

## THE CONSUL AND THE DRUMMER.

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The laws of commerce grow always out of existing conditions. At one time the valley of the Euphrates was its great highway. Then the Mediterranean linked its emporiums of traffic. After a time, its advance guard crept outside the pillars of Hercules. Following in Columbus's track they sought the products of the New World to supply the greed of the Old. The Portuguese found their way around the Cape of Good Hope attracted by the odor of the spices of Ind. Following the same intoxicating perfume, every whiff of which meant gold to the lucky finder, the Spaniards went with Magellan to the Philippines. The smallest of his ships, the only one that returned laden with spices, yielded a generous profit to the outfitters despite the loss of the others and the gallant souls who manned them. Life did not count in that day any more than it does now, if only profit were found at the end of a great enterprise.

In those days and almost up to the present, one great principle governed all commercial enterprise. This was that the buyer is the active element of trade; in other words, that the consumer must seek the producer. The feet of the buyers marked out all the ways of ancient commerce. Now, all this is changed. The seller holds the laboring oar. The producer must do the walking. The consumer sits quietly at home and waits to be solicited to buy; the seller must search out his customers and create a demand for his wares. This is the universal rule in all lands and markets except only as to necessaries of life. Men must eat and for food-products the length of the aggregated girdle--the capacity of the aggregated human stomach--is the measure of the world's demand. In all other lines, the buyer's will and pleasure, or his capacity to pay, is the measure of the producer's profit. This is the law of the new commercial epoch.

The Consul is valuable to a nation seeking commercial expansion.

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sion chiefly through his eyes, and the American consul has no rival in any other service, as an observer. He may not shine on the golf-links nor have any very wild ambition to dazzle society in a foreign capital; he may not even be an accomplished cicerone; but he has the irrepressible desire of his countrymen to understand everything he sees which is new. He knows how things are done at home and notes with instinctive readiness every variation from accustomed methods, every awkward and antiquated tool or machine as well as every new and improved one. He is the scout of our foreign trade; the eyes and ears of our producers. For years, he has been doing work which no other consular service can equal because its officers have not the same training. They have no memories of the farm or factory as real facts in their own lives. They may have passed more examinations, but they have seen less and have not learned to note the things of every day life, to study men as well as books.

It has become the fashion in the United States--has, indeed, been the fashion for many years, to speak with contemptuous depreciation of our consular service. Until one comes to study its work somewhat closely, he is almost certain to entertain the idea that it is noted for nothing but general incompetency and universal neglect of its most important functions.

It is hardly strange that this should be the case. Instead of adapting it to the new economic conditions, we have been steadily trying to restrict even its former scope with half-defined duties and ill-defined powers. One of our historians has assured us that our consular service in the early part of the century was merely a sink of corruption throughout Europe, and the general tone of that element of our press which professes special knowledge upon such subjects, has for many years been depreciative to the verge of absolute abuse, not ~~even~~ scrupling to declare our service in every respect inferior to that of other countries. Two years ago, I began in earnest the study of consular history, that is, the history of the consular systems of the world, considered especially as agencies

for the extension and regulation of international commerce. A decided penchant for the study of international law and of social movements indicative of national character, had long since familiarized me with the consular functions in a general way; but the remarkable changes in commercial conditions which have occurred since a British premier scornfully asked in the House of Commons, "Who ever knew a consul to be a gentleman?", led me to believe that a like change was destined to occur in international relations in which the consul must play a role of constantly increasing importance. I determined, therefore, to make an exhaustive study of the evolution of the consular function as at present recognized by various governments.

By favor of Hon. John Hay, at that time our Ambassador at London, I received from the British Foreign Office a most remarkable series of documents upon the subject of Her Majesty's Consular Service. From France and other countries through friends and colleagues, I obtained perhaps the finest collection of official statistics in regard to this subject ever made; while others kindly gave me assistance with the bibliography of the same. I have no desire to weary ~~either the Department or the readers of the "Consular Reports"~~ with any detailed recital of this investigation. Suffice it to say that I was both surprised, delighted and annoyed at the conclusions forced upon me by this unique study. Among them were the following:

1--That the function of the consul as the scout and forerunner of a nation's export trade, is a matter of very recent origin. Practically a half century covers its effective existence.

2--That in this matter the American consul excels all his foreign colleagues. Even with the strenuous efforts recently made by the British government in that direction, he has really no competitor worthy of being considered beside him as a commercial observer. It is beyond all question, that the "Consular Reports" and "Commercial Relations" reports of the United States since 1880, constitute an encyclopaedia of commercial facts, observations and suggestions

which cannot be equalled by any other country and to which the cyclopedists and economists of every commercial nation are under the greatest obligations.

3--That, instead of the almost universal contempt which has been visited upon our Consular Service in the past, its work as a corps of indefatigable commercial observers, should be a matter of universal pride to the American people. Of them, it can truly be said in well-deserved commendation:

"-----there is not one  
Who less has said or more has done  
Than thou."

Having so recently become a part of this service, I cannot be charged with any lack of modesty in making this statement, especially as it is the result of practical observation of consular work and the study of records in one of the oldest, if not the very oldest, consulates of the United States in continuous operation, that of Bordeaux, as well as of careful examination of the consular systems and services of other countries.

From earliest times the consul has been in all countries a ~~more~~ more or less discredited official. He has been the international representative of trade, and trade has been and still is to a considerable extent, regarded as discreditable. The army, the navy and diplomacy have been accounted honorable and aristocratic services, but it is less than forty years since the great English statesman scouted the idea that a "gentleman" would ever condescend to consular employment. We followed in this, as in many other features of our international policy, the lead of the nations of the old world and not the least instructive feature of our consular history, is the continuous efforts that have been made to minimize the consular function and reduce the service to a mere clerical force. Two things have saved it. (1) The fact that international commercial relations are daily becoming more important than political relations, --the economic relations of peoples more important than the diplomatic relations between courts. This fact alone must compel in the

(5) <sup>function</sup> and, especially on the part of the United States, a more reasonable and proper regard for the service on the perfection of which the future of our national commerce must so greatly depend. (2) Another thing which tends irresistibly in this direction is the fact that without any of the inducements which help to secure valuable work in other branches of the public service, the work of our consular officials has been of a character to awaken the surprise, the envy and not seldom the antipathy of other countries.

If the army and navy have increased our national domain, the consular service has not less faithfully and under most discouraging conditions, showed the way to our prosperity and enable the Republic to extend its influence to other lands and peoples, not by force of arms alone, but by demonstrating the inestimable advantage of republican institutions from a commercial as well as a political point of view.

I do not doubt that there have been incompetent and unworthy consuls. The really remarkable thing is that the ~~existing~~ "Consular System" which has prevailed in the United States has not had the effect to wholly eliminate desire or aptitude for such work. That the service needs re-organization is beyond doubt. The function of the consul to-day is so different from that of the past, his relations to the country he represents and that to which he is credited, are so different from those of yesterday, that the past of the service is itself the most serious obstacle to its best and most efficient development. Many of the changes that have been suggested would, in my judgment, be no amendment of present conditions. As to these features, however, I hope to express myself in a more permanent form at an early day. What I desire to call attention to at the present time, is the fact that our American producers and exporters seem likely to fall into an error exactly the reverse of their past, -- from <sup>underestimating</sup> ~~understanding~~ the work of our consuls, they have suddenly come to expect of them absolute impossibilities.

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Until within a few years the American business man rarely paid attention enough to the work of our consular service to preserve its reports for reference. Even now he would often rather ask the State Department to send out a circular to them <sup>consuls</sup> than consult previous volumes of reports in which the subject <sup>in regard to</sup> of which they desire information, has been fully treated. Indeed, the tendency seems to be to expect the consul not only to find new avenues of commerce but to do the work which only an expert in each particular line is capable of <sup>in developing the same</sup> doing. Though the consul may discover fresh opportunities for profitable enterprise, he cannot create new markets nor secure new trade in old ones. Though he may have a general knowledge of many lines of business, he cannot have an expert knowledge of all. He may be able to suggest where a commercial prospector might find it well to dig, but he cannot give all those details of cost and difficulties to be encountered which the inquirer, if himself upon the ground would perhaps require months to investigate and determine. In the few hours he is able to give each inquiry he can only summarize his reading and observation. He can ~~only~~ state impressions <sup>and</sup> but should not be expected to furnish detailed specifications, or give assurance of specific profit. To-day, when competition not only between individuals but also between nations is so keen, the producer or the exporter must not expect to sit like a young robin and wait for worms to <sup>by consular officials who are notably overworked</sup> be dropped into his mouth. Only the enterprise of the seller can <sup>and undertake</sup> secure new markets or obtain control of old ones. For these he has three agencies, advertising, the drummer and the local trader.

The latter, indeed, ought not to be regarded as an independent force but only an auxiliary. He has no interest in advancing the American exporter's trade. He probably has none of our American eagerness for new things. He sells what his customers ask for and is not interested in educating their taste or pushing foreign products. He is only material on which the "drummer" can operate, a consciousness on which advertising may find lodgment. The "drummer" is far and away the most important element of a permanent export trade.

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The consular service may point the way to a new market but only the drummer can develop it. The old world may send to the new for necessities <sup>the</sup> ~~of~~ <sup>As consumers as well as</sup> ~~its~~ <sup>merchants</sup> ~~but its consumers~~ <sup>must</sup> ~~be~~ ~~canvassed,~~ ~~informed~~ ~~and~~ ~~convinced,~~ if they are expected to buy American manufactures. The consul will generally be found a valuable adviser of the drummer, but he cannot do his work and should not be expected to do so. Neither can he or even the drummer, secure good results to the producer or exporter by distributing English advertising matter to people of whom hardly one in a thousand knows a word of that language. The consul is the scout of commercial expansion, but only the enterprise of the producer <sup>and</sup> ~~or~~ the skill of the commercial traveller--his ability to organize as well as to sell--his power to capture the foreign dealer and develop a demand among foreign consumers--only these forces can extend and make permanent that foreign trade which the economic conditions of the two wonderful years last past have developed. The consul can advise, aid, encourage and protect the dealer in carrying his plans into effect. These are his proper functions which in the future will grow every day more and more important to our commercial prosperity. But the international commercial traveller will be the chief agency in its development, consolidation and permanency. One might as well hope to win victory in war with an army of scouts only, as expect to invade, conquer and hold foreign markets with the information advice and ~~co-~~ <sup>co-</sup> operation of consuls alone or by bombardment at long range with advertising ~~in~~ in an unknown tongue. The consul may give perhaps an hour, sometimes a day to each inquiry; but the development of a market, the evolution of a demand, the organization of a traffic in another country--this requires the best efforts of the best trained brain in each particular line--one who knows all the secrets of the trade, the cost of production, the risks of loss, all the multitudinous contingencies which stand in the way of profit. And such a man's attention all the time will not be too much to insure success. The consul may help him to avoid obstacles, to overcome difficulties, to

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dodge disasters, but he can no more do his work than the scout can do that of the artillerist. The consul may serve as a sign-board to point the way to profit, but the only agency that can successfully develop and hold a foreign trade, is the man who carries a sample case and knows his business from A to Izzard.

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