

ALFRED HOLT & CO
OCEAN STEAM SHIP COMPANY LIMITED.
THE CHINA MUTUAL STEAM NAVIGATION CO LTD

THE BLUE FUNNEL LINE.

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*India Buildings,
Liverpool, 2.*

13th February 1958.

Midshipman J. F. Pollard,

Dear Sir,

On your appointment as a Midshipman in the Company's service it is important that you should understand clearly what is expected of you. In this letter, therefore, we have set down an outline of your duties, together with recommendations and instructions for your general conduct. These are based on many years of experience in introducing young men to the sea and you would be wise to keep this letter carefully and refer to it at regular intervals. At the outset of any great venture it is well to have your objectives clearly in mind. To be an officer and ultimately a Master in our service will demand qualities of character and ability that can only be developed through the years, but your apprenticeship, if properly used, will give you your greatest single opportunity to succeed.

The Master of your ship will give you such duties to perform as, in his opinion, will provide you with the best training for the profession of an officer in the Merchant Navy. Every kind of duty will be given you and no such duty must be regarded as beneath your dignity. It is imperative that you should have thorough practical knowledge or you will never have full confidence in yourself; lacking it you will never be able to inspire others with confidence in you. An officer in the Merchant Navy must be able to lead his men by his own practical example and should always be able to show the man how the work should be done. Keep an enquiring mind, therefore, so that you may learn not only how to do a job but may also appreciate its significance. Do not be afraid to ask questions but choose a seasonable moment and address your officers always with respect and never with impertinence. Your best chance of learning is from what others will tell you of the work and of their experience and if you show yourself troublesome or ungrateful for their help they are hardly likely to take much interest in you. You are expected therefore to enter into every duty with zeal and cheerfulness and to obey all orders with alacrity.

Do not imagine that it is enough for you to learn the routine of a deck officer's work. If you desire a successful career you must have a thorough knowledge of all things relating to the care of a ship and her cargo. The carriage of goods between the different parts of the world is the first and foremost function of the Merchant Navy and the Managers attach the highest importance to the skill and care shown by their officers in the safe and efficient performance of this duty. Omit no opportunity of learning all you can about the stowage of cargo and the problems to be solved if the cargo is to be delivered in a good condition, and preferably in better condition, than when it was loaded. Make a special study too, of naval architecture and marine engineering not only from books but from a study of your own ship, trying to keep abreast of modern developments and trying too, to appreciate the implications of the latest scientific aids to navigation, cargo stowage and ship propulsion.

If you really mean to reach the top of your profession you should cultivate a taste for scientific knowledge of the sea, of its living animals, plants and birds, of meteorology, astronomy, modern geography and oceanography. All these pursuits will add to your prospects of success and will at the same time render more interesting your life, both to yourself and to those with whom you come in contact.

Never forget that you are destined to become an officer, one whose example in all respects must be beyond reproach. Take a pride in your uniform and do not allow yourself to acquire slovenly habits in your dress or person. You will normally be expected to wear the Company's uniform. On occasions when, with the Master's permission you are dressed otherwise, be sure that your dress is smart and correct, bearing in mind that in the seaports of the world you represent not only your ship and your Company but also your country. Let your bearing be alert and attentive. Above all, be truthful and straightforward. In your dealings with the seamen and other ratings be civil and friendly but without unseemly familiarity. They can often teach you much and it is part of your duty to learn by sympathetic understanding of their lives how to obtain from those under you willing and efficient service. Moreover, the happiness of life aboard ship depends upon a healthy and natural comradeship all round and the Managers will expect your conduct among yourselves and towards the ship's company to show that this is realized by you.

Your attitude towards the inhabitants of the countries you visit should be friendly and sympathetic. Beware of assuming superiority or of measuring the worth of a nation or an individual by your own Western standards alone. Your business abroad is not to cause resentment and so discord but to create goodwill and foster understanding between the peoples. In this respect you have a unique opportunity to serve not only your country, but the cause of peace in the world.

Your course of training during the apprenticeship will offer numerous opportunities to improve your skill, knowledge and ability. Take every opportunity that offers and make the most of them. Studies will be set for you during each voyage and you will be expected to complete these and return them, together with a report to the Managers, when your vessel returns to this country. Your report will inform the Managers of the way in which your time has been spent at sea and in port. It must be truthful in every particular. At regular intervals you will be required to report in person at this office for instruction and for a review of your progress. If the Managers do not consider that your conduct has been satisfactory or that you possess aptitude for the profession they will not hesitate to ask your father, or guardian, to withdraw you from their service.

Take care of your health. Report promptly any symptom of ill-health to the doctor or Master. Do not try to doctor yourself or conceal any ailment. Abundant physical exercise and daily showers or baths will not only help to give you a manly bearing but by keeping you free from illness will help you in your enjoyment of a sailor's life. Perfect eyesight is precious to a seaman. Do not endanger it by excessive smoking and protect your eyes with sunglasses whenever they are liable to strain. You are forbidden to take alcohol during your apprenticeship and you will be wise to resolve firmly to avoid in the years to follow a habit which can only impair your efficiency as a seaman and prejudice your position as an officer. Your own self-respect and regard for your future health and happiness will prevent you likewise from becoming stained by vices which are only too apparent in the great seaports of the world. Live a manly life and set yourself a standard of pure and upright manhood.

Finally, never forget that a free and enthusiastic interest in your life's work is a source of great happiness. Have a pride therefore in your Service and in your Company and contribute your full share to the common good. The Management most earnestly desire that you should find lasting happiness and satisfaction in your association with the Company.

Wishing you a most successful career,

Yours truly,

Alfred Holt