

The LOOKOUT



SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

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The Lookout

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Christmas at the Institute

We shall have more sailormen with us for Christmas this year than ever before. With the new dormitory and several floors of bed rooms in the annex open, we shall be able to accommodate twelve hundred active seamen, almost fifty percent more than we had last year.

This means that twelve hundred sailormen for at least once in their seafaring careers will have a real homey Christmas that they can enjoy and look back to through the lonely years that may follow.

Nearly every seaman can remember some Christmas somewhere when someone was kind to him, even though it may have been back in his childhood. He therefore knows what Christmas might mean to him this year if only he could manage to be ashore in America.

Perhaps his ship was caught in a winter storm last year and no one on board could give a thought to anything but navigating; or maybe someone remembered it was Christmas and

hunted the ship over for something red and green to hang over the mess table.

Think what it would mean to such a boy to find himself under the Institute's hospitable roof this year; to discover a real Christmas tree in the lobby with gay lights and shiny baubles and the fragrance of Maine woods; and then to go to a nice warm clean room and find on his pillow a holly-bordered card inviting him to turkey dinner on the morrow.

Think what it would mean to such a boy in one of the marine hospitals to have our chaplain hand him a colorful cretonne bag containing all the little comforts he had missed during his illness and perhaps an orange and a friendly note from the donor.

We can (and should) reach over three thousand seamen if our Holiday Fund permits. Each dollar sent to the Institute designated for this fund will gladden one sailorman's Christmas Day.

The LOOKOUT

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Men of the Vestris

P. & A. Photo

SURVIVORS READING OF THE DISASTER AS OTHERS SAW IT

The Institute has had the privilege of caring for the surviving members of the crew of the *S. S. Vestris*—one hundred twenty-eight of them.

We haven't had an experience to compare with it since the War, when torpedoed crews were more or less the order of the day. But they were disasters accepted with the casualties of warfare, while this affair de-

scended upon an incredulous world like a bolt out of the blue.

Long before the rescue ships docked, the Lamport and Holt Line had turned to us with the request that we care for their men, and we were ready for them.

They came to us, poor souls, in pitifully scant improvised costumes, some of them with rags tied about their feet with rope

by way of foot-wear, and all of them terribly shaken by their recent nightmare.

They were outwardly calm until the contingents from the first two rescue ships met. It was their first intimation as to which of their shipmates had been saved, and they gave way quite frankly to laughter and tears and ardent embraces.

Over in a corner of our Apprentice Room, where we received them, a slight little figure sat huddled over a table, his head on his arms, sobbing violently. He was the ship's laundryman. He had made a desperate effort to save his wife, the laundress, but had finally seen her go down, beyond his reach. Occasionally a shipmate would go over to him in his corner, and place a hand on his shoulder for a moment, silently. There was nothing for either to say.

It was a strange scene. Over a hundred of the survivors crowded into one room (although there was an adjoining one at their disposal also). Some wore sou'westers and sleeveless sweaters with nothing over their arms; some had fragments of blankets fastened about their shoulders with safety pins;

some wore tattered cotton shirts; many still had their white linen stewards' coats; a few were barefooted; a few were fitted out with lounging robes and slippers donated by passengers on one of the rescue ships; all were disheveled, and all showed signs of lack of sleep.

In sharp contrast, ten or a dozen snappily dressed reporters and news photographers circulated amongst the crew, eager for their accounts of the disaster. Some talked freely as if to relieve their emotions; a few gave calm connected accounts of their experiences; but most were silent, sailor fashion, too dazed to venture opinions.

At one end of the room a boy from the Institute staff worked with a representative of the Lamport and Holt Line checking up the names of the survivors and giving them bed and meal tickets.

As each man filed past, a tailor engaged by the Line whisked a tape measure about with a few deft movements, jotted down a figure or two and said, "All right. Next!" As if by magic this same tailor appeared in the middle of the afternoon with a truckload of neat paper packages containing the results of his

measurings and jottings—a complete well-fitting outfit for each man. There were good quality navy blue serge suits, black shoes, grey felt hats, white shirts, neckties of various hues, and a set of warm underwear. Later the Line supplied good warm overcoats and suitcases.

Credit for some of this has been erroneously given to the Institute by the newspapers. We did all we could, of course. We gave the men emergency clothes and foot-wear to protect them temporarily. One of the most interesting scenes in the whole program was in an open hallway where about fifty of the destitute crew sat about on the floor in their grotesque attire soon after their arrival, trying on the motley assortment of shoes produced by our Old Clothes Man, exchanging both advice and foot-gear with their shipmates.

It was most gratifying to us to witness the results of the efficient and thoughtful planning of the Lamport and Holt Line in behalf of their men. Within a few hours after his arrival each man was perhaps better outfitted than ever before in his life, with a ten dollar bill in his pocket for pin money, all his expenses having been provided

for. A second gift of ten dollars was forth-coming at the beginning of the second week ashore. In addition each man will receive a bonus of two months' pay and full compensation for the time he is in New York waiting to ship home. This is contrary to the usual accepted custom of the sea of stopping wages when a ship sinks.

Of course, even this generosity on the part of the Line would not have sufficed, had there been no home to open to these unfortunate men of the *Vestris*. Someone told us, "If the Institute had never done anything in all its 85 years of history, its existence, to my mind, would be more than justified by the hospitality it has extended to these poor devils."

We gave them a special dormitory and some of the best bedrooms in the new building; and we set aside a reading and game room for their special use, where they might get away from curious questioners and enjoy the comradeship fostered by a common soul-shaking experience.

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do" was our program. We found an opportunity to serve as liaison between lawyers and the crew by arranging for

various men wanted to be on hand at the proper time for hearings, etc.

We handled an unprecedented number of telephone calls and personal visits from friends of the crew as well as from friends of missing passengers who came with a glimmering hope that some of the crew might have seen them picked up.

There were pathetic incidents without number; there were amusing episodes; there were plenty of tales of heroism, even though some of it was to no

avail; and there was the strange case of one seaman who had checked his baggage at the Institute before sailing on the *Vestris*. He had not been well and a doctor told him that a trip to South America might help him. He counted it good fortune that he had left most of his belongings with us, but he has been taken to the hospital again suffering from pneumonia contracted through exposure.

We were quite touched when a committee from the Veteran Wireless Operators Association



P. & A. Photo

THE IMPROMPTU PRAYER MEETING

of America came to us and asked us to conduct a memorial service for Michael J. O'Loughlin, chief radio man on the Vestris, who died at his post of duty.

It was our privilege to arrange such a service for the first Sunday after the disaster, in old Trinity Church. Four of our chaplains were vested and in the chancel; and Dr. Stetson conducted a very simple but impressive memorial ceremony similar to those held there for Queen Victoria and President McKinley. Appropriately, these last rites for the gallant O'Loughlin were broadcast.

But back at the Institute, the day of their rescue, a few of the crew had gathered together under the leadership of one of their ship-mates known as the Deacon, and in their own simple

Thanksgiving Entertainment

The day after the holiday we happened to mention our Thanksgiving Entertainment to one of the Institute "regulars," who promptly came back with, "Which one?"

It was then unfolded to our landlubber mind that the passing

way they read the Bible, prayed for their lost comrades, and gave thanks for their own deliverance. Their little service closed with the plea voiced by the Deacon:—

"O Lord, You judge them and You judge us, please, because You knows everything how it happened."

The Benefit

Our Fourth Annual Benefit gave us a net profit of \$3,031.58. We are most grateful to all who helped make it such a success; and we especially appreciate their acceptance of the play, "This Thing Called Love," as a substitute for the one originally scheduled. We hope too that everyone enjoyed the performance.

out of sandwiches and doughnuts and apples and coffee in the afternoon was considered quite as much of an entertainment as the antics of a professional comedian in the evening, if not more so.

The apples were a special

treat, for fresh fruit is rare in the mess-room of a freighter. Again our sailorboys convinced us of their resourcefulness in meeting any emergency, by balancing a sandwich, a rolling apple and a rolling jelly doughnut on a paper plate in one hand and a brimful mug of coffee in the other. Some cut their problem in half by stowing the apples in their pockets, but the restless jelly doughnuts still remained to be reckoned with!

It is always a joy to be able to do anything for these sailormen of ours. They are so orderly and so appreciative. They came quietly to the tables where we were serving, with no attempt to jostle, each man conducting himself becomingly without direction from anyone.

The evening entertainment was a variation of our usual Thursday night performances consisting of our sailor talent. The spice of the program was a professional comedian rejoicing in the name of Tizzard. One of our boys suggested that if he would change the first letter he could have a name particularly appropriate for the occasion.

For two hours we all forgot our troubles. We still have no auditorium, but our two husky

tables and three or four hundred chairs lined up in one end of the new lobby make a splendid recreation room.

Chorus singing opened the program. The words of "Bye, bye, Blackbird" were flashed on the wall and we were off for the evening appropriately:

"Pack up all my care and woe,
Here I go, singing low."

There is always something pathetic about our boys when they sing, even though they do it with gusto. Words like, "Just me and my shadow, not a soul to tell my troubles to," are all too true, and one cannot help wondering what is behind some of the lusty singing.

One of the favorites concerns itself with a Senorita who said Si-si "In a little Spanish town, 'twas on a night like this." Perhaps it is reminiscent to some of our cosmopolites.

During this Thanksgiving program, as usual, some of the boys sat reading, apparently entirely unaware anything was going on. An article on "What's Wrong with Mexico?" and the Society Page of the Herald-Tribune held two earnest chaps so spell-bound they missed all of Mr. Tizzard's jokes, and

(Continued on page 10)

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Christmas Ships



What would Christmas be without the sailor who brings in the freights?

How would we get our toys?

How would we get sugar for our Christmas sweets?

How many of our Christmas gifts could we bestow if the merchant sailor had not brought us at least some part of them?

Indeed, how many of our everyday necessities would we have if it were not for the men who bring in the freights?

It is for all this that the sailorman undergoes discomforts—for all this that he lives his lonely and hazardous life, and even sacrifices it on the wintry seas.

He comes ashore, his sea-bag on his shoulder. As he swings along South Street, his eyes lift to the glowing Cross on the roof of the Institute, and he remembers with a pang that it is Christmas Eve.

There will be twelve hundred others with us that night—lonely sailorboys to whom we want to give Christmas dinners on the morrow.

Don't you want to write your check for the Holiday Fund now and say,

"Here's to the sailors that bring in the freights!"

(Continued from page 7)
 "many a joke had he."

None were so hilariously received as those concerned with seamen, especially the reading of an advertisement of a millinery store:

"Wanted—girls to trim rough sailors."

They laughed loud and long over that, and seemed equally appreciative of the nautical touch in a song entitled, "She was a sailor's sweetheart, but now she's an officer's mess."

Our boys supplemented the efforts of the versatile Mr. Tizard with numerous solos—the soloist always protesting that he had a cold and really shouldn't sing, you know. Then there was the usual harmonica player—there is always at least one in every assemblage of seafaring men. This one was a very young boy in dungarees and a heavy blue sweater. He ambled nonchalantly to the platform, drew his sleeve across his mouth, rubbed the harmonica on his hip and then cupped it in his hands preparatory to an animated rendition of the latest blues. All this was accompanied by rhythmic foot-tapping and the swaying of a refractory lock of hair that hung over one eye.

Unique on the program was a paper-tearing act, volunteered by a middle-aged man who looked like a moving-picture senator. With great dignity he converted the evening paper into lace doilies, five pointed stars and such, while the pianist followed him with soft nothings and our sailors sat spell-bound like youngsters at a circus.

In the audience was a boy from Ohio who had confessed earlier in the day that he was thinking about the folks back home, and he reckoned maybe they were thinking about him. There was also a young man from Florida who came in from a long trip Thanksgiving morning to find that his mother had died several weeks before. Both admitted that being at the Institute made the day tolerable.

How many more heavy hearts were gladdened through our Thanksgiving celebration we shall never know, but this we can say—approximately one thousand sailormen participated in the festivities, and six thousand more who crossed our threshold availed themselves of the hospitality of the Institute in some way or other, and all because our many friends supply us with a Holiday Fund.

Our Sailors Eat Again



Photo by Schoenhals

THE END OF THE LINE IN THE CAFETERIA

December third answered the question, "When do we eat?" which has long been confronting the Institute.

On that day we opened our new cafeteria and dining room after many months of doing our best to feed our hungry sailors at the soda fountain.

The soda fountain served very well, being fully equipped as a modern luncheonette, but it never pretended to take the place of a dining room where

men may sit in comfort and enjoy their meals.

Now they have as fine a cafeteria as they could wish—spacious, light and airy, with mottled stone floor and walls and gleaming nickel fixtures. The food is temptingly displayed on steam tables or on ice tables or on glass shelves, as required, and it is served by kindly women attendants in crisp green and white uniforms.

Adjoining the cafeteria is a

dining room with table service for seamen, officers and staff.

Behind the scenes is a variety of kitchen equipment that has a mysterious air to the uninitiate. It has been most carefully chosen, however, with a view to labor-saving, efficient service and economy.

To announce the new dining facilities, we placed small cards in each man's room; but when the time for opening came, a seaman took matters into his own hands and helped us out—the scalawag! Observing that we

were "all set," he dashed into the crowded lobby and shouted that to christen the new mess room we were giving "free feeds" to all. Fortunately no one was hurt in the stampede that followed. When the hoax was discovered, the boys first gave their attention to dealing with the perpetrator, and then they came to "sample the eats."

Rumor has it that they were all delighted. They said very little, which we have learned is a sailorman's most enthusiastic praise.



THE DINING ROOM



BEHIND THE SCENES

Vignettes of the Seaman

Little Timothy is a seaman with one voyage to his credit. It was a rough voyage and Timothy was "pretty sick," but he still feels that he was born to be a sailor.

During the entire sixteen years of his life he has been a State ward, farmed out here and there in the mountain country of inland New York. It was a hard life for a little fellow,

Timothy being (according to a shipmate) "about as big as a pint of cider half drunk up."

So while Timothy milked cows at four a.m., he dreamed of a care-free life on the rolling sea. He got there eventually via the Instiute employment office. Such a persistent little customer we never had. He had made up his mind to go to sea and there was to be no alter-

native for that youngster.

The spirit of sixteen finally won and little Timothy got a ship for Havana and return. He regretted only that it was to be such a short trip, but it proved long enough to establish the fact that a sailor's life is not altogether carefree, and also that the sea does roll as advertised in songs. What the songs had not revealed, however, was that the rolling of the sea is likely to cause an internal commotion quite new to a boy brought up in the mountains.

Still Timothy plans to follow the sea. His shipmates encourage him with the assurance that the first hundred years are the worst, but he is taking no unnecessary risks. Enthusiasm has become tempered with discretion, it would seem, judging from Timothy's reaction to our offer of a job on a ship bound for South Africa.

"Guess I'd better take another short trip first," said Timothy, A.B.

In direct contrast to Timothy, we have Wiggins, an old timer. Wiggins has been "ailing" for some time. He didn't seem to respond to treatment of any sort. We tried to get him

light shore jobs to keep him going, but it finally became evident that it was the shore jobs that were making Wiggins sick. We got him a berth on a ship bound for a four months' trip to West Africa, and he spruced up unbelievably at the very anticipation.

Jed strolled into the Social Service Department with a roll of bills amounting to forty dollars. He approached our Relief Secretary, who is approximately one-fourth his size, and asked her beseechingly,

"Take care of me, will you? I never know how to manage ashore. I always get into trouble with my money."

Jed's roll was duly deposited in a good safe place, but on the morrow, bright and early, he appeared to draw out ten dollars. That is the limit we allow a man in one day, so when Jed came back for another ten, we questioned him.

He was a bit vague about what he had done with the first ten dollars, from which we surmised (knowing Jed) that he had parcelled it out to needy shipmates.

"I've got to have ten more," he persisted. "I've got a lot of

friends, and they need beds and something to eat."

"Have you got a bed and something to eat for yourself?"

Jed produced a pink dormitory ticket and a handful of change.

"Then you don't get another cent today," pronounced our Relief Secretary.

Jed accepted her awful finality, but he had the last word as he went out the door.

"Well, I suppose I'll appreciate you more tomorrow than I do today!"

Kenelly has been going to sea for years, but it hasn't washed the sod of Old Erin from him yet. His brogue is music to our ears, and it is always a happy day for the Institute when he rolls in with his never-failing smile and his big-hearted humor.

He told Mrs. Roper (in an accent that defies our poor ability to spell) that he prays for her and another member of our staff every night.

"I've got a long list to pray for, I have, and sometimes I go to sleep before I get to you, but I mean it all right. And course I know you're a different church, so I say a Protestant prayer for you and then I say a Catholic

prayer for you, and then I tell the Lord to take his choice."

Good old Kenelly! If it weren't an anachronism, we should suspect that the poet had him in mind when he compared kind hearts with coronets and simple faith with Norman blood.

Newman came into the office to pay back a dollar he had borrowed only a few days before. To a stranger it would have been just a picture of a man well beyond middle age, shabby but immaculately clean, a bit stooped, a bit clumsy because of poor eyesight, fingering his cap apologetically—just a quiet, wistful old fellow with a rumpled dollar bill.

But to our Relief Secretary, it was the close of another chapter in Newman's tragic life.

For ten years he has been depriving himself of everything to give his children an education. The eldest will be graduated from one of the best engineering schools in Europe in June, and he has been promised a good position here in America; but in the meantime Newman is having a pretty hard row to hoe, quite unknown to his son.

Newman's eyes are failing him. It is hoped that an opera-

tion in a few weeks will save his sight. Until then he is trying to make ends meet with a shore job. He came to us for an extra dollar, but it bothered him to be in debt. So after his day's work was done, he got a night job in a restaurant washing dishes, and he came to us the next morning—just a quiet, wistful old fellow with a crumpled dollar bill.

Many of our Relief Fund dollars come home to roost as did Newman's. We have an unusual record in this respect, judged from the standards of other social welfare agencies. Forty-percent of the money we loan is repaid within a year.

We were therefore not surprised when Jansen came in the first of December to repay four dollars loaned in July. It was the very first opportunity he had to revisit us and he was almost out of breath when he dashed into the Social Service Department less than half an hour after his ship docked.

At the end of July he received a notice to appear before the examiner to qualify for his final citizenship papers. To conform with Government requirements, he had been waiting for his summons for several weeks and had

used up his savings. When his time came, therefore, he needed four dollars.

Jansen passed his examination with flying colors, and to his great joy was made an American citizen. He immediately got a ship and set forth on a four months' voyage.

In his eagerness to repay his loan he came to us direct from his ship in his working clothes; but he returned later in the day in a new outfit just to show us how a prosperous American citizen should look, so he explained.

There is a full-length mirror in the entrance hall of the new building near the cigar counter. The location was chosen with no special thought of its use in connection with the counter.

The other day, however, one of our fastidious young men about to invest in a new pipe made a very careful selection and asked if he might take it to the mirror to "try it on." He was pleased with the effect, and bought the pipe explaining that only certain styles of pipes are becoming to certain types of men, and he wanted to make no mistake.

And we learned about seamen from him!

Funds for the New Building are still vitally needed and will be most gratefully received by

JUNIUS S. MORGAN, JR.

Treasurer

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