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The Most Valued Possession of the Sea Captain.

The Making of Chronometers a Refined Art That Is Followed by But Few—Expensive Instruments.

New York, as the leading seaport of the country, is the center of an important industry on which depends in a large measure the safety of thousands of ocean travelers, says the Philadelphia Ledger. This is the manufacturing, and particularly the rating, of marine chronometers. Nearly every shipmaster, upon entering New York after an ocean voyage, obtains from the customhouse a permit to land his chronometer, so that it may be rated according to standard time. This rating may be likened to the daily comparison which the man with the fine watch makes with his jeweler's timepiece.

In the case of a chronometer the adjuster keeps a careful record of its variation, and this record goes with the clock when it is returned to the ship. The importance to a captain of knowing whether his chronometer is running fast or slow cannot be overestimated, for, although it may vary only five seconds a month, each second makes a difference of four miles in a ship's course, and a mistake of such a short distance, if not corrected might result in a wreck and the loss of many lives. Knowing the exact variation of his chronometer, the captain is, therefore, able to make the necessary allowance for it when he ascertains the latitude and longitude of the vessel after taking his sight, or, in other words, after determining the angular position of the sun through the use of the sextant.

Many of the large ocean liners carry three chronometers, the ordinary vessel one and the deep-water ships sometimes two or three, but the life of an ocean timepiece, if well taken care of, is 100 years and more, and accordingly the maker has to meet no great demand. As a matter of fact, a chronometer really goes out of service only when it sinks with a vessel. A shipmaster, when about to abandon his command at sea, invariably thinks of four things that should be saved—his logbook, sextant, compass and chronometer. With these and a fair supply of provisions he feels a certain sense of security when he risks his life in an open boat. A derelict with a chronometer on board is indeed a rarity. And when one reads of a captain who has been unable to save his chronometer the story is indubitable proof that the summons to leave the vessel was so urgent as not to admit a moment's delay. Leave the ship's cat if you will, but save the chronometer, might well be taken as an ocean maxim.

Though carefully nursed, the chronometer meets with many adventures. It may go through fire, shipwreck and other perils of the sea, but rarely does the regular, distinct ticking ever stop forever. If a captain dies or his vessel is condemned it finds another owner or another berth and this it shifts about from ship to ship, changing hands continually and traveling at odd times all the seven seas.

The manufacturing of marine chronometers in this country is confined to four firms, three of which are located in New York, and probably the whole output for a year amounts to 500 or even fewer. As with other articles, the price of chronometers varies according to quality and workmanship. The cheapest cost about $200 each, while the United States government, which naturally buys the best, pays sometimes as much as $375.

The movements of chronometers are usually imported "blank" from England—that is, only the plates and wheels are brought over. The manufacturer here provides the balance, springs, pivots, jewels and other parts needed to complete the whole, together with the brass-bound box in which the clock is placed. Being set in gimbals within the box, the chronometer will remain in a horizontal position when the vessel rolls or pitches, and by this means the poise of the balance is not disturbed.

It takes about three months to manufacture a chronometer and another three months to adjust it, though makers declare that the timepiece should not be sent to sea for two years after completion, as the delicate mechanism must be tested in various ways to obtain a perfect regulation. This adjustment, as the regulation is called, is something that requires the utmost skill and really is the most important feature of the maker's art. Sudden changes of temperature, humidity and electric currents will affect the speed, balance and hairspring, and therefore all the running parts must be so compensated and regulated that whatever contingency may arise there will still be the steadiness which allows no capricious variations. Old-fashioned chronometers were built to run eight days without winding, but these have been superseded by the 56-hour timepiece. Fifty years ago the chronometer was brought to its present state of perfection, and since that time, despite modern ingenuity, makers have found no reason to make any alteration in the principal parts of its mechanism.

For news and opinions—the Oregonian.

Morrow County, Oregon.

Morrow County is a new country, and like all other new countries, is awaiting development.

Located in the Columbia river valley, and skirted on the South with a spur of the Blue mountains, within the boundaries of Morrow county is a territory 75 miles in length by 35 miles in width, and containing 1,313,280 acres of land. Formerly stockraising was the principal industry, but latterly the fertility of the land is bringing agriculture to the front. Immense wheat crops are grown with little cultivation, the soil being mixed with a volcanic ash which is very rich in wheat producing qualities. The 1904 crop will aggregate 1,400,000 bushels, much of it from virgin soil.

Morrow county has thousands of head of sheep, horses and cattle. The wool production for 1904 was 2,500,000 pounds. Alfalfa and fruit growing are profitable industries, rapidly growing in importance. The county has also a great coal field, soon to be developed.

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