

### THE LINER'S PURSER.

His Difficult Role on a Transatlantic Steamship.

DIPLOMAT AND SAILOR TOO

This Officer Must Absolutely Possess Tact and Be All Things to All Men. A Purser's Skillful Play With Two Antagonistic Opera Queens.

In the smoking room of a great transatlantic liner which arrived in New York recently, after a trip made in not far from record time, conversation among those who were not at cards turned to the purser of the vessel, who by his courteous bearing, his well ordered energy and air of savoir faire generally had attracted from the passengers an unusual degree of attention. The talk began about half an hour before it was time for the lights to go out. The man with the pipe had observed that the officer's activity was simulated. The man sitting next, the head of a brokerage firm, smoking the most expensive cigarette to be had in the case near the door, held differently. It shortly came to a "showdown," to fall into smoking room vernacular.

"Well, if you say so. What does he do, so much?" asked the man with the pipe.

The smoker started to tell him. He began perhaps twenty minutes before closing time, and when one after another the electric lights faded and died he was not half through. This should indicate that the purser is a man of some importance aboard ship, and those who so read it will not drift far from a true course. He is an important man—in his way the most important in the employ of the steamship company.

Even ashore and in some other vocation the purser would be a striking personality. No doubt in a way his office makes him what he is, but at the same time he had to be of the stuff of which pursers are made before he ever saw a steamship. This may be read to mean that instinctively he must be a good fellow. Oh, assuredly he must be every inch of that. He must have a handshake and smile as magnetic as were President McKinley's. He must tell a good story well and listen to a bad one with laughter. At the same time in his mental and physical equipment he must be endowed with a not insignificant alloy of iron, and he must stand firm in emergency and frown and swear with facility equal to that which he evinces in slapping a man upon the back or in touching the springs of mirth.

He should be and is all things to all men. He is sympathetic as well as hale and hearty and well met. He has a head for figures, which could not be otherwise, since he is the company's financial man afloat. He pays all salaries; he cares for the money and valubles of passengers, which, of course, necessitates honesty of a sterling sort; he pays for all supplies; he knows all about the cargo and all about the passengers. A purser who forgets the face of a man who has sailed on his craft once before is of little value to his employers. When Congressman Jones goes abroad for his summer vacation, he proceeds forthwith to the purser's office, a smile illumining his face and seasoned hand outstretched.

"Why, how do you do, Congressman Jones?" This is what he gets.

Do you suppose that this representative of the people will ever afterward sail for Europe with any other purser, on any other vessel or line? Not so long as pride lurks within the bosom of mankind.

The purser in this respect must be the equal of a hotel clerk, and every one knows how utterly inept the man who stands at the gateway of a glided hostelry would be without his memory for faces and names. Not alone that, but besides being a man of resources and ability and a genial wit the purser must possess in eminent degree that God given qualification, that subtle yet luminous estate of moral and mental equipoise, which men call tact—courteous felicitas. If an old patron of the line finds fault because the stateroom in which he usually travels has been taken by some one else a month before, it is the purser who must apply soothing verbal embrocation and make clear the fact that the former stateroom compares in no way with the present apartment.

Complaints as to food come to the purser through the chief steward for final adjudication, and if in the galley there are signs of dissatisfaction or unrest he must enter the realm of pots and pans and argue with the two assistant cooks, it may be, until they shake hands or at least promise not to allow their personal jealousies to interfere with their culinary duties until they reach port.

They do tell a story of a purser who, in arranging for the usual Wednesday night entertainment, offended two prima donnas—one a queen of Wagnerian and the other an empress of light opera—by assigning the principal place on the programme to the pride of English burlesque. It may have been that the purser, being a Britfisher, was swayed by patriotic emotion to such a degree as to veil the necessity of handling a problem manifestly delicate with the usual Machiavellian adroitness of his craft. At all events, the mistake soon became apparent.

The exponent of Wagner sulked in her cabin, coining delicious Teutonic swear words. Some one taking her side, said something in the presence of the English beauty, and there was

a hiatus in that entertainment or in the plans for that entertainment which made plenty of small talk and no small amount of large talk, for the matter of that. The captain sent for the purser, who already knew more about the situation than the master did, explained the situation and then proceeded to the bridge, a tact suggestion that he was paid to run the ship and not to settle fool contretemps between fool women. In other words, it was the purser's move in this game of emotional chess. The purser moved. He went to the burlesque favorite and dictated a letter which she between sobs of rage wrote. Then the purser borrowed from the conservatory a bouquet of the most beautiful flowers he could pick and sent them, together with the note, to the room of the operatic queen. The purser has this note now. As nearly as the writer remembers it reads something as follows:

My Adorable and Gifted Mrs. M.—It is not for me to assume the place of honor on the programme tomorrow night when upon this vessel abides the queen of all songs. Accept these flowers! Accept my love! Accept my request to appear wherever on the programme may please your fancy! Peccavisti! Gasundhetti! Prost! (or something of the sort). At thy foot believe me, ELSIE BONBON.

Of course the celebrated protagonist of heavy opera accepted the flowers, sent her love, her thanks, her esteem, and asked—nay, begged—that she be allowed to relinquish the honor cast at her feet. The burlesque queen, need it be said, appeared in the place to which the programme assigned her. This man, as will appear, is no slouch of a purser.

Pursers are born, not made. They are selected by steamship companies with special eye to the duties they are called upon to perform. A large line, such as the North German Lloyd line, for instance, or the Hamburg line, selects a man for the position and puts him to work in the purser's department with the title junior assistant purser. Above him there is the assistant purser, who is in line as soon as vacancy shall occur for the office of purser on one of the humbler ships of the line. No man is ever promoted from the assistant purser's office of a large vessel to be head of department on the same vessel. He goes to any of the smaller craft, from which a purser has been elevated to fill the vacancy on the larger vessel.

A purser on one of the great German boats is a man to reckon with and a constant delight to the soul. He knows the name of every wealthy ocean voyager of whatever nationality, and when in the mood he can stand in his office and retail delightful bits of anecdote and flashing characterization of those who figure prominently on the passenger list.

"Jones! Who is Jones?" he will exclaim reproachfully to an inquisitive newsgatherer. "Well, he is der white-wash king of South Dakota. So."

Pursers have full charge of the ship accounts. They pay the salaries of some 700 men, and at the same time it is the purser who must visit the personal and baggage declarations of passengers, clearing up cloudy points to the end that when the customs officers come aboard the passengers will "go through" without trouble or annoyance. He is also responsible for the cargo. He it is that checks the manifests and signs them, which signature is taken to mean that the vessel has in her hold just what the company contracted for and nothing more. He is held responsible for the proper condition, in fact, of every paper pertaining to the ship, which is a task worth the full time of any ordinary man. An officer of a great line in speaking of the purser and his duties said that he would advise no young man to encourage purser ambition unless he loved work, constant and arduous.

On the other hand, pursers have more fun on shipboard than any other officer. Their duties bring them in close contact with passengers, and many firm friendships are thus formed. One of the most popular was an Englishman who, strange to say, was attached to the French line. He could speak French, of course, as well as he could English and carried off affairs with Gallic tact and facility. He is now enjoying the fruits of a successful life saving invention. Another purser in the White Star line was so popular that his friends urged him to come ashore and start a fashionable restaurant in this city. He yielded to the temptation, but the result was not all that could have been hoped for.

So far as running a ship is concerned, a purser is absolutely lost. But he knows the management of small boats, and in time of accident he has charge of one.—New York Post.

Don't Complain. If your chest pains and you are unable to sleep because of a cough. Buy a bottle of Ballard's Hoarhound Syrup, and you won't have any cough. Get a bottle now and that cough won't last long. A cure for all pulmonary diseases. Mr. M. J., Galveston, Texas, writes: "I can't say enough for Ballard's Hoarhound Syrup. The relief it has given me is all that it is necessary for me to say." For sale at Hart's drug store.

The Comfortable Fortune. "What is your idea of a comfortable fortune?" asked the ambitious youth.

"One," answered the man of experience, "that is big enough to buy you everything you want and not big enough to attract the attention of the grand jury."—Washington Star.

A Novelty. Guest—I hear you are going to give up housekeeping. Host—Sh! Not so loud! My wife wants to have the satisfaction of discharging the cook.—Puck.

### THE DETECTIVE STORY

Origin and Growth of the Clever Amateur Sleuth.

VOLTAIRE WAS HIS CREATOR.

The Great French Writer Introduced Him to the World of Fiction—The Genius of Poe and Gaboriau and Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes.

Most persons who read detective stories, and most literary critics, too, believe that this very popular form of fiction was invented by Edgar Allan Poe. They point to his story of "The Purloined Letter" as being the first of its kind—the first in which is introduced the man of keen mind, of close reasoning and of constructive imagination, who is able to piece together certain facts that are known and then by brilliant deduction to pass from them to other facts which are not known, but the truth of which he is able to establish beyond a doubt.

Poe himself had a mind precisely of this character—the mind of a mathematician, subtle, logical and capable of searching analysis. He once gave a remarkable illustration of what he could do as an investigator of mysterious crime. A young shopgirl named Mary Rogers was found murdered under circumstances which excited great public interest in New York. The police were completely baffled, though they advanced a theory which was plausible in part. Poe, taking the facts that were admitted, wove them into a story, the scene of which he laid in Paris and which he called "The Mystery of Marie Rogot." Then from what was known he passed by deductive reasoning to what was quite unknown and worked out a solution to the puzzle which no professional detective had been able to explain. Years afterward the confession of a dying man afforded proof that Poe was right and that he had reconstructed accurately the whole series of events which led to the death of Mary Rogers.

This remarkable achievement fixed in the public mind the notion that this use of logic blended with imagination was original with Poe. As a matter of fact, it is almost certain that Poe, who was deeply versed in French literature, got the suggestion of the method from reading certain passages in the oriental tale called "Zadig," by Voltaire. In this book a young man is questioned as to whether he had seen a stray dog and horse that might have passed him on his journey. In reply he describes very accurately the peculiarities of both, though he had not seen them. He had deduced his knowledge from observing certain indications along the way—the nature of the footprints and many other signs which the ordinary person would either not have noticed or would have been too dull to understand. Here is really the germ of the conception which Poe so brilliantly elaborated in the story of "The Purloined Letter," where we find exhibited the striking contrast between the working of a usual mind and the achievements of a mind of exceptional power and training.

Poe's central figure, the amateur detective, was afterward caught up and elaborated with great effect by several French writers, of whom the chief was Emile Gaboriau. Gaboriau gave the world the character of M. Lecoq in the remarkable novel of that name. Lecoq is a professional detective, but appears in that book as a novice, inexperienced, but full of intelligence and enthusiasm and obliged to work out his clues against the secret opposition of his official chief, Gevrot, who is jealous of the young detective. In the background is the interesting figure of the real amateur detective, old Father Tire-au-Clair ("Bring-to-light"), a retired tradesman who studies crime from sheer love of the intellectual puzzle which it affords him and which he solves by purely scientific deduction.

Sir Conan Doyle in creating Sherlock Holmes openly acknowledged his great indebtedness to Poe. Like Poe's hero, Holmes works apart from the official police and is consulted by them when they are wholly at a loss. Many of the incidents in the Holmes cycle of stories were suggested by the inventions of Poe. Yet it is only fair to say that Doyle has gone one step further than his master. Poe's characters are abstractions. They are like chessmen on the board and excite interest only because of the complexity of the problem which they are made to solve. Doyle's characters, on the other hand, are drawn with sympathy and a shrewd insight into human nature. They entertain us by their whims and individual traits no less than by the adventures through which they pass. Thus Holmes' addiction to the cocaine habit, his trick of smoking great quantities of shag tobacco when thinking out a problem, his dislike of women, his skill as a boxer—in fact, a score of traits all give him individuality and make us think of him as a fascinating character quite apart from his powers as a deductive reasoner. And it is so with the minor personages as well—Watson, the somewhat obtuse chronicler of the adventures; Lestrade and Gregson of the official police and Moriarty, the arch criminal.

But, however brilliant Poe may have been, or however ingeniously Gaboriau may have spun tangled plots, or however ably Conan Doyle may have given life and reality to the central figure of his stories, they all derive their inspiration, whether consciously or not,

from the clever tale told by the famous Frenchman before Poe saw the light.—Scrap Book.

A Trumpeter's Courage. During a French campaign in Africa many brave deeds were done, but none braver perhaps than Trumpeter Escoffier's rescue of his captain. The Arabs were pressing the cavalry of Captain De Cott, and everything was in confusion, when De Cott's horse was killed under him and the capture of the officer and the whole company seemed inevitable. At that moment the trumpeter of the company leaped from his horse and gave it to De Cott, saying: "Take him. Your life is necessary. Mine is useless. You can rally the men. It does not matter about my neck." De Cott mounted the horse, rallied the company and continued the fight. Trumpeter Escoffier was taken prisoner, but the Arabs, who adore courage, had witnessed the scene and, appreciating the nobility of the man, treated him with generosity. His trumpet was a source of great entertainment to his captors, who used often to make him give the signals of the various military movements. One day Escoffier gave the whole repertory with great gusto, finishing up by blowing the summons for a charge with an extended flourish.

"What was that?" asked the Arab chief.

"Ah," said Escoffier, "you will hear that soon, I hope. That is the signal for a charge!"

A Rare Vegetable. In choosing his ground the truffle is guided by the time of year, the character of the soil and his own judgment and experience, says a London journal. On familiar beats he knows exactly where to go, and in a strange country is guided by certain general principles. Where fern and bracken grow, where furze is plentiful, where there are reeds and rushes, wherever the land is moist and sour, it is hopeless to expect truffles. They love a light soil and yet never attain any size or perfection on a poor one. By far the greatest quantity are obtained under the shadow of beech trees, but very fine specimens are often found under the cedar, especially in avenues and grounds where the land has been well trenched. The lime is another good tree for them, and so is the evergreen oak. In France the oak is their favorite tree. Early in the season—that is to say, in September and October—quantities are to be obtained on the roadsides (sometimes in ground so hard it would need a pickax to open it), on railway embankments and on the outside of copses and covers. Later, when leaves have fallen and the sun is able to penetrate glade and thicket, the inside beds are most productive. They do not come under very young trees and disappear entirely from old woods.

Sarcasm in the Jury. The second day drew to its close with the twelfth jurymen still unconvinced.

"Well, gentlemen," said the court officer, entering quietly, "shall I, as usual, order twelve dinners?"

"Make it," said the foreman, "eleven dinners and a bale of hay."—New York Press.

Every Man His Own Boss. "When did Henpecke get a divorce?"

"Why, he isn't divorced. What made you think so?"

"Well, he was talking about the unalloyed satisfaction at his time of life of being his own boss."—Judge.

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