The LOOKOUT

IN THE FO'C'SLE

U. S. Maritime Commission Photo

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE
OF NEW YORK

VOL. XXXIX AUGUST, 1948 No. 8

Sanctuary

O God, Thou great indwelling Spirit, who art ever guiding the spirit of man to the realization of abundant life, give us a greater expectancy. Grant us faith in the divine possibilities in us and about us, and teach us to look upon the life of men and nations with the mind of Him who staggered the world by the daringness of His faith, our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Church of the Ascension

The LOOKOUT

VOL. XXXIX, AUGUST, 1948

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PLEASE HOLD THIS DATE!

Wednesday evening, Nov. 3rd., for the Seamen's Church Institute theatre benefit performance of "LIFE WITH MOTHER."

Notice will be sent you later.

The Lookout

VOL. XXXIX AUGUST, 1948 NUMBER 8

Surfaceblow Toots a Whistle

By Stephen M. Elonka

SITTING 28 floors up with noisy tugs shoving deep-sea ships into the Hudson River docks under us all day, doesn't help get our mind off the sea. That's why we jumped at the chance when Chief Hotchkiss called us from Weehawken, New Jersey, to have lunch aboard his ship, the *SS Blackhawk*. Visiting old shipmates in port is the nearest we come to seafaring these days.

A quick glance before sitting at the officers' messroom table startled us. Sitting next to Hotchkiss was Marmaduke Surfaceblow, stuffing himself with corned beef and cabbage. This really made the trip worthwhile.

"Mr. Surfaceblow and I were shipmates on the old *SS Argosy*, back in 1911," said our mutual friend after we shook hands with the engineers and other officers around the table. "I thought both of you would like to eat a square meal again. Ha, ha."

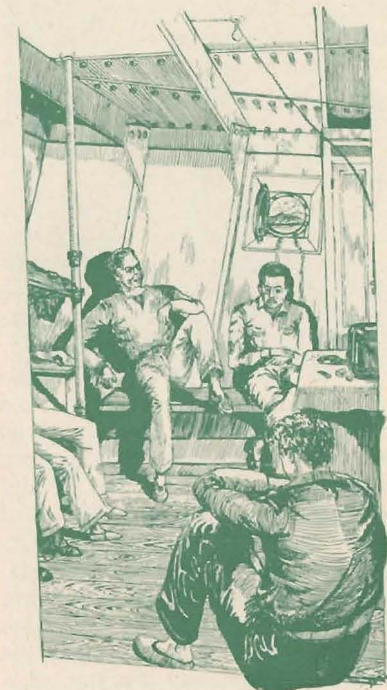
When everyone finished chuckling, he continued, "Speaking of the *Argosy*. Do you remember Whistles Wilson, Marmaduke? He was our chief engineer and he was a character if there ever was one."

"Do I remember Whistles Wilson?" bellowed Marmaduke through a quid of cabbage. "Why that's the son-of-a-seacook who built the world's biggest ship's whistle!"

"Right you are," agreed our genial host. "There was only one difference in the *Argosy's* whistle and her crow's nest: The whistle was on the stack and the crow's nest was on the foremast!"

That got a round of laughter from the boys.

"Now, if Mr. Surfaceblow will favor us by spinning the whistle yarn, gentlemen, I assure you, it'll be a story to tell your grandchildren."



Marmaduke's eyes brightened. He swallowed hard. You could hear his gulp all over the salon, as he swallowed his last chunk of corned beef.

"Whistles Wilson was a mighty good engineer, but every once in awhile he got the craziest notions. One day, he said he'd build the biggest whistle afloat — and that's exactly what he did on the *Argosy*. The old boy ran into a piece of bronze tubing on the dock in Bombay one night. It was 22 inches across and about 6 feet long. He'd been looking for such a tube for years. He lost no time, for in the wee hours of the morning he got his gang to hoist it aboard.

"After that, he forgot all about his plant. He spent days and nights in the machine shop, making that stunted tunnel into a steam whistle.

Correction: The caption on this month's cover should read: IN THE MESSROOM.

"The Argosy'll be heard in any pea soup fog from Zanzibar to Bagdad,' was all he'd say when we kidded him.

"We cooked up all kinds of gags to get his goat. At chow we'd tell him: 'A whistle that size'll draw all the steam from your boilers.' 'She'll use up all our boiler feed.' 'The engine'll sure slow down when you blow that whistle.'

"The first assistant told him the size didn't matter because the way he was building it she wouldn't make much noise anyway.

"Hearing these stories at every meal finally wore down even a man with a cast-iron constitution like Whistles'. But we didn't know this until the whistle was hoisted into place and ready for the 'trials.'

"We noticed he ran a 3-inch steam line next to the old one and hooked her into the whistle. He also asked the mate for a long whistle cord reaching into the fire room. He did this so that he could pull the cord himself and watch the steam gage.

"We were two days out of Manila, bound for Honolulu when everything was ready. By that time everyone aboard talked about nothing but the whistle. Whistles was the star of a one-man show all right.

"The crew not on watch was on deck ready to clamp their hands over their ears — some expected that giant to blow apart. We were ready in the engine room too, but Wilson didn't know. He stood clutching the cord in front of the port boiler, with his eyes glued to the gage. He acted like Alexander Graham Bell about to talk over his first telephone.

"When the bridge gave the signal by ringing the engine-room telegraph, Whistles was all set for the momentous occasion. He steeled himself for the ear-splitting noise. With both hands he gave the cord a mighty jerk.

"Then queer things happened all at once. A low, squeaky whistle was heard. It sounded like a kid's whistle. In fact, it was a kid's whistle. The first assistant had made it from a condenser tube, and the deck engineer, who was planted outside the fidley door above the boilers, blew it. He also had the slack in the whistle cord wrapped about his arm, and Whistles' violent jerk almost pulled his arm out of its socket.

"At exactly the same instant the toy whistle squealed, the fire room lights went out. The first assistant at the switchboard had pulled the fire-room master switch.

"When the lights went out, six minor explosions took place in rapid succession. They were the boiler's six safety valves lifting. The second assistant had slapped the main engine throttle closed when he heard the whistle.

"Of course," concluded Marmaduke, "our gang had hatched this plan up ahead of time, just to confuse old screwball Wilson. They threw in that throttle-closing deal and pulled the fire room switch for good measure. Poor old Whistles was flabbergasted all right. But he didn't stop to find out why all these things happened, he got out — fast.

"He locked himself in his room for three days. The mess boy took his meals up to him. He wouldn't see anyone. When we passed his room, Sandpaper Gin fumes almost knocked us for a loop. The place smelled like a distillery.

"Then one day, when we were steaming into Honolulu, he showed up on deck. He was leaning over the rail, staring bleary-eyed into the blue Pacific. A week's growth of beard made his face look like a coconut doormat. He kept muttering over and over again, and shaking his head hopelessly, 'She should'ave given a blast like Gabriel's bugle, but all she did was squeak like a weak-lunged peanut whistle!' "

Reprinted from OPERATING ENGINEER, May '48

My Most Unforgettable War Experience — Second Prize

The Decision*

By Gunnar Nilsson, *A.B. Seaman*

From the Painting by Paul Sample

IN the chain of events which makes up our lives, countless individuals come and go; good ones, bad ones and those insignificant ones who don't matter because they aren't good or bad enough to count, or because they are just too harmless to be remembered.

One of the most outstanding of these who passed in review in my life and helped shape the events which set the course and added color and excitement to my voyage through life, was the shipmaster on the *S/S Townsend*, C. G. Sanderson.

On this particular voyage of the *Townsend*, during the Battle of Britain, Sanderson was in his early fifties. A well-built and well-mannered man, soft-spoken and fair, he was respected and liked by those who sailed under his command. There was nothing high-hat and pompous about him which one so often finds with other captains of the sea, especially in the British Merchant Navy. On Sanderson's ship, officers and men ate the same food and the men were exempt from working the extra eight hours a week, the field days, which other British seamen were subject to. Even my pal, the Cockney, a Squawker and sea-lawyer from way back admitted he was tops.

Yes, Captain Sanderson stood well up to the measurements of a hero such as the merchant seamen dream about.

"Blimey," said the Cockney as we lugged our gear down to the forecastle. "I just cawn't believe it. 'es a Prince 'e is. 'ope there ayn't nothing phoney about it, I do. Blimey, 'tis too good to be true 'tis."

But there was nothing phoney about it. We left Halifax a foggy Fall morning with the rest of the convoy; and after having manoeuvred into position in the starboard coffin corner the chief mate reassured the curious Cockney there were no field days.

And the days went by, with exceptionally good weather for this time of the year. The feeling of uneasiness which prevailed the first few days as we looked toward the two escorting corvettes and the endless, bounding sea on our starboard flank, gave way to a feeling of complacency. The crew went on with their work laughing and joking as if there were peace on earth and good will among men. It was no time to be light hearted in a sea which was infested with enemy submarines, but the monotony of the unbroken succession of watches made us feel content. Between watches we rested, played cards or read a good book; while the convoy headed eastward, through days of sunshine, storm or rain and through cold, black nights.

The standby on the middle watch roused us.

" 'Tis three thirty in the morning. Time to get up an' relieve us. There's tea in the kettle."

We got up sleepy and slow. The tea warmed us and took the sleepiness away.

"Oooh," yawned the Cockney, stretching his short, skinny legs un-

*Reprinted from BLUE BOOK Magazine

der the table. " 'Tis the noint day out. Noine days an' all's well. 'Tis cold though, brrr."

As I was not in a talking mood so early in the morning, I hastily gulped down my tea and went out on deck. The chill of the black, dismal night stung my nostrils as I fumbled across the deck toward the railing. There, looking down in the phosphorous gleam in the water as the Townsville plowed its way, my eyes got used to the darkness and I could distinguish the contours of the ship. It must have been close to eight bells, because I could hear the Cockney stagger out on deck, cursing the darkness, the war and "the 'ole blarsted civilization."

"Cheerio, Cockney," I said, as I walked away toward the midship. "I'm going up to relive the lad at the wheel."

"O.K., Swede, ole bloke. Cheerio."

Sanderson was up there and old MacTavish, the chief mate, kidded him about being up so early.

"Got that old feeling, MacTavish," the captain answered unsmilingly, while watching the dark, ominous sea, lighted sometimes by white caps when the waves broke and the caps glittered in the light from the moon which had just come out from behind the clouds.

"Feel all right meself, Cap'n," said MacTavish. "Never can tell, though. These Jerries are unpredictable. Aye, 'twould be a shame if they got us now, a thousand miles from 'ome."

He had hardly finished speaking when a gigantic flame shot up toward the sky from the ship ahead of us, followed by a thunderous explosion.

" 'ard to port m'lad! 'ard to port!" called Sanderson, and as I worked frantically to swing her over, the other four ships ahead of us were struck by the unseen monsters.

"The Jerries are 'ere," added Sanderson grimly. "A 'ole pack of them. I knew that feeling couldn't be wrong."

The *Townsend* almost collided with a ship in the line on our port side before Sanderson gave the order to bring the wheel hard to starboard. While we zig-zagged back there were more explosions, now in the middle of the convoy. Way out toward the horizon were heard the heavy detonations of U-bombs and knells of gunfire. The two escorts were attacked by the pack. As the U-bombs went off, throwing cascades of phosphorescent water around the scene of the fight, we could see the two corvettes explode before our eyes.

"We are without protection," said Sanderson. "We 'ave to make it on our own now. Our speed is superior to the subs. We've got a chance if we can zig-zag out of 'ere."

As we zig-zagged back toward the flaming wrecks on our starboard side, we closed in on the survivors in the water. The closer we came the louder we heard the agonized cries of help from the wounded, desperately fighting for their lives in the ice cold water. Any second I expected to hear the captain's voice calling the engineroom and telling them to stop the ship so we could pick up those closest to us. At less than a cable length away he called out:

" 'ard to port m'lad!" then he called the engine room.

"Full speed ahead! Give 'er everything you've got!"

It was evident he aimed to leave the struggling men to the inevitable. He was in complete authority to do so and there seemed to be no thought in his mind but to save the *Townsend* and — I thought — himself.

The second mate came rushing up the ladder. His face shone white in the moonlight.

"All 'ands on deck, sir," he reported excitedly. "And the men are standing by to lower the starboard boat."

"We're going full speed ahead, mister, and we're not stopping unless we're 'it."

The young mate was out of words, but the hitherto silent MacTavish said, condemningly,

"You're making a mistake, sir."

Sanderson didn't answer him. He called to me:

" 'ard starboard m'lad!"

MacTavish continued after Sanderson sent the second mate away with orders for the men to stand by at their stations. The sea was calm and quiet in the moonlight — the burning ships and the dying seamen were behind us, far behind, as MacTavish said:

"You call yourself a seaman, sir: and you made no effort to save those poor devils. You are not the man I thought you were. You are not the man at all."

Captain Sanderson retorted:

"As a ships captain, it is my sole duty to bring my ship into port. Every ship that arrives in England is a nail in the German coffin. We cawn't afford to lose more ships than we've lost already. We've a war to win, MacTavish. Those men in the water knew it when they signed on and they were willing to risk their lives . . ."

"So are we willing to risk ours to save 'em, sir," interrupted MacTavish tartly.

"Our cargo is too valuable to risk, MacTavish." And he added hotly; "There's ships in this convoy designated to pick up the survivors. Furthermore, I'm still in command. What I say goes."

"Indeed it does, sir. You're also a——"

Come on, MacTavish, what are you trying to tell me?"

"When we dock in England, if with God's help we get there, I'll tell you. Until then you're my captain and an officer so I cawn't tell you what I think of you. But by God——" He walked over to the side of the bridge and spit down in the dark ocean. He walked back slowly, painstakingly.

Both remained silent for the next half hour while we kept zig-zagging ahead. Then the Cockney came up to relieve me at the helm.

"Well, Swede, ole bloke," he said, bitterly and loud. "We were all set to lower the boat an' save 'em . . ."

"Silence on the bridge!" thundered Sanderson.

Illustration from BLUE BOOK

The Cockney said no more, but where he stood, with a weak light from the compass shining on his thin face, the sneering smile which twisted his homely features spoke better than words.

When human beings lose their ideals they become frustrated. Their minds are a turmoil of shattered, disappointed thoughts. To us, the sailors of the *Townsend*, the disappointment in our captain was as shocking and bereaving as the anguish we had felt over the dying seamen. Gloom settled over the *Townsend*. The days of jokes and laughter were gone and the men spoke to each other in hushed voices. To Sanderson, no one spoke. MacTavish refused to enter the mess hall when the captain was there, and the younger officers would have done the same thing had they dared.

Among the men in the forecastle he was referred to as a coward.

" 'e bloomin' well ayn't got no guts, if ye'll pardon me for talkin' like a yawnk," said the Cockney, and we agreed.

The only change in Sanderson was that he became silent; he stopped talking when he didn't get any answer, but remained as fair and polite as ever. In fact, he seemed to respect the way we felt about him, which infuriated us still more.

We were close to home. MacTavish had told us the night before that he

expected to see land at daybreak. The old Scotsman hummed softly on 'Rolling Home' when the sun arose behind the rocks of Cornwall. He trained his binoculars on the coast line.

Then a shadow of disgust darkened his face. He turned around to me and grabbed the helm.

"Swede, he said, "Will you please go down and wake up the . . . the . . ."

He had a hard time spitting out the word that had been on his tongue since that unforgettable night. It came, however, forced out and leaving a frown of vehemence on his wrinkled face:

"The coward!"

"O.K., Mate," I answered, with a smile of sympathy to show that I knew how he felt.

I went down slowly, very slowly, and when I finally stood before the cabin door I took a deep breath and opened.

The rising sun shone in through the open porthole, across the narrow cabin, toward the captain, asleep in his bunk. The Old Man's shirt was open and there was something glittering around his neck and on his hairy chest from the sunshine. I entered the cabin to see what it was. As I bent over him with wide wide open, unbelieving eyes, I looked in reverence at a medal. There, in the rays of the morning sun, shone in indescribable glory — THE VICTORIA CROSS. And I knew then that it took a man of courage to make so difficult a decision.

CEREMONY ON THE JOHN W. BROWN

A CEREMONY was held recently on the schoolship *John W. Brown*, a Liberty ship anchored at Pier 4 in the East River and used by the Metropolitan Vocational High School as a training ship for high school boys. There were speeches by Dr. Franklin J. Keller, principal of the school, and Major W. G. Buhmann, United States Army Transportation Corps, after which the schoolship students demonstrated the use of various fire fighting and safety devices.

Aboard the training ship *John W. Brown*

In his speech, Major Buhmann said that there are about 5,000 marine personnel in Army Transport Corps and he was glad to say men drawn from the Merchant Marine continue to be on the same high plane that the Army has become used to. They pay them the prevailing maritime wage and they like to think working conditions are, in some respects, superior to conditions in the Merchant Marine. This is because their standards for transport ships are extremely high and rigid inspection of ships by shore personnel keeps them that way. . . . He said that the line between the Armed Services and the Merchant Marine became smaller and smaller during the recent war because the men were sailing together, working, eating, fighting, dying together. Maritime Day should be publicized to the furthest corners of this country so that people on farms, in factories, everywhere, will realize how vital our Merchant Marine is to our prosperity, to our very existence. Had it not been for the seafaring man, this continent might still be peopled by savages; England might still be a "tight little isle" and the world as a whole would not have made the gains toward a civilized and abundant life that it has made.

"Heaven Alone Could Work This Wonder*

By Capt. I. F. Wood

I RECEIVED my master's license the day after Christmas, 1944. A few days later, the Alcoa Steamship Company called me to come to the office. At Pier K, Weehawken, New Jersey, the port captain pointed out the window toward a liberty ship, the *John F. Myers*. "There she is," he said. "Go aboard and receive Captain Harris."

The next morning I took the *Myers* down the river, through the narrows, out past Sandy Hook and on to Norfolk to load for Marseilles.

On the day of the convoy conference at the Norfolk Naval Station, I was told that my ship was to be the commodore ship for the passage. That night the commodore, Commander Stevenson, and his staff came aboard. The next morning at daylight the convoy moved on through historic Hampton Roads.

I had heard that relationships between navy commodores and merchant marine captains were not always congenial. To me, it was an honor to have the convoy commodore aboard and I was determined to make the passage a pleasant one.

We had fair to moderate weather the first four days. On the fifth day a howling northwest gale had overtaken the convoy. The North Atlantic is notorious for these fierce and devastating storms. By night we were making heavy weather.

Commodore Stevenson and I sat in my cabin reading and talking as was our custom in the evening. Although we made no reference to the weather there was dual concern and neither of us made any move to retire.

About 3 a.m. we both left my cabin and went to the navigating bridge to take a few turns in the fresh air and to observe weather conditions and relative positions of the ships in the convoy. The seas were heavy and crashing aboard at regular intervals, some slapping across the boat deck sending clouds of spendthrift over the flying bridge. The wind was howling and shrieking through the rigging.

Suddenly the Commodore and I heard from off our starboard side what sounded like a voice yelling, "Help, Help, Help." I could not even imagine a voice carrying above that howling wind or a life surviving in that heavily churned sea. Sometimes ships laboring in a heavy sea will creak and groan in the straining. These sounds are not far different, actually, from the human voice.

I grabbed a life ring and threw it over the side, as far as I could sling it. The light on the buoy was visible as it passed our stern. As I considered the mathematical chance of a man, if that was a man, reaching the buoy, my heart sank within me.

Commander Stevenson through his "Walky-Talky" radio called, "Bug," the code name for the destroyer at the head of the convoy, and asked, "Have you lost man overboard?" The immediate answer was, "No". For a few minutes we stood wondering, "What could that voice have been." Suddenly the "Walky-Talky" came in, "Bug calling Roger. Bug calling Roger." The communication officer answered. The commander of the lead destroyer said that a boatswain mate had been washed over the side. He asked the commodore to contact the destroyer astern and tell him to take until 10 a.m. to search for the man. The message was relayed and acknowledged.

Neither Commander Stevenson nor I could feel any consolation in these developments. We were depressed. We never expected to hear again that boy with the good pair of lungs. We were remorseful because we had not released with two life rafts on the starboard side.

It is a strange phenomenon that in a war involving millions of lives, that one life, and that of an unknown

*Reprinted from BLUE BOOK Magazine

man to me, should create such inexplicable, enigmatic concern.

At breakfast that morning, the commodore gave me a memorandum of damage done to the convoy during the night. Sixteen life boats and six life rafts had been lost overboard. Ten life boats and four life rafts had been badly damaged.

About 9 a.m. the destroyer astern called, "Roach to Roger. Roach to Roger. Have found boatswain mate off Bug. Found him on raft off one of the ships. He is none the worse except a bit chilled."

When I returned to an American port, I received an envelope with the following letters.

8 March 45

Dear "Kamarad":

Enclosed is the letter from the man you heaved a life ring to and my reply. Thought you would be interested to see them.

Hope we get together again soon.

Sincerely,
(S) Stevenson
At Sea
2 March 1945

Dear Nealing:

Thanks for your kind note delivered to me at sea. Am sending a copy of it to Irby F. Wood Master of the Ship and I know he will be pleased to have it.

Our life rafts did not have a bridge release or you would have had one. Seas were coming aboard and it was dangerous to get aft to release one. Although we heard you clearly we knew no one had any chance in that water and felt we had lost a friend.

The master and I were both depressed mentally on account of the tragedy and were relieved when word came that you had been rescued.

It surely was a miracle and for the fact you were saved you should be ever grateful to Almighty God.

Sincerely,
F. T. Stevenson
U.S.S. Ericeson
FPO New York, N. Y.
February 27, 1945

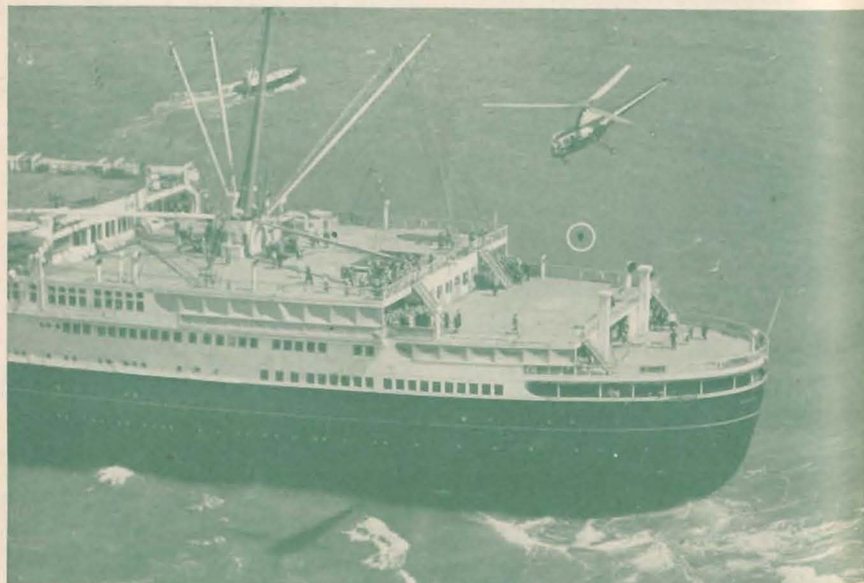
Comdr. F. T. Stevenson, USNR
S.S. Atenas
Dear Sir:

I am the boatswain mate who was washed overboard by the heavy seas from the U.S.S. Ericcson on the morning of January 25, 1945.

There has been no opportunity for me to thank you for what you did that morning, as your hearing my calling and passing the word was the direct cause of the U.S.S. Bangor finding me and picking me up.

I wish to express my gratitude to you and your officers and men who aided you in effecting my rescue.

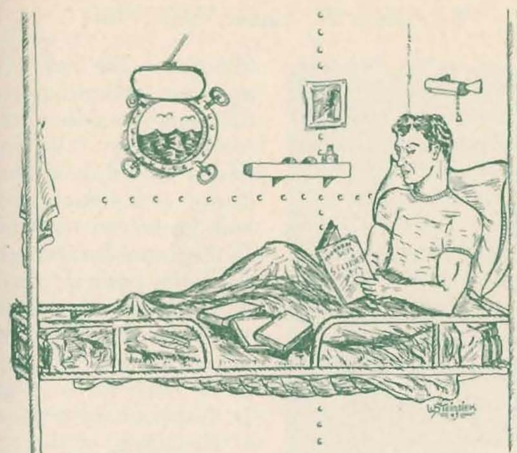
Respectfully your,
John Nealing, BM1/6



Herald Tribune

First newspaper delivery by helicopter in commercial history, April 3, 1948. Container (in white circle) catapulted to deck as *Nieuw Amsterdam* slowed down for pilot.

How To Say "Bon Voyage"



EACH voyage of a ship is an adventure. It may be hazardous; it may be routine. The hazards of wind, storm, fire, are always in the offing. Good seamanship, skilled men, resourcefulness and courage are as necessary today as they were in the days of sailing ships. While radar, loran, "metal mikes" and other marvelous devices make ships safer, the element of danger is still a part of seafaring.

Today when ships leave the port of New York, good luck and bon voyage greetings are sent the crews in the tangible form of Bon Voyage packages packed by women volunteers for the Seamen's Church Institute of New York to distribute to outgoing ships. Hand-knitted sweaters, socks and watch caps, cigarettes and playing cards, toilet articles and mending kits, become prized possessions to men who face weeks and months aboard ship. Books from the Institute's CONRAD LIBRARY help to pass the monotonous hours between watches.

And when the crews return they are welcomed at 25 South Street with services they need and activities they have missed on their long voyages.

Your gift to the Ways and Means Fund of the Institute is a practical way of saying "Bon Voyage" and "Welcome Home" to the thousands of men who carry passengers and cargoes on our merchant ships.

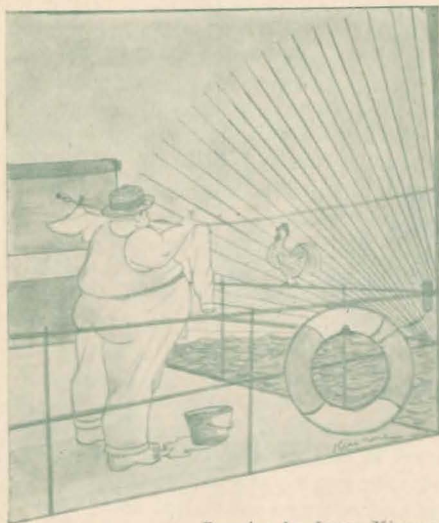
Please make checks payable to the

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

My Most Unforgettable War Experience — Third Prize

The Captain in the Green Hat*

By Francis W. Keyser, *Chief Mate*



Drawing by James Kissane

IT was six o'clock in the morning watch when our convoy steamed through the Straits of Bonafacio and set course for Marseilles. With my pea jacket buttoned up tight against the bitter nip of the mistral, I stood on the bridge looking back over the straight line of our wake. High up against the black hills of Corsica a snowsquall was breaking—snow falling like a blanket of cold whiteness, and blotting out for a moment the colder blackness of the mountainside. The sky hung low and black, with patches of dirty scud flying swiftly with the wind. Off to the north, flashes of lightning cut sharply through the black. Then thunder beyond, deep and growling, noise without movement.

From early fall until late winter we had been shuttling troops and equipment from one Mediterranean port to another. From the time we had left our anchorage at Lynnhaven Roads and stuck our nose out of Chesapeake Bay, it had been a trip of continual bad weather. Twelve ships with their steering gear rooms flooded in the heavy quartering sea had put back to port. Lifeboats on the weather side were smashed and carried away, leaving the empty davits standing useless and alone. The Navy signalman reported five men in the convoy washed overboard. In Leghorn for twelve straight days the rain poured steadily down out of a black sky. Strong southerly winds off Cap Piombino nearly drove us ashore from our anchorage in the outer harbor. In Augusta it rained. In Naples it rained.

The limits of the snowsquall were clearly defined as it moved down over the mountain and advanced slowly over the water toward our convoy. The air was calm now, with patches of nervous little ripples running over the water, as if fearful of the approaching storm. The British Commodore left the wheelhouse and raised his glasses toward the receding shoreline. A small freighter that had put out from the island was setting her course in a diagonal line that was gradually bringing her nearer our convoy.

"Hm, she's a little fellow."

When it's still a long way off to breakfast, and men's spirits are sagging under grey skies, talking becomes an effort. We both knew all about the freighter — she was to join our convoy and go on to Marseilles with us.

"Yes," I said, "she is."

Scattered snowflakes began to fall —large, wet gobs that fell almost straight down and left circles of dampness on the bridge grating under our feet. The signal halyards bellied out in a sudden puff of wind and began to make little rattling and slapping noises against the bridge railing. A gun crew boy hurried forward over the catwalk, arms waving awkwardly in the air as he struggled into his oilskin jacket. A scrap of paper torn from one of the trucks on the foredeck chased fluttering after him, and then, caught by an up-draft, sailed off to leeward. The snow fell faster now, slanting with the wind. Bearded white pennants appeared clinging to the underside of the smokestack guys. The bow and stern were hidden behind a curtain of swirling whiteness. The Captain appeared climbing up the starboard ladder to the bridge deck. Unhurriedly he made his way to the starboard wing and, using one finger with fastidious delicacy, he depressed the top of the smoke-grimed, canvas dodger and peered into the falling snow. The three of us stood in silence. There was no sound except the creaking of the deck grating in the wheelhouse as the man at the wheel shifted his feet, and an occasional blast from the other ships in the convoy.

The squall was soon over. With the slackening of the wind the air grew lighter. A few scattered flakes were left hovering uncertainly in the air, and the squall had moved on away and to the westward. Clear blue patches of sky began to appear overhead. Off to the east bright rays from the sun were breaking through the clouds and slanting downward. The water that had been dull grey was now a deep, rich purple, against which the foam curling back from the bows was etched in glittering white plumes.

"The old man's hanging out his wash." The Captain smiled, looking off to starboard. The freighter that had been setting her course to join us had come in close during the squall and was now steaming along directly on our beam. She was a small, dirty coaster with paint peeling from her smokestack and great red-brown patches of rust on her hull. In the warmth of the sun now pouring down we watched her Captain string a clothes line between two stanchions on the deck outside his cabin, and begin hanging up clothes from a bucket on the deck. He was a big, pot-bellied man dressed in undershirt and dirty white duck trousers, and wearing on his head a bright, green hat shaped like a flower pot. There was a world of contentment in his every gesture as he slapped about the deck in his huge bare feet. Lashed to the bulkhead outside his cabin were several wooden cages. From one of the cages came the long crow of a rooster to greet the rising sun.

"Hot coffee." The Commodore laughed and rubbed his hands together as pots and pans rattled down in the galley and the odor of fresh breakfast coffee floated up to the bridge. "Come, boy. Come, boy," he shouted at me exuberantly, laughing for no reason at all. And for no reason at all, I laughed back at him. The Captain strolled over from the wing of the bridge and the three of us stood there talking and laughing, while the warm sun poured down and water from the melting snow ran in a bright stream down the scuppers.

I have almost forgotten the torpedoes, the subs, the roar of planes overhead, but I'll never forget the Captain in the green hat hanging out his wash, the warmth of the sun, the smell of fresh coffee, and the crow of a rooster coming over the water to give a small lift to the failing spirits of man.

> The Seamen's Church Institute of New York recently conducted an essay contest on the topic: "My Most Unforgettable War Experience." The Judges were Lilian Gilkes, Frank Laskier and Donald Kennicott. Mr. Kennicott, who is editor of "*Blue Book* Magazine," purchased five of the essays which were published in the March issue of *Blue Book*. The Institute awarded $25.00, $15.00 and $10.00 for 1st, 2nd and 3rd prize essays.

Drawing by Thomas Musser

*Reprinted from BLUE BOOK Magazine

ARTISTS and WRITERS CLUB OBSERVES THIRD ANNIVERSARY

BUDDING authors, shy poets, inarticulate artists mingled with successful editors, writers, painters and critics at the luncheon held June 21st at the Institute to celebrate the third anniversary of the Artists and Writers Club for the Merchant Marine.

At a table decorated with ship models sailing in a cellophane sea, seamen with creative talents heard experts talk about the problems of their craft. Many of those present had been going to sea for many years but only since joining the Club had begun to record their experiences on paper, or their observations on canvas.

Harry Hansen, book critic of the New York World-Telegram, announced the winners in the recent essay contest conducted by the Institute on the topic, "My Most Unforgettable Shipmate." Mr. Hansen served with Frank Laskier, seaman-author and John Mason Brown, author and critic of the Saturday Review of Literature, as judge in this Contest. The winners were: James H. Parsons, A. B. seaman, for his portrayal of a ship's surgeon who saved his life when his ship was attacked, which won first prize of $25.00; Captain Gordon Messegee, second prize $15.00; Captain I. F. Wood, third prize $10.00; and P. R. Bliss, honorable mention, $5.00.

Mr. Hansen commented: "I think these essays were a very interesting collection with a lot of human ideas. Many of the men seemed to remember in particular one shipmate who had been violent and then turned to do something kind or heroic. I find the most interesting thing about these manuscripts is the touch of human kindness which runs through them."

John Mason Brown, in sending in his choices, wrote: "These are by all odds the best essays I have so far had the pleasant privilege of reading for the Seamen's Institute. I don't know whether my preferences will conform with the choices of the other judges. I find it very hard in these contests to make fair selections. I have, however, mustered my courage and followed my tastes. In announcing the awards, don't you think it would be in order to indicate the high quality of the present entries?"

Speakers at the luncheon included Beth O'Shea of 20th Century Fox Film Corporation who told how moving pictures are buying "originals" and said the fresh material of seamen writers would receive a careful reading and Dorothy Johnson, editor of "THE WOMAN" and a writer of fiction for the Saturday Evening Post, who pointed out that during the war writers had a ready-made conflict, and now it was increasingly difficult to find strong conflict.

Ship News

EMPIRE STATE SAILS

The New York State Maritime Academy's training ship *Empire State* sailed from Fort Schuyler, N. Y., on a three-month training cruise to the Mediterranean. In addition to 300 cadets and officers, it also carried fifty tons of relief supplies for Italy, a gift of the National Catholic Welfare Conference. Ports of call will be Trinidad, Madeira, Italy, France, Gibraltar and Algiers.

Vice Admiral Herbert Leary, retired, said this marked a turning point in the history of the maritime academy because "for the first time every cadet midshipman aboard is a college degree candidate."

SURVIVORS OF ATTACK BY U-BOAT IN REUNION

Thirty years ago on the first of June, 615 sailors drifted in lifeboats and rafts in the Atlantic 500 miles west of Brest, France, after their troopship, the first to be hit by a torpedo, was sunk by a German submarine. On June 1, 1948, eighty members of the crew of the ship, the *President Lincoln*, held their annual commemoration reunion at the Astor Hotel.

Among those at the dinner was Admiral P. S. Foote, retired, of Charlotte, N. C., the skipper of the *Lincoln*, which lost twenty-six men when she was sunk. He recalled the night-long vigil the men spent awaiting the arrival of two rescue destroyers that had been diverted from convoy duty.

CHINESE INSCRIPTION ON HULL

The United States Lines freighter *Courser*, which returned here from a regular run to the Far East, carried on her hull three large Chinese characters translated as "Fine Horse." The inscription was the work of Shanghai artisans who chose the closest approximation in their language to the ship's American name which, by dictionary definition, is a poetic term for "a swift or spirited" equine.

The *Courser* is the only ship of the line to date to display a foreign version of her name.

'KIDDIE SHIP' TO AID FRENCH

A "kiddie ship" gayly decorated with Mother Goose characters sailed recently, with more than thirty tons of food, clothing and toys for youngsters of Calais, France. The vessel is the new 100-foot trawler *Lucien Marie*, built at Bath for the French Government. It is being sponsored by Portland radio station WCSH. Children of the state have contributed to the cargo.

OFFICER'S DREAM CATCHES EX-GI STOWAWAY NEAR GOAL

By The United Press

A former United States soldier who stowed away on a ship bound for Australia was caught in sight of his goal because a ship's officer had a startlingly accurate dream.

Chief Purser R. T. Heydon awoke about 3 A. M., when the Matson line *Marine Phoenix* was about twenty miles out of Sydney. He had dreamed that a stowaway was hiding in the ship's reading room.

Mr. Heydon at once went to the reading room. The first person he saw there was Robert L. Joyce of San Francisco, who had traveled across the Pacific without being caught.

Mr. Joyce had obtained official clearance to immigrate to Australia, but could not finance the trip even with Government help. So he stowed away and nearly got away with it—even eating most of his meals in the dining room without being questioned. He slept in obscure corners of public rooms on the ship.

His papers were in order, and the Immigration Department will admit him to Australia—if Matson Line officials will agree to cut their loss and let him leave the ship.

RETIRED L. I. SOUND LINER TO PLY CHINESE COAST

Another old American steamer will join the notable list of once-popular coastwise liners now flying the Chinese flag. The Steamship Historical Society of America reports that the 2,153 gross-ton *Comet* has been sold to the Asia Development Corp. for Chinese coast and river service.

Built in 1907 as the *Camden* for the Eastern Steamship Co., the *Comet* became famous in the Long Island Sound passenger run. She was one of the first turbine-propelled ships built in the United States and in her coastal service could do well over eighteen knots.

TUGBOAT ANNIE'S NYLONS

What was described as the first eight-inch nylon hawser to go into commercial use was put aboard the Moran Towing and Transportation Company's oceangoing tug *Margot Moran* recently. The quarter-mile-long line is the largest ever manufactured at the Plymouth Cordage Company, of Plymouth, Mass. It weighs more than a ton, has 2,528,604 nylon filaments in it—roughly equal to 74,250 pairs of silk stockings—and its breaking point strength is rated at 105,000 pounds.

"Superstitions of the Sea"

By Ralph Childs, *Professor of English at Cooper Union*

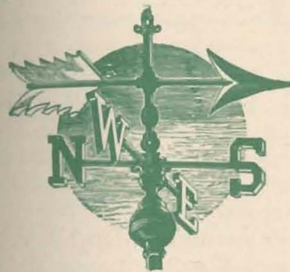
(*Continued from July LOOKOUT*)

MAYBE by now you have noticed I have been coming down the coast toward New York. As we have the biggest and best of everything here, so we also do well on phantom ships. New York has two. Neither is quite as well authenticated as some of these others, but both are subscribed to by that eminent Hudson Valley booster, Washington Irving. One is a vague story of a ship captained by the Heer of Dunderburg. The vessel is of Dutch build, rather like Henry Hudson's *Half-Moon*. She has been seen all along the Hudson from Hoboken to Tappan Sea. The other has to do with a certain Rambout van Dam who lived at Spitting Devil. He rowed and sailed from there one Saturday, the length of Tappan Sea to Kakiat on the western shore, to attend a quilting party. There he drank and danced until midnight, when he entered his boat to go home. He was warned that he was on the verge of Sunday morning. He swore that he would not land until he reached Spitting Devil if it took him a month of Sundays. He was never seen again, but he is often heard plying his oars on Tappan Sea, being the Flying Dutchman of the Tappan Sea doomed to row between Spitting Devil and Kakiak until Judgment Day.

TWO MYSTERIES OF THE SEA

At this point, having been tossed on the uncertain sea of spectre barks and phantom noises, let us climb back onto the solid rock of reality and discuss two mysteries of the sea. Both are connected with New York in that one vessel sailed from here and one was coming here. Let us take them up in chronological order. The first is the unsolved mystery of the pilot schooner the *Patriot*. She sailed from Georgetown, South Carolina for New York on December 30, 1812. On board was a

woman, a sign of bad luck, Mrs. Joseph Alston, the wife of the governor and daughter of Aaron Burr. Theodosia Burr Alston was going to New York to see her father but after she sailed out of Georgetown harbor she was never seen again. In 1869 Dr. W. G. Pool was called on to attend a poor woman at Nag's Head near Kitty Hawk on one of the barrier islands on the Carolina coast. She had no money to pay the good doctor so she gave him a portrait of a lovely young lady, painted on mahogany and framed in gilt, which had been given her as a maiden by her sweetheart. He had taken it from a ship which had been driven ashore there in 1812 with all sails set, rudder lashed, unfinished meal on the table and silk dresses in the lockers. The ship was deserted and there were no signs of violence or bloodshed on board. Dr. Pool thought the portrait looked like Aaron Burr and sent photographs of it to the Burr family who identified it as Theodosia. It was then compared with the Sully portrait of Theodosia which it resembled in features and expression. It is now in a private collection here in New York. The only explanation of this mystery is given by the death bed confessions of three men. Two of them were criminals about to be executed who said they were members of a pirate crew that boarded the *Patriot* and made everyone walk the plank. The third was a dying beggar in Michigan who confessed to the same story and added that he had been haunted by the face of a beautiful woman who pleaded for her life and permission to go to her father in New York. These confessions have not been taken very seriously for it is known that men about to die will confess to imaginary crimes as well as actual ones. Further, none of these men offered any explanation as to why, after making the passengers walk the plank, they then failed to loot the ship, but let her drift ashore.

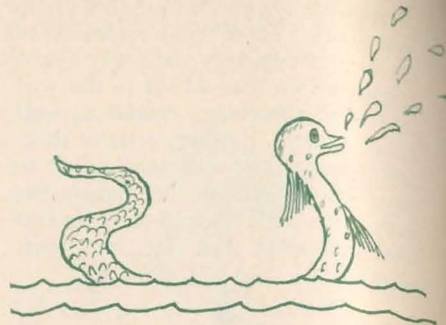


Another and more recent mystery of the sea is the fate of the crew of the *Mary Celeste*. This has been the talk of wardroom and fo'c'le for the last fifty years. The *Mary Celeste* was built upon the Bay of Funday as the Amazon and launched in 1861. She was rather a jinx ship. Her first captain died three days after taking command. In 1862 she was wrecked in Glace Bay, Newfoundland. She was salvaged and in 1871 sold to satisfy debts in Boston. Next year in 1872 she was found a derelict in the mid-Atlantic with no one on board. Finally in 1885 she was wrecked for good in Haiti. At the time we were interested in her she was skippered and partly owned by Captain Benjamin S. Briggs of Marion, Massachusetts. He set sail in her from New York, pier 50, East River for Genoa. On board were his two mates, cook, four seamen and his wife and three year old daughter, Sophia Matilda — ten in all. In the hold were 1700 barrels of alcohol. They cleared Sandy Hook on Thursday, November 7, 1872. Not a soul on board was ever seen again. On November 15 the *Dei Gratia*, with Captain Morehouse, sailed from New York for Italy. On December 4 some 400 miles east of the Azores the *Dei Gratia* met a vessel headed west back to America with no one aboard. The mate, Mr. Deveau, of the *Dei Gratia* boarded the deserted ship and found her to be the *Mary Celeste*. Some sails were set, the mast was furled, the wheel was not lashed, the row boat was gone and some running rigging broken in eluding the peak halyard of the mainsail. The ship's papers were gone although the mate's log was there. The fore and lazarette hatch covers were off. Very little water was in the hold. Sailors had left money and pipes on board, and the chaptain had left his watch. The last entry in the log showed the position then, ten days earlier, as 25 miles east of the Azores. Captain Morehouse put Mr. Deveau, his mate, and a prize crew aboard and sailed her into Gibralta and put in a claim for salvage. The Queen's Proctor in the Admiralty Court was very suspicious of foul play. Maybe the crew had drunk some of the alcohol and murdered the master and mates. The underwriters were accused of hiring the crew of the *Mary Celeste* to mutiny. Neither could be proved and the action in either case would be pointless and without profit. Another theory is that the crew of the *Dei Gratia* bribed the crew of the *Mary Celeste* to mutiny then met her at sea by appointment. The crew of the *Dei Gratia* then overpowered the mutineers and made them walk the plank — since dead men tell no tales.

The *Dei Gratia* then sailed the *Mary Celeste* into port and claimed salvage. They were eventually awarded 1700 pounds salvage. The latest theory is that Captain Briggs, smelling alcohol fumes in his hold, and fearing an explosion, ordered everyone into the small boat. The peak halyard was used to tie the small boat to the ship so that they could get back on board in case no explosion took place. Then a breeze sprang up, and the tow line parted. The ship sailed off by herself and the small boat was swamped in the ris-

ing sea. This explanation is not completely satisfactory. The Lazarette was open and plenty of line was there to use as a tow line much more conveniently than unreeving the peak halyard. Alcohol, especially mixed with sea water, is not explosive. No report of a frayed end of a halyard exists. So the desertion of the *Mary Celeste* remains one of the mysteries of the sea and serves as the prototype of many yarns of deserted vessels.

Vague references to sea serpents continue down to modern times. Lately two of the best places to see sea serpents have been Scotland and New England. We get a fairly good description by the Reverend Mr. MacLean who saw one near the Island of Coll, Scotland in 1808. "Its head was somewhat broad, of oval form, its neck rather smaller and shoulders considerably broader and then tapered to the tail. It had no fins and seemed to move on undulation. It was about 80 feet long." It chased the dominie in his boat into a cove from which it had difficulty in emerging to the sea again. This serpent was seen the same day by the crews of thirteen fishing boats. After that an epidemic of sea serpents occurred off New England. A hundred foot one with a head like a horse was seen in Gloucester in 1815 and two years later in 1817 was back again and was approached by a boat within thirty feet. According to the Gloucester Telegraph, hunters shot at it but missed. In 1818, the next year, Mr. Tom Prince saw it about 100 yards off Long Beach near Lynn, Mass., and a few days later at about 100 yards off shore Mr. Samuel Cabot saw it off Nahaut, near Boston. The eminent Mr. Cabot reports that he had a head like a horse and was not less than eighty feet long. It was there again the next year and was seen by many people on the beach and by one man with a telescope (which does enlarge things) who estimated its length at 60 feet. Later the same year the crew of the sloop *Concord* and the Reverend



Cheever Finch saw it, adding the detail that the head rose about seven feet above the water. In 1820 it was seen off Swampscott, Mass., by a large crowd, many of whom made affidavits before the local J. P. After a lapse of 13 years it appeared again off Swampscott in 1833 and after 16 years again in 1849. Apparently he had taken to roaming for he was seen in the Atlantic off the African coast on July 9, 1848 by the officers and crew of H.M.S. *Daedalus* and a few days later near the same spot by an American brig, the *Daphne*, now grown to be about 100 feet in length. By 1857, another ten years, its size had increased to about 200 feet in length, when Captain Harrington of the *Castilian* saw it off Boston again where several people on board the yacht *Princess* saw it and followed it for two hours firing at it with a rifle, without being lucky enough to hit it. Another serpent, at least I believe it must be another, was seen off the coast of Brazil at 10 A.M. on December 7, 1905 from the Earl of Crasford's yacht *Valhalla*. Mr. Meade Waldo and Mr. Michael J. Nicoll, both members of the Zoological Society (London) described it in the "proceedings" of that society.

Marine Poetry

MY DECISION

By George Newton

Past the boomin' surge out yonder,
Anchored in the open sea
Is a fast ship and a good one,
And her sailin' waits for me.
She's bound for Rupat Island
In the long, Malacca Straits,
And she's pullin' hard at anchor
As impatiently she waits.
From her high forestays'l foreward
To her mizzen royal arms,
Every stay and ratline ship shape
For the doldrums or the storms.
She's pitching now to rising seas,
The mate has glass in hand
And if I send the signal out
I'll forfeit my command.
For right here in Tocapilla
There's another waits for me;
There's a dark-eyed, dusky maiden
Just beyond the mango tree.
Just beyond that grove of oranges
In a thatch-roofed cottage there;
With her lovely hands arranging
Red hibiscus in her hair.
With her full lips slightly parted,
And a burnin' in her eyes,
And her sweet, young bosom swellin'
And her throaty little cries.
I'm torn between the two of them;
The ship of my command,
And the dark-eyed dusky maiden
On the stinkin', worthless land.
They're haulin' up Blue Peter now,
The wind and tide are right:
But she'll never sail without me
For I'll be aboard tonight!

THE SINGING MAIDEN

By Alvin L. Davis

What thinks the sailor as he lies
'Neath stars on his ship at night?
What thoughts in the mind of the sailor when
He wakes in the morning light?
Why does the sailor follow the sea
And never ashore remain,
Why does he pass from the land of his home
And never take roots again?
This you ask of me, my friend,
And the answer I give to you
Is the story of a singing lady
Who sings to the sailor true.
When the sea is calm and the seagulls cry
And follow the ship for food,
When silvery fish play night and day
And turtles feed their brood,
When lanterns of St. Elmo's fire
Shine sparkling on the stays
And plain are seen the sailboats white
Becalmed upon the bays,
When the glowing moon is golden bright
On whitecaps on the sea,
I see the form of a maiden fair
And the maiden sings to me.
The singing lady's hair is white,
She often wears a veil.
Reflecting moods of heaven high
In wind and rain and hail.
Many shades of blue her dress
Trimmed in black and green.
Great pearls appear upon her gown
And shine a silvery sheen.
Around her feet black ribbons play
Bedecked with diamonds' light.
And none can solve the mystery
Of how they glow so bright.
My singing lady welcomes all
Who seek with her to be.
So join a ship and hear the call
Of my maiden fair . . . the sea.

I AM TIRED OF SHRILL NOR'EASTERS

By Jerry Doane

I am tired of shrill Nor'easters
And foul weather of all sorts;
I am sick of drinking rot-gut
In grimy Northern ports.
I've had enough of snowstorms,
Of hail and stinging sleet,
And I want to soak in sunshine
In the tropics' lazy heat.
I want to smell the jasmine,
And I want to taste the wine
In the taverns where there's laughter
In the lands below the Line.
So I'll ship aboard a freighter
That is following a course
To the cities where it's summer
Beneath the Southern Cross.

From "Salt Water in their Veins"
Fine Editions Press

LOOK OUT FOR LEO!

Whiling away a few moments in the Janet Roper Club, a group of seamen began discussing why they had gone to sea. Among a variety of answers was that of a seaman who said *he* had gone because he was born in August and asserting that August's sign, Leo, stood for trouble. Then, for fun and the sake of experimentation, all the birthdates of seamen registered in the Club's Birthday Book were checked. Results showed that more seamen recorded there had been born in August than in any other month!

FO'C'SLE MUSIC

Front and back cover of this month's LOOKOUT show two views of seamen relaxing in the fo'c'sle. The cover is a modern photograph taken on a merchant ship. The above is a painting by Anton Otto Fischer from his book "Foc'sle Days" showing men of the old sailing ship days having a bit of music between watches.

LEGACIES TO THE INSTITUTE

You are asked to remember this Institute in your will, that it may properly carry on its important work for seamen. While it is advisable to consult your lawyer as to the drawing of your will, we submit nevertheless the following as a clause that may be used:

"I give and bequeath to **"Seamen's Church Institute of New York,"** a corporation of the State of New York, located at 25 South Street, New York City, the sum of...Dollars."

Note that the words **"of New York"** are a part of our title. If land or any specific property such as bonds, stocks, etc., is given, a brief description of the property should be inserted instead of the words, "the sum of...Dollars."