

The LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE
OF NEW YORK



EDITOR'S NOTE:

This issue of
THE LOOKOUT,
is entirely a
SEAMEN'S NUMBER.

The articles, poems,
stories and illustrations
have been contributed
by merchant seamen.



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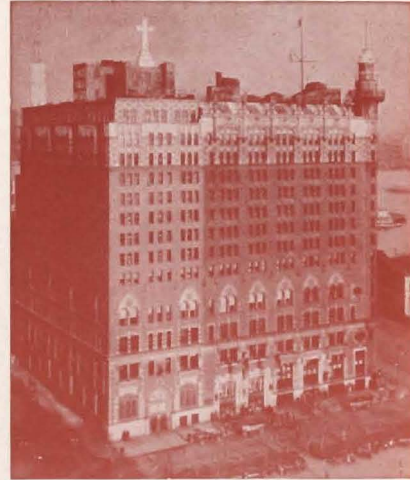
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You are asked to remember this Institute in your will, that it may properly carry on its important work for seamen. While it is advisable to consult your lawyer as to the drawing of your will, we submit nevertheless the following as a clause that may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

I give and bequeath to "Seamen's Church Institute of New York," incorporated under the laws 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.

The Lookout

Vol. XXIX

AUGUST, 1938

No. 8

Why I Prefer Sea-Going to Shore Life

By C. E. Oehley, 2nd Officer, S.S. Umtali

Winner of First Prize in Essay Competition* open to Officers of all Departments, 1937.



"I gloried in every minute of that first voyage . . ."

Photo by Ted Czupryna, O.S., S.S. Exmoor

THERE can be few, if indeed any, men who have not, at some period or other in their lives, felt the call of the sea. This urge and the desire to become an engine-driver are two phases of our youth which usually tend to become rather more than passing. The wish to become an engine-driver usually dates from the first meeting with the fascinating, intricate mechanism of a locomotive. Usually it is but a matter of time for this desire to be supplanted by some other. The craving for a seafaring life, however, is probably more deeply rooted in our natures. It is possibly an instinctive characteristic of our island race. Frequently it is a family tradition and sons follow in their father's footsteps and that in spite of each successive generation of father's vehement "I'd see him to blazes

before I'd let him go to sea!" It is, however, the thirst for adventure, always present in youth, which, seeing an outlet in a seafaring career as portrayed in so many of the books of our boyhood, is usually the deciding factor in inducing boys to take to seafaring as a career.

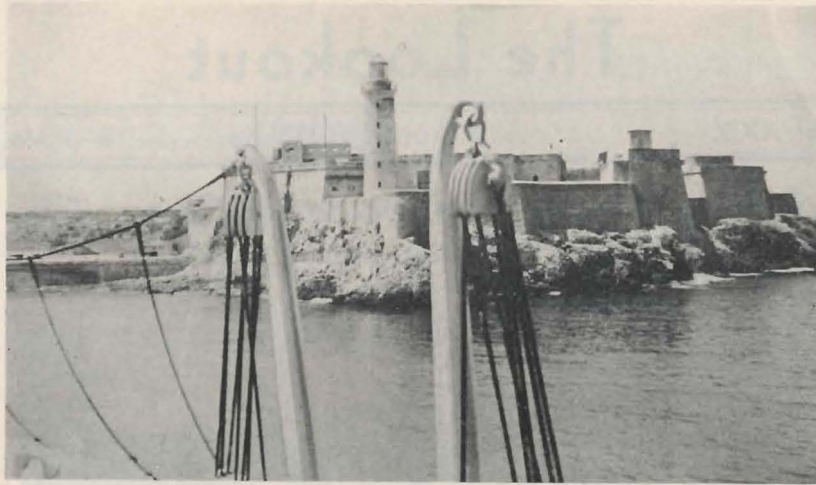
At an extremely early age I decided that seafaring was the career which attracted me above all others. I devoured all books of a nautical nature on which I could lay my hands. From various encyclopaedias I studied seamanship, these being the only available sources. At that time I lived in the hinterland of South Africa and the sea seemed very far away. No one in the village appeared to have any idea as to how one set about getting to sea and it was generally accepted that I would outgrow this desire. This I

Reprinted from "THE SEAFARER" by special permission.

*Competition sponsored by The Seafarers' Education Service, London, England.

"Memories"

By Captain A. J. Currie



"The joy of arriving at and exploring new places . . ."

Photo by John O'Brien, Ordinary Seaman.

did not do and though for several years I seldom referred to my ambition, when South Africa acquired a training ship I pressed my case with renewed enthusiasm, and with the aid of my parents, I had soon taken the first step in my chosen career by joining the training ship.

During my two years of training I came into contact with officers and instructors who loved the sea and I became acquainted with the works of Conrad, Masefield and other writers who gloried in a life at sea and I was indeed eager to get to the "real thing". At last came the fateful day. The "—" was a "tramp" steamer and had just completed loading and bunkering in Durban when I joined. Dirty steel decks met my gaze instead of the snow-white wood of which I had read; squat funnel in place of tapering masts and a dirty, spitting Lascar crew instead of the picturesque sailors of my imagination. We sailed and instead of struggling with sails aloft I bailed revolting bilge water till my arms and back ached and my stomach became most upset! Instead of whistling for a breeze to fill the sails in the Doldrums I spent ten hours each day chipping decks

under a blazing sun and we prayed for a breeze or a cloud to cover the sun. Was I disappointed at the contrast? I was not! I found that with a readjustment of my ideas the romance and adventures were as much in evidence as in the days of sail. I gloried in every minute of that first voyage as I have done in successive voyages, for always there was some new interest as there is to-day after seven years at sea. It is little wonder that the sailor ashore has so great a difficulty in settling down. After the never-ending variety of sea life the eternal monotony of so many shore berths is bound to become irksome.

After the first few months at sea when some of the novelty had worn off I began to realise that adventure and romance were not the only necessary constituents of a really happy life. Soon I found myself in positions of responsibility far in excess of any that would have come my way at so early an age had I taken a job ashore. One of my earliest recollections is of a remark made by the "Old Man" during a "dressing down" which I received due to my completing a job not

(Continued on Page 8)

I can't help feeling lonesome for the old ships that have gone,
For the sight of tropic sunsets and the hour before the dawn,
And the white sails pulling stoutly to the warm and steady draft,
And the smell of roasting coffee, and the watches must'ring aft.

I'd like to ship off-shore again, upon some Blue-nose barque,
And shout a sailor's chanty in the windy, starry dark,
Or fist a clewed-up topsail in a black south-easter's roar,
But it ain't no use-a-wishing, for them days will come no more.

YES, those days of sail, that have passed, were the glorious days, and those that served in those windships like myself and others, will always have the tang of the sea in their blood, for the sea and tall ships have a charm that holds one in a spell. What was more lovely a sight to behold than one of those old windships in full sail?

Lean, low-hulled, lofty, a passion of symmetry, set out for the conquest of the sea, eager bows trampling into foam the restless waters of the world, as you know, these were the greyhounds of the trades and the "forties," barring the sunset skies with slender spars in those glamorous days that are dead, but yet even their sturdy beauty has outlived its usefulness and has passed into obscurity with the advance of steam and motor power, remembered now only by those who served beneath the towering clouds

of onward-pressing sails, I can never forget the dear old windships, and the greatest days of my life that I spent in them. Well I must say it was a dog's life, in those old ships, but I wish I had a chance to be a puppy once again! I'd go back and eat pantiles, cracker hash, salt pork, pea soup, Cape Horn skilly, and enjoy it. It makes me lonesome when I think of those good old days. Oh, how I often wish myself back in an old Blue-Nose barque going down channel, with a nice little north-east breeze to help her along, bound for Frisco. Those were the real times, so you see, how can ever one forget them?



"And the white sails pulling stoutly . . ."

Photo by Capt. Alan Villiers

The Wreck of the S.S. "Mati"

By Charles Eichberg



"As I lay upon the sand looking at the wreck of our ship . . ."

Photo by Orville Handlon, Deck Dep't.

THE waterfront at San Francisco was all a-bustle in 1916. Seamen had no difficulty in getting jobs, the world war was on in all its fury. Seamen could ship anywhere.

There were four jobs open on the S.S. MATI belonging to the Union Steamship Company of New Zealand, commanded by Captain McLean. The Chief Engineer scoured the waterfront to get men to fill these jobs down below. Four of us Americans decided to ship with him, as we wanted to visit the South Seas, the paradise of the Pacific, by way of Tahiti, a French possession, and then to Rarotanga and Wellington, N. Z.

We got under weigh with a passenger list of a hundred and six bound for Tahiti, our first port of call. The passengers were instructed

how to put on life belts, they were assigned to their stations and life boats, and each day this instruction went on so they would be ready for any emergency, for a German raider was reported in the Pacific, sinking Allied shipping.

Despite all this there was cheer aboard ship; passengers playing shuffle board, ring toss and other games, to pass away the time, for the MATI was not a very speedy ship—a coal burner—and sailed at an average speed of twelve knots. Tahiti is 3,660 miles from San Francisco. After fourteen days at sea, we arrived at this South Sea Island. The natives all anxious for news of the war: "Had we seen the German raider?" "Were the Allies winning the war?"

Tahiti in all of its tropical splendor, its native women who bedeck themselves with plenty of bracelets, rouge their cheeks, use beetle nut which blackens their teeth — the Belles of the South Seas, much to the amusement of passengers and crew, for they seemed not to be worried about the war. Twelve hours was our time limit at this port. It seemed all the natives were at the wharf at our departure, waving their flags until we were out of sight. Six hundred and thirty miles to go to Rarotanga. The barometer began to fall, the weather becoming nasty, beginning to blow a gale, with high seas, slowing down our speed, and taking us three days to make this run. We entered Rarotanga at night, high seas running, and without warning she hit a coral reef violently. She immediately listed to a dangerous degree. The foremast

toppled over the side. The passengers became panic stricken. The order was given to abandon ship, the officers and crew going among the passengers quieting them down. One woman lost her reason, jumped over the side. A seaman saw her and courageously sprang after her, and both were rescued by the No. 1 life boat. By this time the life boats had all the passengers aboard, all were rescued and landed safely ashore. The crew remained on board until daylight loading stores, blankets and everything useful to be taken ashore, for we did not know how long we had to stay on this island. By orders of the Governor, the passengers were taken care of by the native whites, the crew in a large warehouse. Sports were encouraged—boxing bouts for the amusement of the men. An oiler from Wellington, a bully aboard ship, proud of his prowess with the gloves, challenged any one who could stay five rounds and offered a pound, and "How about you Yanks?" He asked a young fellow, Callahan by name, a native of San Francisco, who accepted his challenge, and promptly knocked this cocky New Zealander out in the second round. When he came to, he said: "Why he hits like a kick from a mule! Blimey, he never said he could box, you can never tell a blooming Yank by his looks!" Rarotagna is a beautiful South Sea island, the Mauri race of people being the inhabitants, who seem to be contented in their South Sea paradise, some highly educated having been taught by visiting missionaries. It is beautiful to walk along the sea shore with a full moon, stars shining brightly, casting a silvery hue over the ocean. As I lay upon the sand under a palm tree looking at the wreck of

our ship, hard and fast on the coral reef, I wondered how it happened. One of these beautiful nights as I lay thinking and having fond recollections of home, I was approached by a young girl, dressed all in white, jet black hair, sparkling eyes, pearly teeth, a native Mauri, a beautiful young woman of the South Seas. "Are you one of the crew of the MATI," she asked. "Yes," I answered. "I am wondering how it all happened." I was surprised to hear her answer. "It was God's will that you were all saved." She was a Christian, taught by the missionaries, and was teaching her brothers and sisters to have faith in God, also teaching them at the Missionary School. She read many books on civilization. She did not care to visit any other countries. Had not the war taken her two brothers? Both killed in action. Why should she go away from her native home? Was there not more civilization here than in other countries where there was only war, greed, selfishness and the lust for power and gold? When her betrothed came home from the war, she would marry, have sons of her own. "Have I not got to replace my brothers who will never return?" Many conversations we had. I almost had the longing to go native. But one morning smoke was seen on the horizon, a steamer coming rapidly to port. It proved to be the ROTURA, bound for Auckland with wounded troops from the front. She had orders to pick us up. I regretted to leave this beautiful spot in the South Seas where this Christian woman made me lean more toward a Christian life and gave me a token of a Cross, with the words to have faith, hope and charity.

Seam Artists

Editor's Note:

Inspired by the examples of marine artists such as Charles Robert Patterson, Gordon Grant, Mon Dawson, and J. E. Spurling, a number of seamen have been working diligently at painting and drawing, with the hope of winning fame and fortune as marine artists. For example, Seaman Leslie Dawson, who is at the U. S. Marine Hospital in Stapleton, Staten Island suffering from a chronic ailment. For sheer pluck and determination he has served a medal. He has a corner "studio" in a four-bed ward at the hospital, and surrounds his bed is a profusion of paint tubes, brushes, crayons and palettes. Born in Liverpool in 1900, Dawson ran away to sea when he was 17 and spent many years sailing out of New York on coast-wise and transatlantic ships.

Another marine artist who has been encouraged by the Institute who now has settled down ashore after an adventurous seafaring life is Charles Rosner who sailed 'round Cape Horn five times, about whom we wrote in the March, 1936 issue of THE LOOKOUT. In the past few years his work has greatly improved, and his colors of ships are much in demand.

Still another seaman artist is George Franklin, about whom we wrote in the June, 1935 issue of THE LOOKOUT. His murals are very modern, and some do not understand them, but after he explains patiently the meaning of the "abstractions", they are compelled to admit that they admire the vivid color combinations. He was born in Germany and went to sea in barks and freighters for seventeen years, as carpenter, quartermaster and mate.

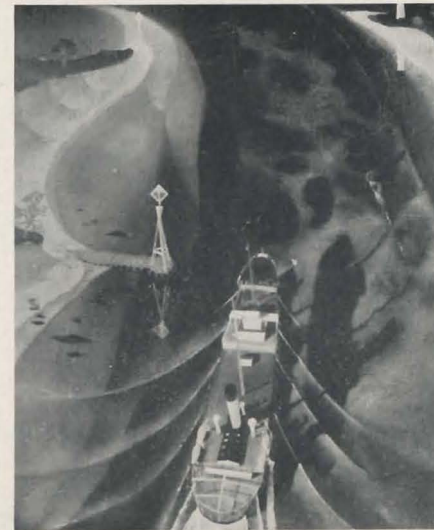
A marine artist who has attained a considerable degree of success is Captain Alexander Breede, who has paintings of the "Flying Cloud", "Glory of Seas", "Sovereign of the Seas" and other famous yachtsmen and collectors. Captain Breede began his seafaring career at the age of 16 on square-rigged British merchantmen, making long voyages to India, Australia and West Africa. He became a U. S. citizen in 1914 and during the war served on the Army Transports, "Malia", "Mongolia" and "Black Arrow". In recent years he studied marine painting with Guy Pene duBois and Warren Sheppard.

The Institute is very proud of Cliff Parkhurst, a former seaman who has "made good" with his paintings of ships (and about whom we wrote in the October, 1937 issue of THE LOOKOUT). His work was exhibited at the Art League.

Another seaman artist who has achieved success is Andrew Winter, (about whom we wrote in the July issue of THE LOOKOUT) who won the Medal at the 110th Annual Exhibition of the National Academy of Design for his painting, "Toilers of the Sea." Very much a sailor, Winter first went to sea from his home in Estonia on the steamer "Roma." After serving on all kinds of ships, both passenger and freight, he was awarded the Mooney Traveling Scholarship and studied in Rome and Paris. The main subjects of his paintings are coastal



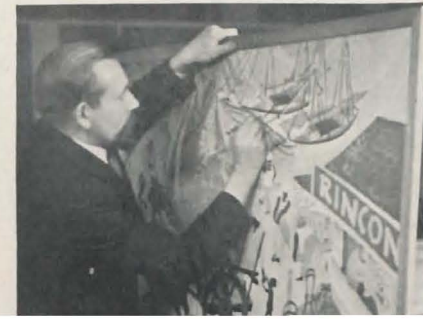
Clipper Ship "Sovereign Of The Seas" From the painting by Alexander Breede



"Outward Bound" From the Painting by George Franklin.

GEORGE FRANKLIN

ALEXANDER BREEDE



From the painting "Toilers Of The Sea" by Andrew Winter.

ANDREW WINTER



The Schooner "Edward B. Smith." From a Pencil Sketch by Cliff Parkhurst.

CHARLES ROSNER

LESLIE DAWSON



Why I Prefer Sea-Going to Shore Life

(Continued from Page 2)

quite as well as it might have been done: "Remember, son, if you make a mistake in an office it is a clerical error and you will be told off and made to correct it; if, however, you make a mistake at sea the chances are that there will be no one to tell you off and you will not be there to correct it!" Possibly this was something of an exaggeration due to pride in his profession, but there was undoubtedly much truth in it and it certainly served its purpose, for afterwards while splicing a new boat-fall or doing some other job of seamanship I would recollect it and do the job just a little bit better than it had been done before. There were, of course, routine duties such as chipping paint and polishing brass, somewhat tedious to many but, having chosen sea-going as my profession, they always appeared to me to be rather more interesting than totalling columns of figures in a ledger or pushing a plough in a field, though I can quite imagine that to those more interested in book-keeping and farming mine would appear to be the more monotonous task. These duties, once one showed one's keenness and efficiency at "sailorising," were soon changed for more congenial seamanlike tasks. Quite soon I received the opportunity of learning to steer. No one who has not had the pleasure of taking the wheel of a bluff little tramp ship pitching and rolling in a heavy sea can imagine the joy of it. At first the steady concentration for two long hours is maintained with great difficulty but with the coming of proficiency it was with great pleasure that I found I was obtaining the "feel" of the ship and could meet each sea with a turn of the wheel almost before the ship commenced to swing off her course. Being turned out after midnight of my

"watch below" during a gale in the notorious "Bay" to take over the wheel from an Indian Quarter-Master, who had many years of experience at steering, was my first experience of being relied on and my joy knew no bounds so that after close on four hours at the wheel I relinquished it most unwillingly only when the Captain ordered me to get some sleep. Responsibility increases continuously throughout one's career at sea. Comparable only with my first "trick" at the wheel and, I imagine, with my first day in command (may it be soon!) was the first time in sole charge of a watch. The Captain's "Feel confident, Mr. —?" before he went below met with a decided "Yes, sir." No better watch has ever been kept. The feeling of being entirely responsible for the safety of 12,000 tons of ship and cargo and the lives of over 200 folk was an exhilarating one. Would I have been in so great a position of trust had I remained ashore? I doubt it! Now, after four years of watch-keeping, the thrill is no less. I would not—in fact could not—exchange it for any of the "cushy" shore berths without responsibility which we sailors so often discuss enviously and with which so few of us would be satisfied.

The joy of arriving at and exploring new places is endless, but to me there is always the vastly greater pleasure of meeting new people and making new friends. This I consider one of the greatest advantages of seafaring. The average shore-dweller has his little group of friends amongst whom, year after year, there are but few changes. We seafarers, however, while having our similar groups in home ports, are constantly meeting new and interesting folk in foreign ports and so increasing our circle of friends to pro-

portions beyond the wildest dreams of the unfortunate, but necessary, stay-at-homes. I have sailed with shipmates of many interesting types. At sea there is an oft-repeated phrase to the effect that one never knows a man till one has sailed with him. Certainly under the varying conditions of a life at sea one obtains an insight into the character of one's shipmates which would probably take years to obtain ashore. To a student of human nature shipmates would supply a never-ending study. At sea there are to be found men of almost every conceivable type and almost all will become one's firm friends once one gets to know and understand them. There are, inevitably, those sent to sea as being unmanageable, those who have tried and failed at a variety of jobs ashore and at last gravitated towards the sea as a last resort, those who have come to sea simply because it is a job and jobs are scarce ashore, and those who, having read so much of life at sea, have let their imaginations run riot and come to sea in search of adventure. From all of these various types fine seamen have been produced but

invariably the man who becomes the true "Old Salt" is, regardless of his first reasons for coming to sea, the man who loves the sea as only a real sailor can. It is no easy matter to persuade these men to get talking of their experiences, but once one has coaxed them into commencing, their yarns will fill many a dog-watch with tales more interesting than have ever been published. Friendships commenced at sea are usually lasting, which is rather remarkable, for frequently they are commenced during a short voyage after which the friends are parted, but the friendship continues though letters are rare, for the average sailor is not a great letter writer.

I have dwelt at length on the two aspects of sea life (responsibility and friendship) which I personally consider the two most important advantages of a seafaring over a shore life. There are, of course, many more and naturally a number of disadvantages such as the loss of home life, but would a sailor really be happy if all grievances were removed? I doubt it, for grouching alone is one of the joys of the "Dog Watches"!

Hymn of Hate

I hate the sea with its traditions
The sailor's life and its conditions
The ships and all their requisitions
But most of all their impositions.

I think a farmer's life is cozy
With horse and cow and wife so rosy
With now a tree and then a posie
And distant from all neighbor's nosie.

Or I could be a tinker jolly
Mend pots and pans or baby's dolly
I'd profit by all others folly
And do uncommon well, "By Golly".

There's a great appeal in keeping bees
In tending goats or in making cheese
In digging ditches, lumbering trees
I'd trade the sea for any of these.

Avast there steward! Where you headin'?
You've got my towels—and my beddin'!
You thought I was quittin'? Glory be!
What gave you to think I'd quit the sea?

By "ROPE YARN"
THOMAS WILSON WALKER

My 12,000 Mile Ferryboat Ride

By Jim Evans*

THE queerest voyage I ever made was when I helped to bring a tiny ferry-boat from the building yards on the Clyde to Sidney harbour, New South Wales. I was stranded in London when I took on that ferry-boat voyage but I'd sooner be a permanent and hopeless stiff there than make a run to Australia in a ferry-boat again. It was about 300 tons, top-heavy, unballasted, and no slightest qualification for undertaking a twelve-thousand mile voyage. If there hadn't been mugs like us in the world she couldn't have gone, but there's a pretty good supply of them, somehow. We came out through Suez, of course, since that was supposed to be the shortest and most sheltered way.

We didn't think, when we first saw what a ferry-boat could do in a seaway and still float, that we would ever even see Algiers, much less Sydney. Roll! I have never seen anything like it. She didn't roll; she *fell* over, first this way, with a sickening motion as if she were in her death struggles, and then that, with a terrifying unnering hover in between. Heavy weather in the Bay of Biscay didn't make things any more pleasant, nor did the incompetence of the cook. His name was Cook, and he could make only two dishes: one was stew and the other wasn't . . . The ferry-boat had bunkers enough for forty-eight hours' coal, so enough for two weeks was piled about the decks . . . She had all round her a huge wooden fender, fixed on with a steel band which was bolted through to the ship's side, but she

rose so much and so high on the crests of the seas, and flopped this fender arrangement down on the water again so viciously, that after a few days of it half of it was washed off, steel bolts and all. The boltholes were left in the ship's side and she began to leak. We tried the pumps but they wouldn't work . . . so she just went on leaking, and one light collision bulkhead was all that stood between us and a pretty uncomfortable grave. It was a grand voyage!

Every day something of the ship's stores ran out—flour, beans, coffee, tea, milk, sugar and so on. All the meat went rotten and things were pretty short for the "crew" of eighteen. We slept on the seats on the upper deck, leading a catch-as-catch-can kind of existence; sometimes the seats would carry away despite their heavy lashings. The cork-like arrangement of the ferry-boat tried to stand on her head when we called in at Aden in the monsoon season. . .

. . . At long last, we saw Sidney Heads, and if there'd been enough provisions to make a sea pie, there wasn't enough coal left to bake it . . . The cheerful pilot who came aboard wanted to know if we'd been "out all night in the blessed thing." "Out all night?" we exclaimed. "We've been five flamin', all-fired, sulphurous, unprintable months!" We handed the ship, pretty rusty and sea-worn now, over to some shore guys. We asked 'em if we could get a job in our ferry, seeing that we had gone through so much to bring her out. "Oh

no," he said, "we've got our own men waiting now." He cheered us up no end, though, by saying that if we called at the ferry office next day we could have a photograph of the ferry boat as a memento!

Editor's Note: A recent letter from Jim Evans to Miss Elsie Jansen, of "Tramp Trips" states that this ferry-boat, the "Kurl-Kurl" (what a name for *any* kind of a boat!) was still going strong. Jim wrote an account of his latest sea-

going exploit. "I delivered one of four newly built flat-bottomed river-boats from Sidney to New Guinea, for a big oil company," he wrote. "The first boat, named 'Panuca' was nearly lost when she encountered a cyclone. Our pumps failed and there was twelve inches of water above the engine plates when we finally arrived. Now I must take out her 'sister' ship, and then two more after that, if I live that long!"

Sailing At Midnight

I was on the "Port Campbell" the other day

To see an old shipmate who was going away

And as we sat talking in the fo'cs'le's dim light

He said that they were sailing at midnight.

We talked of ships and men we had known

And how since we had parted the years had flown

The hours sped on, and I went to go ashore

Saying as I left him, that I would sail no more.

That night as I lay awake on my bed

With the windows open near my head

There came on the wind the sound of a ship

Blowing farewell as she left the slip.

Vividly I imagined her going astern

With the flood tide helping her make the turn.

Heading down the channel towards the sea

While something clutched at the heart of me.

I thought of turning engines and of coal under my heel

Of the men on deck, and the man at the wheel.

And as I looked at my watch in the dim light

I thought of his words "We sail at midnight".

By GEORGE GARDNER ELVIN



"Heading down the channel toward the sea . . ."

Photo by C. Wikeley, Deck Dep't. S.S. Samaria

* Reprinted from "By Way Of Cape Horn" by Alan Villiers.

The Inquiring Photographer *

By Jimmy Jemail

THE QUESTION.

Were you ever shipwrecked?
Under what circumstances?

THE PLACE.

Seamen's Institute, South St.

THE ANSWERS.

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The Clipper Ship's Return

By Arthur Flaherty

See them at night swing slowly from the
River,
Sleek clipper ships that sailed the seas
of yore,
Their bowsprits edging once again o'er
South Street,
Returned from Capetown, Rio, Singapore:

Shrill sounds the bos'n's pipe as stalwart
seamen
Secure the ship, set foot on wharf again,
Two years or more from which they
have been absent,
Harsh years that changed raw youth to
grizzled men:

Hark to the nervous rustlings of crisp
satin,
See odd bonnets worn by maids in days
of old
As, dressed in Sunday finery, their
women
Greet hungrily these wind-bronzed men
to fold:

Here in loud delight a beaming father
Holds, gently, child born while he braved
the sea,
Betrothed ones, now near strangers,
whisper nothings
And re-pledge their love in awkward
ecstasy:

Now from out of sea-chests gifts and
treasures
Impatiently and proudly come to view,
Aigrette feathers, Hindo-China perfumes,
Maltese lace, mantillas from Peru:

Some have chittering monkeys perched
on shoulders,
Loud screech gay parrots brought from
far Cape Verdes,
And see! a child runs from its bearded
parent,
Forgotten but for mother's prayers and
words:

And now o'er cobblestones, up elm-lined
streets,
They slowly depart in groups or arm-
locked pair,
Dawn's first faint gray appears far up
the river,
And lo! quick vanishes the scene into
thin air.

Skeptic! Go you down to South Street's
olden wharfage
On nights jet black, when clouds blot
out the stars,
And see the forms of gray ghost ships
returning—
Aye! hear the night wind moaning
through their spars.

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