

A SYSTEM OF PETTY FINES.

The Way the Ever Ready Scran Bag Helps to Keep the Ship Looking Spick and Span—Some Rules That Are Enforced in the Officers' Messes.

In the British navy to say that a thing is a custom of the service is to say that it must be done that way and no other. It is nowhere laid down, for instance, that the senior officer shall always enter a boat last and leave it first, but the expression on a certain captain's face might have led one to believe that one of the laws of the Medes and Persians had been broken when, on taking the newly joined chaplain ashore with him on one occasion, he said, "Now, then, padre, jump in," and the reverend gentleman politely replied, "After you, sir."

This custom is one of the oldest in the service, says the Grand Magazine. It doubtless dates from before the days of Drake, if not, indeed, from those of Noah himself, probably the last to enter the ark after all his juniors and proteges had been safely embarked. The gunroom mess consists of the subalterns, all other commissioned officers of equivalent rank and all midshipmen and cadets. Midshipmen are divided into two lots, senior and junior. The former are over eighteen years of age and are allowed many privileges, such as smoking and so on, denied to the juniors.

As a specimen of the customs which remind the juniors that they are still in bondage the one known as "fork in the beam" is worth notice. It may be sprung upon its victims at any time during or after dinner.

When the president of the mess sticks a table fork into one of the beams overhead, it is a signal for all juniors to clear out of the mess as fast as legs, arms or anything else can carry them. The last one receives several good whacks with a dirk scabbard on the most convenient part of his body as he disappears through the door. The scabbard that results would disturb the equilibrium of most older and more sedate diners than those usually found in a gunroom.

One of the most important and best known institutions in the service is the scran bag. It is well known that the allowance of paint and materials for keeping a ship clean, as laid down by the British admiralty, is quite inadequate for that purpose. My lords are much more generous nowadays than they used to be, but the first lieutenant commander has still to put his hand in his pocket if he wishes his ship to look really smart.

The small supply of these necessities which the admiralty provides for cleaning brasswork, etc., is augmented from the takings of the scran bag. A ship must be spick and span and tidy as any housewife could wish to see her home.

Nothing must be out of place, and nothing must be left lying about, but sailors, like other mortals, are only human and consequently leave articles of clothing and personal property in places where they ought not to. This is an offense for which they are liable to disciplinary punishment. But a brilliant though unknown officer many years ago devised a scheme by which all the articles thus found are promptly seized by the ship's police and placed in the scran bag.

There they remain until the next Thursday afternoon, which is the time set aside for men to make and mend clothes. The bag is then opened by the master at arms, and the owners may redeem their lost property by paying a fine of an inch of yellow soap for each article.

The price of this soap is a penny an inch, and the fine is usually paid in cash, not in kind. Should a man have something confiscated without which he can not manage to get on till the next Thursday he can redeem it at once by paying double. Not even officers are exempt from these penalties.

Several quaint rules are enforced in the officers' messes, the origin of which is lost in the oblivion of antiquity. For instance, one rule lays down that no officer may place his feet on the table unless he has sailed around both capes—i. e., Cape of Good Hope and the Horn. Any one not eligible found in this elegant attitude is fined drinks around by all the members who happen to be in the mess.

AN ARGUMENT OF FORCE.

Napoleon Smashed a Vase, and the Treaty Was Signed.

Early in April, 1797, the people of Austria demanded peace with France. Negotiations were begun in the vicinity of Leoben. Bonaparte, in an interview with the Austrian plenipotentiaries, said to them, "Your government has sent against me four armies without generals, and this time a general without an army." In the treaty which the Austrian commissioners projected the first article stipulated that the emperor of Austria thereby recognized the French republic. "Erase it!" exclaimed Napoleon. "The existence of the republic is as plain as the sun. This article is only fit for the blind. We are our own masters and shall establish any government we prefer. If one day the French people," he continued, "should wish to create a monarchy, the emperor might object that he had recognized a republic." The preliminaries were soon settled, Napoleon signing for France, thus placing himself on an equal footing with the emperor of Austria. The formal treaty known as Campo Formio was signed in October, 1797. Austria fulfilling the pledges she had already given. The Austrian plenipotentiary protested against the distribution of the provinces beyond the Adige. Napoleon was angered at this, and, seizing a vase, dashed it to the ground, exclaiming, "If it is not so arranged I will break your monarchy as I have broken this vase!" This argument of force, as demonstrated to the diplomat was convincing, and the treaty was signed.

A Caustic Rejoinder. A physician who had for fifteen years been one of the doctors of the Actors' fund and who attended hundreds of actors with no compensation whatever, wrote to a prominent manager and asked for some theater tickets. His request was refused, the manager asking what the doctor had ever done that he should be entitled to receive theater tickets gratis. The physician immediately replied. His letter contained a brief recital of his services to theatrical people. In conclusion he said: "Despite my services, as named above, I should not have thought of asking you for tickets had it not been that upon the occasion of the death of Mr. Blank you assured me that if you could ever serve me in any way whatever you would consider it a favor if I would call upon you. However, I bear you no ill will on account of your present action. I was very glad to attend Mr. Blank when he died in your box office, and I should be happy to do as much for you at any time."

Discharging the Cook. "Well, cook's gone at last, John," said Mrs. B. "Good. You must have had more courage than I gave you credit for to discharge her." "I didn't do it. She discharged herself. I flattered her so about her cooking that she thought she was too good to stay with us, and off she went."

Music Hath Charms. "Waiter!" called the customer in the restaurant where an orchestra was playing. "Yes, sir." "Kindly tell the leader of the orchestra to play something sad and low while I dine. I want to see if it won't have a softening influence on this steak!"—Tit-Bits.

Shifting the Blame. Husband—Where did I leave my spectacles last night? Wife—Let me see! I saw them somewhere, but I can't remember where it was. Husband—That's just like a woman—can't remember anything.—Exchange.

Coming Forth. Stage Manager—Why didn't you go on when you got your cue, "Come forth?" Super—O! was waitin' for the other three to go on first. Sure, an' how could O! come fourth if I wait first?"

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The Early Worm.

Entertaining a children's party at a certain millionaire's house in New York, a woman professional teller of stories to juveniles happened to employ the old proverb, "The early bird catches the worm." A little boy questioned the proverb promptly. "But wasn't the worm foolish," he asked, "to get up early and be caught?" "My dear," said the story teller, "that worm hadn't been to bed at all. He was just getting home."

Girl Friends. Nell—Did you tell her I couldn't come? Belle—Yes, and she seemed surprised. Nell—But didn't you explain to her that I've got the chicken-pox? Belle—Yes; that's what surprised her. She said you were no chicken.—Catholic Standard and Times.

Five Indispensable Drugs. "You need five drugs," said a foolish physician to a patient—"water, food, air, sleep and exercise." But the patient sought another doctor, and the foolish physician died poor.—Saturday Evening Post.

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"Say," exclaimed the man in a hoarse whisper as he met his wife at the depot, "didn't I telegraph you not to bring your mother?" "Yes," answered she, "but she opened the message and insisted on coming along to investigate."

"McLush has been arrested for drunkenness and wants you to bail him out." "Bail him out!" ejaculated Colonel Pepper, who had heard the remark indistinctly. "Good gracious, is he that full?"

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