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**CRIMPING IN AMERICA AS  
 VIEWED IN GREAT BRITAIN**

**Liverpool Journal of Commerce Discusses  
 Situation From Standpoint  
 of Shipowners.**

[Liverpool Journal of Commerce.]  
 The question of crimping is one which has been before the public for years, and is yet far from practical solution, notwithstanding the avowed determination of the United States authorities to put an effectual stop to the evil. Some correspondence has passed between the board of trade and the shipping federation on the subject, but apparently to little purpose. The latter body takes exception to portions of the report of the United States commissioner of navigation dealing with desertion of seamen from "foreign" ships at San Francisco, and evidence is tendered in the form of a sworn affidavit by one of the witnesses examined—a shipmaster—that certain matters referred to in the commissioner's report were absolutely untrue, and the deductions drawn not such as were warranted, the scope of the inquiry being insufficient, and the basis therefore unsound. It is alleged in the report that causes connected with the internal discipline of the ships are responsible for the desertions of seamen to an even greater extent than the crimping system which obtains at San Francisco.

As supporting this argument the case of French vessels is quoted, the desertions from such being considerably fewer than in British, German or Norwegian. This is said to be due to the pecuniary inducements offered in French ships, which in order to earn their bounty must have three-fourths of the crew Frenchmen. San Francisco in any case is not the worst port by any means for desertions, and should not be taken as representing all that can be said against the systems prevailing in other places, such as Portland, Tacoma and various ports where wages rule even higher, and "blood money" is outrageous. But even at San Francisco desertion causes a direct loss to owners, because of the higher wages to be paid and the shipping fees to be met. In any case there is no inducement to masters either for their personal gain or that of their owners to seek the clearance of their fore-castles. Doubtless in very exceptional cases masters have assisted, directly or indirectly, in the desertion of some members of their crews, but these cases are so few as to be ignored, and cannot in any case be advanced as constituting a majority or warranting the statement complained of.

With regard to the comparison with French vessels, there are many considerations which conduce to their crews remaining by their vessels, which are ignored by the commissioner of navigation. These men have seldom any knowledge of the English language, and the temptation to desert in a foreign country is less than in the case of British or even of Norwegian and German seamen. They are as a rule men of a better class than those composing the mercantile marine of this country. French crews are usually recruited from the same district—often from the same town or village—

and frequently include many members of the same family. There is consequently a bond of cohesion among them which is not to be found in the case of British crews. French seamen are during the whole of their career more or less under naval discipline, and cannot readily escape the consequences of misconduct. In his letter, Cuthbert Laws says:

"More important still, as nullifying the conclusions of the commissioner of navigation, is the fact that inquiries which my executive have made in France have resulted in the information from an authoritative quarter, that the failure of a French vessel to maintain the proper complement of French hands on board during the currency of a voyage which had been commenced under the prescribed conditions would not deprive the owners of that vessel of the bounty payment, if such failure could be shown to be due to desertion in foreign ports, which would constitute 'force majeure.' Under these circumstances the inference drawn by the commissioner of navigation in this connection falls to the ground."

The unreliability of the evidence taken in San Francisco is drawn attention to, but generally the facts elicited justify the shipowners' attitude with regard to crimping in that port. The suggestion of the consul general at San Francisco that the crews of British ships be paid off there, or should receive their wages weekly, is one that could scarcely be expected to appeal effectually to owners or captains as practical, and it is not incorrectly assumed that to initiate such a practice at a port where the wages were higher than at the port of shipment would prejudice owners and shipmasters, whose authority would be worth little. Owners ask if on the adoption of such a proceeding in special cases the board of trade would indemnify them against the claims of seamen for repatriation. The board of trade requested the opinion of the federation on the advisability of preventing the possibility of profit accruing to the ship through the desertion of members of the crew, and in reply they say that section 252 of the merchant shipping act, 1894, would be best rendered effective by the systematic prosecution of deserters by the board of trade, so that the order of a court for the forfeiture of their wages may be obtained, the balance of wages (if any) remaining after applying such forfeiture to the expenses caused to the shipowner by the desertion, would then legally accrue to the exchequer. If the board of trade should be prepared to adopt this course, the federation executive would be ready in cases where the circumstances are such as to preclude the possibility of proceedings against deserters, to advise members to pay voluntarily to the exchequer the balance (if any) of the deserters' wages remaining after deduction of the expenses caused by the desertion, and would raise no objection to a regulation making this course obligatory under conditions specified.

**The London 'Bus Driver.**

The last few days have seen the arrival in London of a great crowd of beauty, fashion and wealth. The American girl is here and she is teaching us all a thing or two in manners, conversation, dress and "hustle."

Our Anglo-American hotels are full to overflowing; there is an enormous demand for ice cream, soda and Niagara nuts; the polite gentlemen from Messrs. Cooks' are showing the mysteries of London to the admiring fair; and the 'bus driver is in his element.

In spite of all sorts of temptations the front seat on the top of an omnibus is the great attraction for Peony L. Potts and her merry sisters. Peony says that the car driver is altogether just rippin'—full of interesting information, full of sweet stories and quite a gentleman.

On the other hand, what does the 'bus driver think of Peony and her papa? One of them unburdened his soul to a Leader representative recently.

"There's Yankees—and Yankees!" he said. "There's cute Yankees and there's bloomin' cute Yankees. And I seem to have struck the bloomin' cute ones—and no mistake about it. There was one gent yesterday, as Bill pulled the 'bus up, for goin' up hill in White' all. He gets on the front seat and he says, 'Say, driver, give us the lay of this 'ere city of yours!' And I

showed 'im everything from Charles the bloomin' First to the Bank. And he wags his whiskers and says they're just all right for an old-fashioned place like London; and when I've talked myself dry, this Yankee he says 'Thank you, driver—and good mornin' to you. And if you ever come to New York city and call on Silas G. Bland I'll show you some of our little lions,' he says!

"And he gets down—after stoppin' the bloomin' 'bus again—and he never offers me a cent! But I guess my oar in afore he goes. I says, 'Thank you, sir, I'm havin' a two-quid trip to your city in the autumn!'"

"Well," says he, 'call on me and I'll tote you round!'"

"Thank you, sir," says I again. "And do you know what I shall do after your great kindness?"

"Well?" says he.

"I'll stand you 'arf a bitter for your trouble," I says. "And even that bit of lip didn't fetch 'im!"

"But the ladies! Well, they're little bits of all right. They're free enough with their money; and wot's more, they'll swaller any story you like to tell 'em! And I've got a nice little scheme on my next day off. I'm takin' three of 'em from the Hotel Cecil round to see the sights. I'm only chargin' them my own day's wages—seven bob and exes."—London Leader.

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