

DAILY NEWS, SATURDAY

"OCEAN TRAMPS."

We have received for publication the following letter from a sea captain, who has had great experience in well-decked ships, to a friend. The letter was intended to be private, but the statements, we are informed, are entirely to be depended upon, and appear to us matter of public interest. We have omitted a few passages which might identify the writer :

"In giving you my experiences I do so in the language of an unlettered seaman without scientific knowledge. The only stability the cargo steamer has is obtained from her flat floor. Having no tumble-home and no turn in the bilge she is no sooner off her floor than she is on her broadside. If not most carefully nursed in heavy weather she will most certainly turn turtle. Her immense length of flat side without one atom of curve "sticks," as we express it, to an equally flat wall of water. Perhaps I should term it the attraction of cohesion between two immense surfaces. This attraction prevents the tramp rising smartly in a seaway, therefore it tumbles on deck in tons, doing immense damage to people and property. The former not noticed, the latter covered by that curse of seamen 'insurance.' In the 'tramp' the midship-section or extreme beam is carried close up to the extremities or rather butt-ends of the structure. The master is ordered to trim her on even keel to save pilotage, and to offer less resistance arising from the flat floor being 'angled.' Hence in a head sea, unless nursed, she 'sends' fearfully and ships send that sweep everything before them. In one of the 'tramps' the sea swept away her cabin in midships three times, gutting it from side to side, and sending everything over the stern, on the last occasion washing away the mate and three men, in fact the whole watch, as well as the bulwarks on the port side. The normal position of the tramp in heavy weather is, or should be, 'end on,' engines dead slow, with reefed after canvas, sheets in midships to pick her up as she falls off on either side, stand by telegraph to help her a little if wanted. Under any other treatment she will be missing. Under this management, and by constant watching, never having my clothes off, I have got across to United States in 21 to 26 days. Tramps are more 'tender' when loaded than in ballast, this owing to absence of tumble-home. A tramp when loaded to please the managing owner, is nine-tenths in the water. In ballast she is nine-tenths out of the water. A tramp in ballast is as dangerous as when loaded. She is too light to face a head wind and sea, falls off, and unless you can pay out 120 fathoms of chain cable, she will run away with you and beach herself and all hands. I have had to pay out cable as described in the North Sea. Before a gale in ballast the tramp is so light that as she rises on the sea the propeller is out of water, she then broaches to and lays in the trough of the sea. I believe many have unseated their boilers in this manner, and so perished. On the . . . of . . . I left . . . during a north-westerly gale, a 'mistral.' The . . . broached to with me, having lost her way as described. She laid with her head E.N.E. to E.S.E., and rolled terrifically. This brings me to the question of crew. From eight to midnight, mate and three men on watch, two at the wheel, one on the look-out. One of these two was the boatswain. He was sent to call the watch; mate taking his place at the wheel. He never returned. 'He must have been jerked overboard.' Had any man done this he would of course have been hanged; but as he was murdered by the . . . , or a production of modern science as applied to 'naval architecture,' there is no more to be said.

"Hundreds of shipmasters with whom I have conversed maintain that on the question of freeboard the Board of Trade Department is quite correct. Permit me to mention my experience. For two years I sailed the . . . with a freeboard of . . . 1.16in. to the foot depth of hold . . . Imagine, sir, my crossing the Atlantic with less than even this murderous freeboard during winter. I did it twice. Where I am at a loss is, how does this state of affairs escape the notice of the Board? for every voyage the 'side' is entered in official log and in articles. This is what makes 'moral cowards' of the average ship masters. They think the situation has the sanction of the Board, hence the apathy of masters. On the . . . of . . . a chief surveyor for the . . . coast raised my Plimsoll . . . inches, equal to 70 tons less cargo. The change in my vessel was simply wonderful. I and my crew are indebted to your officer for having in very heavy weather less anxiety than I and they have had for years. It is the last 'unholy straw,' the last pound of the 'shipping Shylock' that sinks tramps and drowns seamen.

"Now, sir, I believe I shall incur displeasure, for I am about to tell you that which I would insist on if I were in the position of the Right Honourable and courageous President of the Board of Trade, who has earned the love and gratitude of every British seaman. I should insist on a standard co-efficient of fineness for every cargo steamer made imperative by Act of Parliament. Now, make the Act retrospective by raising the freeboard of the present tramp until her displacement corresponds with the new type.

"I will now, sir, crave your indulgence for errors of composition and orthography, and conclude with the only apology I can offer you for the prolixity of this communication—I am an Englishman, and after 33 years at sea I grieve to have lived to witness our noble life-like vessels—vessels that the seaman loved next to his wife—ousted from the ocean by the cowardly-looking thief, the 'ocean tramp.' England must produce another Cromwell in shipping, or she will need the pen of a future Gibbon to record the 'decline and fall' of her supremacy on the ocean.—I am, &c."

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 1

FRENCH NEWS.

M. FERRY AND THE POPE

(FROM OUR CORRESPONDENT.)

PARIS, FRIDAY NIGHT.

The Catholic journal *Defense* says that the *France's* story of an understanding between M. Ferry and the Pope is pure imagination. No negotiations ever took place between the Pope and the Comte de Paris. The former, in reply to a letter announcing the death of the Comte de Chambord, sent his condolence, and the Comte de Paris thanked him. It is, however, significant, and in a way confirmatory of what the *France* said, that the *Defense* admits that the French Republican Government has latterly shown marks of deference to the Holy See although any decision is still suspended.

An employé in the gas company named Serran was to-day tried for having cried "Vive le Comte de Paris" at the Orleans station when the Count left for Madrid. He admitted being a member of a popular Royalist League, but denied that he had canvassed anybody to join him in the demonstration. Witnesses, however, affirmed that he did, and the Judge-Advocate said that he was not particular as to the quality of his recruits, but took Bonapartists or any discontented people. He was found guilty, and sentenced to eight days' imprisonment and to pay the costs.

There is no confirmation of the report that M. de Brazza is killed.

(THROUGH REUTER'S AGENCY.)

PARIS, FEB. 1.

A contradiction is given to the statement made by some papers yesterday that the Council of State has decided against granting to the city of Paris the concession for the projected metropolitan railway.

The Budget Committee of the Chamber of Deputies had under discussion to-day the Senegal Railway scheme. The Minister of Marine, who attended the sitting, declared that the abandonment of the undertaking, with the consequent loss of material and the expense of bringing back the staff now on the spot, would cost as much as to complete the section already commenced. The Government proposed therefore to introduce a Bill authorising a special credit of three million francs for the prosecution of the works, which would be carried on until the Chamber had taken a final decision in the matter.

The Minister subsequently explained to the Committee the reasons for asking for a supplementary credit of 165,000 francs for Madagascar. He justified the credit on account of the necessity for providing for the expense of an additional five hundred men, which was not foreseen when the Budget estimates were originally framed. Questions having been put to the Minister in regard to the object and result of the expedition to Madagascar, he replied that these questions should be addressed to M. Ferry, President of the Council.

A note from M. Derhins, representative of the De Brazza Mission in Paris, has been published stating that he has received information to the effect that certain persons opposed to the expedition were again about to spread the report of M. de Brazza's death, with a view to prejudice the demand for credits. The note puts the public on their guard against any such false news.

GREAT FIRE IN PARIS.

ONE HUNDRED FAMILIES HOMELESS.

(THROUGH REUTER'S AGENCY.)

PARIS, FEB. 1.

A great fire broke out last night in the Cité Joly, near the Cemetery of Père Lachaise, by which a lace and trimming manufactory, several coal depôts, and some shops containing scenic decorations for several of the Paris theatres, were destroyed. Five workmen's houses were also burnt down. Two women jumped from the window of a house to escape the flames.