it was he could not tell. The idea that any sound should thus influence him aroused his ire, and after a moment he sprang out of bed and lighted the gas. He meant to make a tour of his rooms and see if his celebrated burglar-proof window locks were all right, but as he was ready to move he was jumped a foot high by the sound of a sneeze under his bed. It was a man's sneeze—a hearty, wholesome sneeze with a note of defiance in it. The Colonel had boasted that nothing could startle him out of his everyday placidity, but a mere sneeze had done it, and he was furious about it. He dropped on his knees and looked under the bed, and what he saw was a man stretched at full length on the floor.

"Ha! You rascal, but I've got you!" exclaimed the warrior as he made out the form of the intruder.

"I guess not, Colonel," was the cool reply.

An army revolver, endeared by old associations, reposed in a drawer not far away, and the Colonel jumped for it and said:

"Now, then, you roll out here or I'll blow your head off."

"Go a little slow, Colonel," replied the man under the bed. "I've also got a gun, and the instant you stoop down I'll send a bullet into you."

"You—you will?"

"I will for sure, and I guess I'll shoot at one of your legs as it is."

Acting on the impulse of the moment, the Colonel sprang upon his bed, but fifteen seconds later he was so mad to think he had jumped that he leaped to the floor with the exclamation:

"Come out here now or you are a dead man!"

"That's all bluff, Colonel," said the intruder. "Pull on your trousers and sit down and take things easy."

The Colonel obeyed. He obeyed because it suddenly struck him that he didn't look dignified without trousers, and that he would need them anyway when he came to escort the man outdoors and hand him over to the police. He sat down because his knees trembled under him, and that very fact made him boil over with anger and chagrin. With the revolver pointed under the bed he queried:

"When did you get into this room?"

"About 11 o'clock, Colonel."

"How did you get in?"

"Through that window to your left. You thought yourself smart when you put that wonderful catch on the sashes, but it did not bother me five minutes. I wish all windows were provided with such a soft snap."

"I say you never got in by that window!" shouted the Colonel, who had repeatedly told his friends that he would give any burglar leave to work on his patent all night.

"Then I'm a liar, and you are a gentleman! However, I don't blame you for feeling a bit sore. I heard of your patent and your boasting long ago, and I knew I could take you down a peg when I had a few minutes to spare. It was easy, Colonel, dead easy."

"But what are you in here for?"

"Robbery, Colonel; that's my trade, you know. I had a pal with me, who took off a bag of stuff, while I stayed behind to investigate further, and was hiding under the bed when you came in. I was about to crawl out and go through your clothes, when you awoke."

"Now, then, are you coming out?" thundered the Colonel.

"Well, hardly—not just yet!"

"Then I'll shoot you where you are!"

"No, you won't. The minute I see your legs moving I shall open fire on them. From where you sit your bullets can't reach me, while I have a dead sure thing on your legs. Go slow, Colonel."

The Colonel was up on strategic positions, and he realized that the enemy had all the advantage. While furiously angry, he retained all his common sense, and figured that he must temporize. If he was to capture instead of being captured, he must resort to diplomacy. He therefore controlled himself to say:

"You must see that you cannot escape, and it will be better if you quietly surrender."

"That's where we differ, Colonel," calmly replied the man under the bed. "All I have to do is to shoot you through the legs and make my way out through the window. It depends on you, however. What's the use of being so peppery about trifles. A man of your age and habits should have perfect control over himself."

"You villain!" hissed the Colonel between his clinched teeth.

"No use to call names. I might call you an old brag and blowhard, but that wouldn't help the case any. It's always better to argue a point. What is the exact time, Colonel?"

"It's time I called in the police and had you out of this, and here goes"——

Click! click! It was the man under the bed getting ready to fire on the Colonel's legs, and the Colonel happily realized it and fell back into his chair.

"There won't be any police called in here before I'm gone," said the stranger in his cool, calm way. "After I'm out you can raise all the racket you want to, and no doubt you'll give it to the papers very strong. Make a hero of yourself if you can, but should you bear down on me too hard I might pay you another visit."

"You—you rob me, threaten me and would assassinate me!" groaned the Colonel.

"Then don't threaten me. My desire is to treat you like a gentleman, but you make it impossible. When you get ready to talk like a reasonable man I'll take my departure and you can finish your nap."

"But I'll call the police! Do you think I'll let you escape me?"

"I do, Colonel. Let's reason a moment. You have done any amount of bragging about those window locks, and you don't want your friends to call you down. People always guy a man who has been neatly done up, and you don't want to be guyed. The plunder is beyond reach of the police, and were I to be arrested and tried my identity might be revealed."

"Blast your identity!" howled the Colonel.

"There you go again! You'd never do in my trade if you lost your head that way. About those window locks, Colonel. The principle is all right, but not being a practical man you failed to apply it. I'll come around in a day or two and show you the defect and remedy it. And about your nerves. I've heard you spoken of as a man who wouldn't look surprised if the earth opened and took him in, but like all other club men, you affect that. It's the proper caper, I've heard, but they ought to have seen you half an hour ago. Hold on, or I'll shoot."

The Colonel had jumped up in his wrath to make a bolt for the door, but the man arrested him and he sat down with the muttered exclamation:

"Ye gods! but must I put up with this?"

"You must, Colonel," said the man under the bed. "I've been ready to come out for ten minutes past, and you alone are to blame that I'm keeping you up. Why not hold on to that peppery temper of yours until we can come to a mutual understanding?"

"Let a robber go after he has plundered me?"

"That's what it must come to, Colonel. As a soldier, you see the situation. I can't get out on account of you, while you can't stir from that chair on account of me. We have got each other by the short hair, so to speak, but neither of us is happy over it."

"Should I let you go," said the Colonel, after a moment's reflection, "I should always feel that I had disgraced my record. No, sir! I'll sit right here till doomsday but what I'll give you in charge!"

"Still on the warpath, old man?" laughed the man under the bed. "There may be a question of honor involved, but I think you'd better waive it. The amount of stuff my pal took away won't fetch $200, at the outside figure. For such a sum as that are you going to have the police and reporters overrun you with column after column in the papers, and a caricature of yourself held up to the world? You are too sensible for that, old man. Never give yourself away for a cheap price. Besides——"

"Besides what?" snapped the Colonel, who was rapidly taking the robber's view of the case.

"The family honor, you know."

"What do you know about my family, sir?"

"A great deal, Colonel. You had a brother George."

"But he is dead."

"Well, hardly. He was supposed to have died several years ago, but as a matter of fact he is very much alive today."

"And you know him?"

"Like a book. He's the chap who carried off the swag just before you came in."

"You are lying, sir—I won't believe a word of it!" exclaimed the Colonel.

"Off your base again! Your brother's middle name is Yates. He has light hair, blue eyes, small hands, a handsome mouth, and there is a scar on his right cheek from a wound received when a boy. The last you heard of him he was in Dakota. Am I right, Colonel?"

"Yes, yes. Come out and tell me more!" whispered the Colonel.

"There's only this to say," said the man, as he crept out and stood erect. "Your brother has gone to the dogs. That is, he is one of our gang. He didn't know that this was your den, of course, but he has helped to plunder it, and if I'm jugged he'll get the same dose, and the public will know his real name. Do you cotton to that, Colonel?"

"And my brother George is a robber—belongs to a gang of robbers?"

"Straight goods, Colonel. Sorry for you, but he's doing fairly well and may conclude to reform after he's made his stake. Can I go now?"

For answer the Colonel pointed to the door leading into the hall.

"Thank you. I can find my way. Don't take it too hard, Colonel. Of course, I shall say nothing to George. Good night, old man."

At the door he halted to look back and say:

"Yes, sorry for you; but things do come about in a curious way. Good night!"

But the Colonel had his face in his hands and was weeping.

Of the several central labor bodies in Washington the Building Trades Council is perhaps the best and truest exponent of trade unionism pure and simple. As its name implies it is composed of only such organizations as have to do with the erection and adjustment of all modern improvements in buildings, both private and public. Since its organization in September, 1894, it has maintained an autonomy of trades organizations, and at all times and under all circumstances used its whole influence in the upbuilding of the building trades of the city. In this endeavor its efforts have been crowned with more than the success usually attained by labor bodies. For while battling to maintain its own position in the labor world of Washington and promote the interests of the members of the affiliated crafts it had also to contend against unfriendly influences within the ranks of organized labor.

As already stated the "Trades Council" was organized in the latter part of the year 1894, Mr. E. L. Lomax, a member of the Brotherhood of Carpenters' Union, No. 190, being chosen the first president.

At that time the affiliated unions were: Bricklayers' Union, No. 1; Carpenters' Assembly, No. 1748, K. of L.; Carpenters' Union, No. 1; Amalgamated Carpenters, Carpenters' Council, composed of representatives from the three organizations of carpenters, painters, plumbers, tin and sheet-iron workers, galvanized iron and cornice workers, steam and hot water fitters, plasterers, stonecutters, granite cutters, stonemasons and electrical workers. In regulating the representation of the several trades, in order that no one craft should have an advantage over the others, the different organizations of carpenters were received as one and allowed only the same number of delegates as any other of the affiliated unions. This placed every union represented on the same footing and prevented a possibility of craft legislation for the benefit of the members of any one trade.

During the latter part of the year 1895, and the spring of 1896, the council passed through a trying ordeal. It was during that time, when the labor world of Washington was agitated from center to circumference by the troubles between the Knights of Labor and the proprietors of the local breweries. Several of the organizations belonging to the council were also connected with the order of the Knights of Labor. These, and one or two more which sympathized with the Knights, and also indorsed the boycott placed on the products of the local breweries, withdrew from the council, and cast their lot with the Knights of Labor. The council, however, refused to indorse the boycott, claiming that such action on their part would be transgressing their power and jurisdiction; and, further, that if it were carried on, even to success, would not result in any benefit of the affiliated trades. The organizations which favored the boycott made a desperate effort to have the council indorse the placing of the local brewery proprietors on the unfair list, and, failing, withdrew from the organization.

The trade organizations which drew out were the Tin and Sheet Iron Workers' Assembly, K. of L.; Carpenters, 1748, K. of L.; Plasterers, 1644, K. of L.; Painters, 1798, K. of L.; Plumbers, Structural Iron Workers and Stone Cutters. The Plumbers and Stone Cutters' Unions withdrew, it was stated, because they did not see the advantage of belonging to two central bodies. At the time they were affiliated with the Local Federation of Labor.

It is claimed by the trades unionists who are still affiliated with the Building Trade Council that the prime object of the seceders was to disrupt the organization. The effort, however, failed for the sole reason that the majority of the organizations composing the council were distinctively trades unions, which contended that the boycott was injurious not only to the individual members of the crafts to which they belonged, but also to trades unionism in the District.

The result was that the organizations which were left banded themselves more strongly together and made a determined fight against the methods pursued by the boycotters. They even went further than this; they notified the brewers that they would not support the boycott, and submitted terms of settlement so far as they were concerned. The terms were accetped by the brewers, who entered into contracts with the building trades affiliated with the Building Trades Council, agreeing to recognize only members of their organizations in all work to be done by them. This did not settle the trouble. The Knights of Labor prosecuted the war against the brewers for nearly a year, when they finally agreed to raise the boycott on condition that the brewery proprietors would not discriminate against the members of the order in the giving out of contracts for building.

The result of the "beer boycott," as the trouble was generally called, was looked upon as a decided victory for the Building Trades Council and materially added to their influence as a labor organization in the city.

Shortly after the settlement of the beer troubles unions were organized by the plasterers, painters, and hod-carriers, by workmen who had never before been connected with any labor organizations and others who had become dissatisfied with the methods of the Knights of Labor and had withdrawn from that order before the trouble with the brewers had caused any dissensions in the ranks of organized labor in the District. These organizations filled the places of those which had withdrawn and put the council on the same footing so far as numerical strength is concerned.

At the time of the trouble Mr. William Silver, a member of Granite Cutters' Union, was the president of the council, and it is to his conservative judgment and wise counsel that is due the successful and amicable adjustment of the beer trouble. Mr. Silver's service in this was thoroughly appreciated by the members of the council, as may be learned from the fact that since that time he has four times been chosen to succeed himself as president of that organization. Mr. J M. Boyce, who was chosen secretary of the council, when Mr. Silver was first elected president, has filled that office ever since.

As mentioned above Mr. Silver is a granite cutter. He was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, in 1856, and came to this country when twenty-four years of age. He was a member of organized labor in Scotland, and when he came to America was armed with a working card from the Granite Cutters' Union of Aberdeen.

The latest additions to the Building Trades Council are steam and hot water fitters' helpers, who are closely identified with the trades union of similar name.

The allied trades unions which constitute the Building Trades Council have an aggregate membership of about 4,000, which is rapidly increasing, not only by additions to the individual trades unions, but in the organization of the wage-earners of other crafts.

One Strange Paris Woman

A strange character has just died in Paris in the person of Mme. Brasseux, an old lady of seventy. She had no relatives and was an incurable invalid, but she had a large fortune, which she used for her pleasure in a most unusual way. She filled her house, not with servants, but with a troupe of young and pretty girls. Once a week she gave a ball, to which she invited all who pleased her, irrespective of their social status. One of their most regular attendants was a young messenger girl, whose gentle grace attracted the old lady's attention one day in an omnibus. Saturday after Saturday this eccentric hostess used to sit in her chair by the piano watching her guests dance. When she died her will was found to be as eminently Parisian as the character of its author. To her distant relations, who had neglected her during her illness, she left only a few hundred thousand francs, but the bulk of her fortune is left to her dancers, her visitors, and the members of her household. She left 3,000 francs to one young man because he danced well. The girl of the omnibus got 8,000 francs. Twelve thousand francs went to a young lawyer's clerk who, bringing her some papers one day, gratuitously offered her a piece of advice, which afterward proved useful. Each of her maids is assured lodging, board and wages during the next fourteen months. The bequests are not large, but there are so many of them that they amount to more than 2,000,000 francs.

The Man, Not His Clothes.

On October 2, 1795, a wager came off at Brighton between Sir John Lade—who figures in Conan Doyle's "Rodney Stone"—and Lord Cholmondeley, whom he had undertaken to carry twice around the Steine, pickaback; as his lordship was stout and Sir John a little fellow, the concourse was large to see it; but he had no backers. "Now, my lord, strip," said he; "I undertook to carry you, but not your clothes." Whereby he won his bet without any exertion.

Quaker City Humor.

Many a good soul is on his uppers.

The croak of the crocus will soon be heard.

A floating debt—the yacht that isn't paid for.

A diner out—the one that matches and gets stuck for the bill.

Held for court—the fellow who is arrested for breach of promise.

The grass widow is probably called so because she is not under the sod.

Even the milk of human kindness will curdle if it isn't properly attended to.—Philadelphia Record.

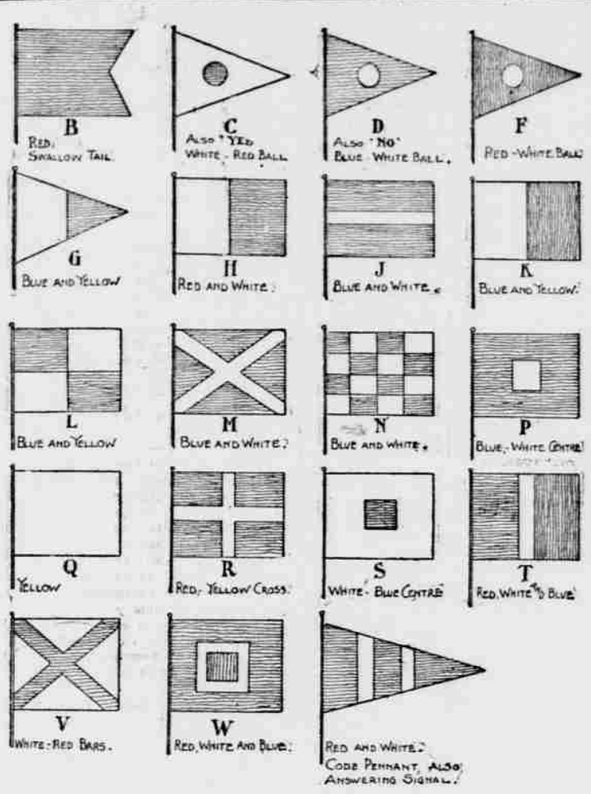
FLAG LANGUAGE

Interesting Codes of Signals Used at Sea

BY WILLIS ARDEN.

Nineteen flags and twenty-two forms of signals have been so arranged through man's ingenuity that they tell the tale of prosperity or distress to their sister vessels in transit, and by this international system "ships that pass in the night" may speak through silent lips to one another. Ships that go out to sea always bear away somebody's friends, whose lips have felt the parting salute, and whose hearts carry the last tender love message. These vessels plow through smooth or angry waters as the fates in their erratic moods may decree, and as vessel meets vessel on the great marine highway the working of the signal code is an operation of deep interest to all travelers.

Upon the red flame of the night rocket or the dull boom of the day gun, often hangs the fate of hundreds of human lives, and as long ago as 1857 an ingenious person devised a flag language, which he styled the "Commerical Code." This system was adopted by seafaring men belonging to Great Britain, Russia, Austria, France, Germany, America, Sweden, Denmark, Holland, Greece, Italy, Brazil, Spain and Portugal. This code, which is embodied in the "Commercial Code," was much the same as the "international system" of the present period. In this last-named system there are eighteen flags, divided into one burgee, four pennants, and thirteen square flags. These eighteen flags represent the eighteen consonant letters of the alphabet and constitute the cyphers of the code. In addition to the international there is also a code pennant, which is made to do service as the code signal, while it also served as the code's answering signal. The drawings that follow designate the significations of the respective flags.



INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM.

The ensuing description gives an idea of the color and general make-up of the nineteen flags and the letters of the alphabet that they represent:

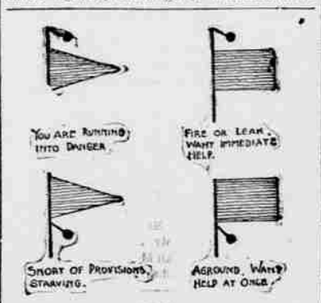
Burgee—B—Red, swallow tail.

Pennants—C—White, with red spots; D—Blue, with white spot; G—Yellow-blue, in two vertical stripes.

Square flags—H—White-red, in two vertical stripes; J—Blue-white-blue, in three horizontal stripes; K—Yellow-blue, in two vertical stripes; L—Blue and yellow, in four alternate checks; M—Blue, with white diagonal cross; N—Blue, and white, in sixteen alternate checks; P—Blue with white centers; Q—Yellow, quarantine; R—Red, with yellow right cross; S—White, with blue center; T—Red-white-blue, in three vertical stripes; V—White, with red diagonal cross; W—Blue-white-red in three colors.

Code pendant—Code signal—Red and white, in five vertical stripes. This code is also utilized as an answering signal.

There are often times that ships passing in opposite directions find themselves many miles apart, with a savage sea running between them, and for the accommodation of such distances there is a special code, made by the setting of certain signals, which are known as distance signals, drawings of which follow:



SOME LONG DISTANCE SIGNALS.

Referring again to the international signals, which the various vessels carry as they stagger about over the drunken sea, it is of deep interest to know something about their mute language. The waving tongues of these flags speak as if from the briny throat of Neptune, and some of the messages that they send from vessel to sister vessel are these:

H B—Want immediate assistance.

H D—No assistance can be rendered.

H F—We are coming to your assistance.

H J—Boat or lifeboat, cannot come.

H K—Boat in distress.

H L—Do not attempt to land your own boats.

H M—Man overboard.

H T—Damaged mast; cannot sail.

H V—Damaged rudder; cannot steer.

H W—Machinery disabled.

J B—Accident; want a surgeon.

J D—You are standing into danger.

J F—You are in a dangerous position.

J P—Heavy weather coming; look sharp.

K D—Stand by.

K Q—Channel has altered; do not try it.

K R—Dangerous without a pilot.

L S—Put out to sea at once; get an offing.

L V—Shift your berth; your berth is unsafe.

M L—Quit the vessel as fast as possible.

N C—In distress; want assistance.

N D—I must abandon the vessel.

N F—Do not abandon me.

N G—I am unmanageable.

N H—I am on fire.

N P—Fire gains rapidly; take people off.

N S—I have sprung aleak.

N T—Leak gaining rapidly.

N V—I am sinking.

P C—Want assistance; mutiny.

P D—Want immediate assistance.

P F—Want boat or boats immediately.

P H—Want food; starving.

P J—Want coal immediately.

P K—Want an anchor.

P S—Want hands.

Q C—Repeat signal.

In order to provide signals by night, there are various codes used, including the distress gun, this being fired at intervals of one minute. In extreme cases barrels of tar or oil are burned upon the deck. At other times, shells or rocks of various colors are fired at brief intervals.

In addition to, and used in connection with, the international signal code, one of the most notable is known as the semaphore system. It consists of masts, each of which is furnished with three arms, there being eighteen of these masts which stand, respectively, for the letters B, C, D, F, G, H, J, K, L, M, N, P, Q, R, S, T, V, W. The masts are utilized for long-distance signal work after the following plan:

1. The disk at the top of the mast indicates that signals are being made by the international code, and it must remain there while so signaling. It is a large, black disk with white rim.

2. Any arm pointing downward represents a pennant.

3. Any arm in a horizontal position represents a ball.

4. Any arm pointing upward represents a flag.

When the arms are idle they are invisible, lying parallel with the masts. The ensuing table will give an idea of what the semaphore system is like:

The following alphabetical arrangement reveals a portion of the language used through the international code:

B—Ask name of ship or signal in sight.

C—Yes.

D—No.

F—Repeat signal or hoist it in a more conspicuous place.

G—Cannot distinguish your flags. Come nearer or make distance signals.

H—You may communicate by the semaphore, if you please.

THE SEMAPHORE SYSTEM.

J—Stop or bring to. Something to communicate.

K—Have you any telegrams or dispatches for me?

L—Want a pilot. Can I have one?

M—Want a tug. Can I have one?

N—What is the meteorological weather forecast?

P—Call attention of signal station in sight.

Q—Vessel asks for orders by telegraph from owner, Mr. —— at ——.

R—Report me by telegraph to my owner, Mr. —— at ——.

S—Send the following message by telegraph.

T—Send the following message by signal letters through the telegraph.

Some of the examples of the signals used in the code may be found as follows:

Two-flag signal, with burgee uppermost:

1. Attention or demand; B D, meaning "What ship is that?"

2. H B, meaning "Vessels that wish to be reported all well, show your distinguishing signals."

Two-flag signal, with pennant uppermost:

3. Compass; G T, meaning north by west.

Two-flag signal, with square flag uppermost:

4. Urgent, danger, or distress; N V, meaning "I'm sinking."

5. Urgent, danger, or distress; P F, meaning "Want boats immediately."

Three-flag signal:

6. General; D S K, meaning "Do you come from any port putting you in quarantine?"

7. General; G L C, meaning "When were your last observations for latitude?"

8. General; H T F, meaning "During the monsoon."

9. General; L P H, meaning "Will the sounding be a safe guide?"

10—General; P Q H, meaning, "Tell my owner ship answers remarkably well."

Four-flag signals, with burgee uppermost:

11—Geographical; B N C W, meaning "Moreton Bay."

Four—Flag signal, with pennant G uppermost.

12—Man-of-war; G T V R, meaning "H M ship Sultan."

Four—Flag signal, with square flag uppermost.

13—Merchant vessel; K M T V, meaning "The steamer Baltic of Liverpool."

Four—Flag signals, with pennant C, D or F uppermost.

14—Vocabulary; D V K S, meaning "The steamer is getting ready to come off to you."

15—Vocabulary; D N R K, meaning "What is the premium of insurance?"

The code, in its total, covers many pages. Those signals that are classified as urgent run from H D to S D. The importance of these signals cannot be over-estimated, and it may be well to state that they are never disregarded at sea. In instances of caution, distress, or danger, as well as when indicating the intended port of a vessel, or when crying out for aid in the case of fire, leak or disablement, or in any other of the wants that overtake these floating ocean palaces, the nightly service of the signal code is brought into action. The general signals embrace the flag F, G or H uppermost, when relating to latitude, longitude, time, wind, weather, fog, sea, ice, storm, nautical books and instruments.

A fact deserving mention is that which relates to the symbol N C, this being the special distress signal, adopted according to the merchant shipping act of 1873, while the special pilot signal is P C.

The blue-eyed girl smoothed out a $5 bill, and gazed at it in a meditative way.

"Some people find fault with the artistic beauty of this picture," said she, "but to me it is perfectly satisfactory."

"It would be more satisfactory if it were a twenty," suggested the girl in the scarlet shirt-waist; "then you could get that new gown you wanted."

The blue-eyed girl said nothing; but she had her gown, all the same, and nobody but herself knew what it had cost till after it was worn out.

It was an outing cloth, but not of the usual outing cloth patterns. It was black, with a tiny hair-line of old gold, and a beautiful soft velvety look when it was new. She made it up with a little zouave jacket of old gold velvet, a collar of silk, and a full front of silk, also old gold. It was so different from the usual outing cloth, and she wore it so serenely, that nobody would ever have thought its being just what it was. It was evidently new, it was stylishly cut and becoming, and with bonnet and gloves gotten up carefully to match, out of the $3 left after the gown was finished, the blue-eyed girl looked, as she felt, well dressed.

The materials were as follows: Gown, $1, (ten yards at 10 cents a yard), silk, off the bargain counter, 40 cents; velvet, 20 cents; linings, 40 cents—for on so cheap a gown she didn't think it was worth while to pay more than 3 cents a yard for cambric. Of course, she would rather have had a pretty cloth gown at ten times the money, but she had only that $5 bill out of which to provide bonnet, gloves and gown for the next three months, and that was the way she took to do it. The outing cloth gown went to church, concerts and the theater all winter, and not being subjected to any hard wear, did not betray itself.

* * *

Much has been said and written about the importance of buying good materials. But think a minute. Every rule has its exceptions. Here is the gown of serge or camel's hair or Henrietta cloth, which costs from $1 to $2 a yard. If you have time to sponge and press and make over, and if quiet colors are chosen, so that the same gown will not be recognized as having done duty for the last three seasons, and if it doesn't cost too much to get fresh trimmings and things when the styles change, and if you are not tired of the sight of that gown before it is worn out, this is all very nice. But what if you haven't time to do any sewing, and the dressmaker charges $7 or $8 just the same for making the dress over as she did when it was new, and makes a great deal more fuss over the job?

What if the dress shows that it was made over, and looks pieced and contrived? What if a large tear or grease-spot lands in the middle of the front breadth during the first week of wear, and you can't match the goods? And what if the gown and its making cost so much that you can't afford a pair of new shoes or a new hat, and don't dare to spend a dime to have your gloves cleaned until it is absolutely necessary? All these things are liable to be included in the experience of the girl who has only so much to spend on her toilet, and puts it all into the new gown.

But it is not necessary to do this, and it is not necessary to wear 10-cent gowns, either; although the exigencies of the situation did make it advisable for one girl, once on a time. There are pretty serges and soft wools at 50 cents a yard, or even less, and there are dressmakers, young girls who are clever with their fingers and work well under direction, who don't charge as much as the fashionable madames, and need the work more. And an extra number of yards can be secured if the cheap gown is selected, which renders the wearer happily independent of accidents, since she knows she can take out the whole front breadth if necessary, or put in a pair of new sleeves if the fashion changes. And accidents are not nearly as likely to happen, somehow or other, under these circumstances.

* * *

Last, but not least, there is the ready-made gown—last resource of the woman who loves pretty things, and cannot afford many of them, because it is so destructive of individuality. Who wouldn't rather have a costume which brought out, with every line and tint and fashioning, some especial good point of her own, than to slip into a shirt-waisted suit, just like Mrs. A's, or Mrs. B's, or Mrs. C's, on the next block? No matter if Mrs. C. is the wife of the richest man in town, one's own individuality is worth something, and though women are accused of following the fashion in a sheep-like manner, most of us like our own way pretty well, after all, when we have time for it.

If one must patronize the ready-made clothing counter, my advice is buy the skirt there. That has to be plain anyway, in this day and generation, and it can be gotten at amazingly low prices. The blue-eyed girl says she got one last spring for $1.19, which is not worn out yet, after a whole summer's service. Then the two or three different waists, one severely plain, perhaps, one of silk for evening, and another half way between the two in style, make a pretty and varied outfit at small cost.

* * *

One trick which my little friend of the outing cloth expedient now and then employs is, I think, original with herself. She says that if she had had even one old gown to make over she wouldn't have bought a new one at all. She wears her new gown for "best" the first winter in the good old-fashioned way; then she puts it on for office wear, one winter of which reduces the sleeves to rags. The skirt is still good for a summer's use with the ubiquitous shirt waist; but autumn finds it ragged as to the hem. Then this same gown again does duty for theaters and concerts and other gay occasions. Velvet or fur trimming replaces the ragged edge of the skirt; velvet cuffs and silk ruffles make the waist presentable, and the old gown, though it would go to pieces in three weeks of hard usage, lasts all winter in this way, and when it finally goes into the rag bag the velvet and silk is not worn out and can be used on something else. Almost any old gown will pay for this sort of treatment, and look as well as it did when it was new.

* * *

It is a question whether home dressmaking "pays," and it is a question which every woman must settle for herself. If one has a talent for it, it does; and if one can acquire a talent for it, it may. But if one must tremble over trying-on and worry over styles, and get backaches and ophthalmia over the sewing, and go to work next day in a state of nervous irritation, induced by trying to do that for which one has no talent, it most emphatically does not pay. Perhaps that is one reason why men don't break down quite so often as women. Nobody ever expected a business man to make his own boots.

There is a fascination about making pretty things, though, if one has the time and talent for it. It is pleasant to feel independent of other people's brains and fingers; it is pleasant to save money for one's little personal pleasures (or for somebody dearer than oneself); it is pleasant to add just that much beauty to the world, in whatever way. But whether one has clever fingers or a clever brain that can employ other people's cleverness, women need never be ashamed of a talent for dress—and most of them aren't. It is one of the ways in which the gayety of nations is increased.

A Scuffle With a Bear.

Mrs. Elizabeth Schroeder, of this city, has in her possession a bear that was killed under exciting circumstances. John Genthner, of Bald Eagle township, a few days ago was tramping over the mountain in the Scootac region in quest of game, when he saw a bear under a rock. The brave hunter approached in close quarters to the animal; so close, indeed, that Mr. Brain came out and swiped the man with his paw. A scuffle ensued, but Mr. Genthner finally broke loose, and, stepping back a few paces, up with his gun and sent two shots into the bear's head, which killed him. The bear is seven and a half feet long and weighs 500 pounds.—Lock Haven Democrat.

Ancient Geometry.

"Oh, by the way," observed Archimedes, "did you ever try to square the circle?" "No," said Socrates. "It was more than I could do to square myself." Even as he spoke the shade of Xantippe could be heard demanding why he hadn't brought up the coal.—Detroit Journal.

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