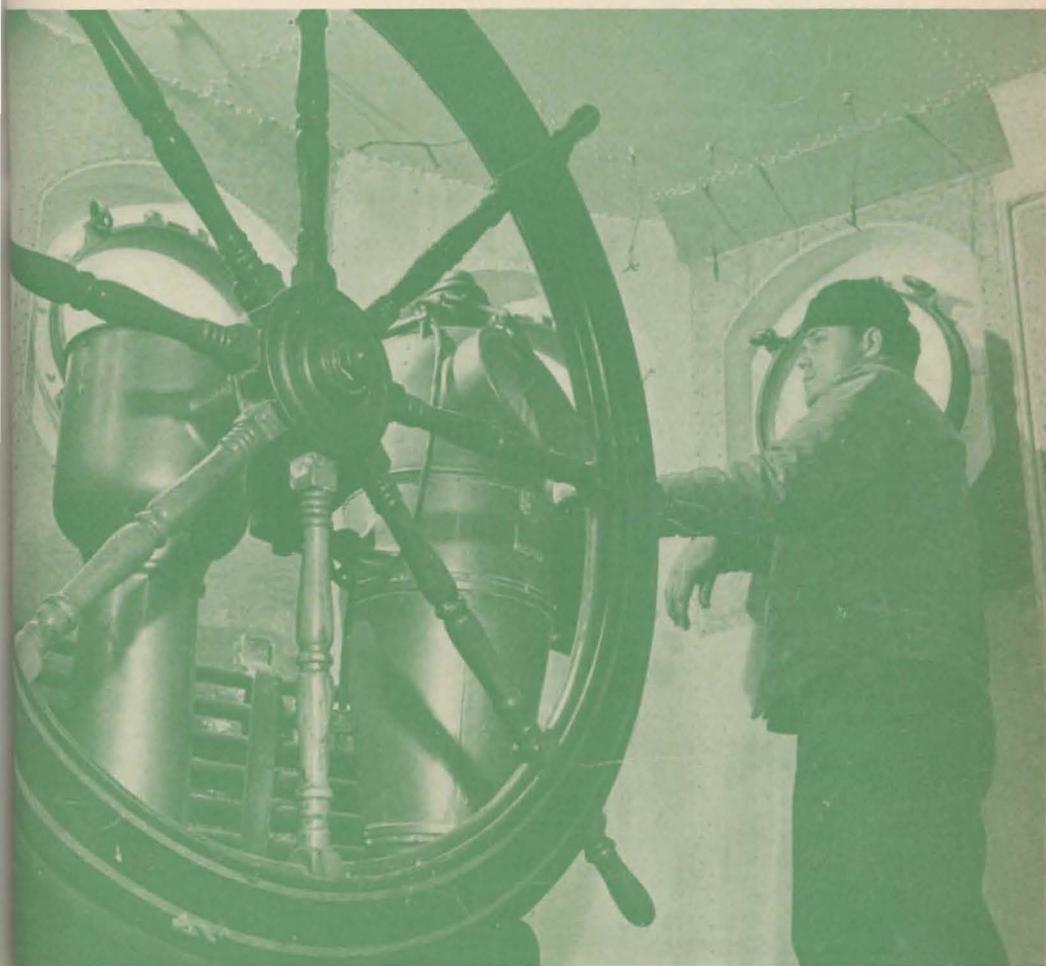


# The LOOKOUT



DESTINATION NOWHERE!

*Three Lions Photo*

BROSE LIGHTSHIP in New York Harbor gives information to ships and planes. An's mate receives messages from shore Coast Guard stations, keeps a check on radio beacon. The wheel (not as large as it appears — that is camera perspective) used to bring the ship in for annual overhaul.

A M E N ' S C H U R C H I N S T I T U T E  
O F N E W Y O R K

## Sanctuary

We pray to Thee, O God our heavenly Father, for all seafarers and for those who serve their needs; for the officers and men of our Merchant Services; for those who serve on inland waters; for the keepers of lighthouses and the pilots of our ports; for those who man life-boats and guard our coasts; for the men of the fishing fleets and those who carry out the services of docks and harbours; and for all Institutes and clubs which care for the well-being of sailors and their families. Bless them according to their several necessities, and protect them in all dangers and temptations; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

*A Prayer for Seafarers from the Annual Report of the Montreal Sailors' Institute.*

## The LOOKOUT

VOL. XL, OCTOBER, 1949

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25 SOUTH ST., NEW YORK 4, N. Y.  
Telephone BOWling Green 9-2710

### WHEN WINTER COMES

The Institute Slop Chest is almost depleted and when the first Northeaster blows along South Street, many seamen will come to us for overcoats, shoes, and underwear. Convalescent seamen just out of hospitals, low on funds, and seamen on the beach, through no fault of their own, will need warm gear. We hope when you do your fall housecleaning that you will remember to pack up and send clothing no longer needed by your men folks.

Call our Department of Special Services, BO 9-2710 if you live in the Metropolitan area and our messenger will call for such clothing. We hope that out-of-towners will mail these items by parcel post to 25 South Street, New York 4, N. Y.

# The Lookout

VOL. XL

OCTOBER, 1949

NUMBER 10

## *The Piece-Off*

By James H. Parsons, A.B. Seaman

WHETHER in prosperity or adversity, seamen gravitate to seamen as naturally as the needle of the compass swings north. With them, the practice of helping one another has become a tradition, an occupational habit. Breathes there a professional mariner who has never given nor received a "piece-off?" Say not so; you could sooner find a Hottentot in Iceland. The bond of sympathy existing between sailors is as tightly made as a Liverpool splice.

For their little acts of generosity, seamen expect no particular credit on the books of the Recording Angel, but every man Jack knows that in helping the Other Fellow he is storing up treasure for himself against the day when a slump in shipping may set him on the beach.

Shore pitfalls are many and varied and the pleasure-bent sailor with a plump purse at moonrise may be a dead duck, financially, at dawn. Wherefore, the good deeds he performs while in the chips are likely to fetch him a happy return in his distress, like bread borne back upon the waters.

The story of Steve Callan is an example of how seamen often aid one another in ways which their critics never hear about.

Steve and I were shipmates on a voyage to India back in 1936. He was around thirty-four and I was some ten years younger. We became fast friends and frequently went ashore together. From scraps of conversation I gathered that he had spent an unhappy childhood and had run away to sea at an early age. Consequently, he had very little "book learning."



Drawing by Gordon Grant

As tightly made as a Liverpool splice

The simplest words were hard for him to read and his handwriting was indecipherable, but in matters of practical seamanship — knots, splices and complicated rigs — he was without a peer in our crew. Well built, vigorous, as deeply sunburned as a Florida lifeguard, he might have been considered handsome except for a four-inch scar over his starboard eye and a fist-made list to his schnozzle. In spite of these disfigurements — or possibly because of them — it was a face that compelled interest. Beneath the leathery tan of his shoulders and arms, faded pigments of old tattoos showed forth, commemorating trips to ports around the world from Shanghai to the Fiji Islands. Meeting him for the first time you would have immediately tagged him for what he was — an amiable, unaffected bloke who had experienced all the hard knocks of "life before the mast."

Like many wanderers who secretly yearn for a home and family without much hope of being blessed with either, he was genuinely fond of children. In Calcutta he used to get a kick out of tossing rupees to naked little urchins who followed at our heels, beating their skinny chests and crying, "No mama, no papa — me pore leetle bahstard! Backsheesh, Sahib!"

Very likely it was the memory of his own sordid childhood that moved him to fling coins by the handful to these waifs. "They are not much worse off than I was at that age," he confided, "only I did have a few rags to wear. Once in a while my step-ma would give me a nickel or dime."

#### A Circe with Sticky Fingers

Our trip ended in New York, and Steve and I parted company. Several days later I joined a tanker and made a quick trip to the Gulf and back. Walking through Battery Park from South Ferry, I came upon Steve seated on a rickety iron bench near the old Aquarium. The suit he wore was filthy and his shirt was torn and soiled. Hunched over, staring morosely at his dusty shoes, he was the picture of dejection. Over one bleary eye, in lugubrious peek-a-boo fashion, hung a shock of tawny hair which accentuated the raggedness of the whiskers fringing his face. There was nothing left of his customary neatness and jaunty air.

When a seaman gets himself fouled up that way, the explanation is usually booze or a woman, or both. I knew without being told that Steve had either crashed to ruin on the reef of a saloon, or had been lured to financial destruction by a Circe with sticky fingers. In any case, as my shipmate he had been a regular guy, and I considered it my duty to bestow upon him something more substantial than a reproach. So I got him a bath, a shave, clean shirt, room, meal tickets, and stuck a ten-dollar bill in his hand to spend as he chose. I deserved no special pat for helping

Steve; any seaman worth his salt would have done as much.

Twelve years slipped by before I saw Steve again — busy years that I could measure in terms of service on seventy-odd vessels. The memory of that trip to India receded to some dim recess of my mind and Steve himself became a vague, indistinct figure in my gallery of shipmates.

In 1948 I was hospitalized for three months in New Orleans with broken legs as a result of injuries received in a shore accident. Leaving the hospital with a discharge that called for periodic treatment, I had a hard time maintaining myself what with no income and not being strong enough to work. My room rent had been taken care of in advance, but the wangling of three meals a day became a major problem. With nothing to occupy me, I fell into the habit of killing time in Lafayette Square.

#### A Fighter's Slant to His Nose

One sunny morning as I sat there on my favorite bench, I suddenly became conscious of the stares of two men who had paused half a dozen yards away. Looking up from my paper I noted that one wore the full uniform of a captain in the Merchant Marine, and the other was garbed in a neat gray suit. This second man, in civilian rig, was about forty-five, having a scar over his right eye and a fighter's slant to his nose. With the springy step of a man in fine physical trim, he bore down on me, grinning, hand outstretched.

"Hi-yuh, Jim!"

"God bless me, it's Steve," I almost shouted, and grabbed his big paw.

We began to gab about old times. Steve recalled the wacky rickshaw race we staged in Calcutta when we had gotten into a tipsy argument as to which of us could get back to the Kidderpore docks the quickest, pulling a rickshaw. We laid a bet and hailed a couple of rickshaws. The native pullers were installed upon the seats of their vehicles, and Steve and

(Continued on Page 8)

## "T-BONE"

ONE of South Street's most picturesque seafarers is "T-Bone" (Alfred W. McBride). His first discharge papers are dated 1896. At the age of 13 he sailed on the "Sea Trader," a lumber schooner plying between 'Frisco and Portland. In 1901 he was on the famous Coast Guard Revenue cutter "Bear," sailing as a cook, 2nd class. That's where he got his nickname. The crew used to ask him what was for breakfast and he always answered "T-bone steak," and then served up the usual hash or beans. He sailed during World War II as a cook and baker, ending with an encounter with a "tin fish" . . . resulting in a broken hip, broken ankle, and fractured skull.

He has tattoos all over his back and chest. "They're the only thing I got out of life I can take with me when I die," he says, with a twinkle in his blue eyes. "An' there's a saying that only a mother's milk will banish tattoo marks. I kinda doubt it." One of his tattoos shows Buffalo Bill Cody, and another tattoo is of "KIKI," the Fire-eater, which he got in Hawaii.

He sailed 'round the Horn on the "Golden State," a four-masted schooner. "T-bone" thinks the food on American merchant ships is better than you can get ashore. But you still hear the men complain because the ship's



Photo by Clem Kalischer

. . . a lot depends on the kind of cook

cooks are not always up to the quality of the food. A lot depends on the kind of cook a ship has. It may even make the difference between a happy ship and an unhappy one.

"T-bone" once served in the Canadian Army Medical Corps. He was born in Stockton, California, and has never married. He expects to be still sailing for many a long year.



#### THE HOCK SHOP

The hock shop is a kind of leach  
That strives upon the need of each  
Seafarer stranded on the beach.  
Yet what, I ask, would seamen do,  
When times are tough and jobs are few,  
With no hock shops to see them through?

By JERRY DOANE  
From "Salt Water In Their Veins"  
Fine Editions Press, N. Y.

## The Seafaring Life

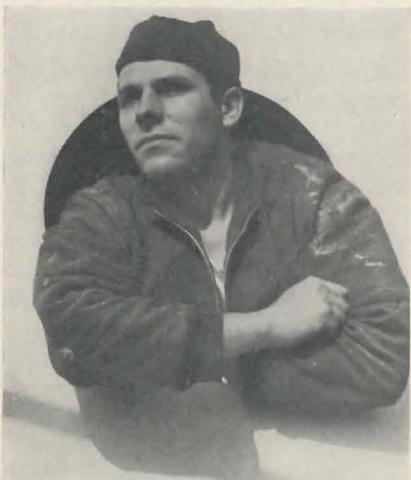
By John J. Flynn, A.B.\*

"If, at my death, my executors, or more properly my creditors, find any precious MSS. in my desk, then here I prospectively ascribe all the honor and the glory to whaling; for a whale-ship was my Yale College and my Harvard." — HERMAN MELVILLE, "MOBY DICK."

I HAVE noted in sundry books about the sea the inference that though the seaman travels tens of thousands of miles yearly to the far corners of the earth, he does in actual fact see very little of the world; that his status in society, because of his long absences at sea, is but a negative one.

Novels like Conrad's "Nigger of the Narcissus," London's "Sea Wolf," and, closer to our time, Eugene O'Neill's one-act plays — "The Long Voyage Home," "Bound East for Cardiff" and others, have depicted the seaman in glowing prose. They have painted him as uncouth, tender, savage, drunken, courageous. He is a composite of the best and the worst in human nature.

The seaman knows no privacy aboard ship. Ashore, he is swallowed up in the teeming waterfront which, from time immemorial, has presented a picturesque if somewhat sordid aspect to the public. The seaman lives



... he remains something of an enigma

as an extrovert, yet for all the sharp depiction of him as a romantic figure and adventurer, he remains something of an enigma to the public.

Many seamen see little of the world in all their wanderings and remain a negative factor in society. For one thing, the seaman is a working man and since the nature of his work is a fixed routine of hours, 4 on and 8 off for the duration of the passage, until he reaches port, all his other activities rotate around these hours. The seafarer regulates his off hours into time for sleeping, eating, and recreation. He must conform to a measure of discipline, adjust himself to the idiosyncrasies of his shipmates, be adaptable in his work which sometimes demands the maximum of skill, stamina, and courage. Finally, he must be content with these conditions while the ship plows through calm or stormy seas. The chafing on the seaman's mind and body resulting from the constraint of his life has fascinated writers like Melville, O'Neill and Conrad. After the confinement of life aboard, seamen are then shown taking their pleasures in port as robustly as they have fought the elements in storm and trouble.

As an old bosun once said to me: "When a man completes a three month trip and has only a few days ashore before the ship sails out again, he wants to cram as much as he can into those few days." The body and mind call for a respite, in which to assuage the pent-up feelings accumulated during the voyage. So, usually, the seaman does not take to visiting castles and museums or other serious sightseeing, but hies himself to places where there is entertainment, life, distraction.

It must be remembered that the professional seaman has become so inured to travel that the novelty of a foreign

\*Member, Artists and Writers Club for the Merchant Marine

port has not for him the same freshness as it has for a tourist. Seamen are excited on reaching a foreign port only because it means a relaxation of ship's discipline and a chance to enjoy social life.

I believe that the man who enjoys himself with moderate drinking, a girl, a dance or a movie, is healthier mentally and better able to endure long trips and get along with his shipmates than the fellow who is unsocial and who doesn't relax a bit in port. This does not mean that the seaman wants only the waterfront and the corner saloon; it simply means that his time is limited, that he is accepted more readily and understood in those "circles" where his ship touches land for a few fleeting moments. Many seamen have higher tastes and yearn for better things but circumstances operate to keep them in a certain milieu. It is not uncommon today to hear, in a messroom bull session,

openly spoken aspirations of the men toward another way of life: toward a business, security, marriage, a home. You hear many of them speaking of their sea careers as "temporary" but year after year you see them in the union halls or aboard ship. It must be that the old saying about "sea in the blood" is no empty figure of speech.

Conditions in general for seamen are much improved and the sea writer does not need to depend on the old stereotyped characters against a seamy water front background. Seamen today are more clean-cut, better educated, more stable citizens. But they have not yet escaped the effects of long voyages on their natures.

It is up to the individual seaman to find in his career all those things that can enrich his life. Whether experiences at sea, companions, work or study, or a hobby, they will exact from him his best and mold him into a better man.

## Activities of a Seaman's Chaplain

By Dr. James C. Healey, Senior Chaplain

THE duties of each of the five chaplains at the Seamen's Church Institute of New York are various. In addition to the daily and weekly services regularly scheduled, there are funerals, weddings, occasionally adult baptism and some times Confirmation.

The chaplains officiate at the funeral services in the hospitals and in the Institute's Chapel, and in some of these services they are the only mourners, as the nature of the seamen's occupation separates him from home and loved ones. In those cases where there are relatives they have generally come from distant places. On some occasions flowers are sent by parents or close relatives to whom the Chaplains write a letter of comfort. These letters are very personal. They mention the beauty of the floral tribute, the hymns that were sung, the attendance of seamen and staff, and



Chaplain Evans, Dr. Hall and Dr. Healey

some other personal note, particularly if the deceased was known at the Seamen's Church Institute.

The replies to these letters are encouraging to the chaplain. Recently one came from the sister of the de-



A seaman in hospital has more time to think . . .

ceased saying that the mother had been prostrated upon hearing of the death of her son but that the letter from the chaplain had brought new courage to her heart, and it appeared that the chaplain had chosen the very hymns which were held dearest in that particular family.

Hospital visitations are a major part of the chaplains' services. Seamen in the port of New York are cared for in the U. S. Marine Hospitals at Staten Island, Ellis Island, and tubercular cases at the U. S. Marine Hospital in Neponsit. The patients at Staten Island may be thought of as active patients. These are men and women (stewardesses) of the Merchant Marine suffering from diseases or accidents which respond fairly promptly to cure. Those on Ellis Island are the more chronic cases requiring a good deal of care and many of them are older seamen who may not be able ever to return to sea again. Tubercular cases are always long standing and a great deal of personal and helpful work can be done with them. The chaplains also go to other hospitals where seamen are patients. Beekman — Downtown,

Bellevue, Memorial and Flower Hospital are almost always on the chaplain's visiting list. The services to each seaman are varied. Sometimes he needs his laundry; clothes taken out of pawn; money for shaves; follow-up of his baggage left in a railroad station, etc. All of these little services the chaplain may be called upon to render and he considers it a privilege to help in this small way. Spiritual solace is also given. A seaman in a hospital has more time to think than when he was busy on board his ship, and the Chaplain finds that man though the seaman may be, he is glad to have a friend to speak to, or even "a shoulder to weep on."

Within the walls of the Institute's building at 25 South Street, he continues his service as he goes through the various rooms and lounges, sits down and plays table games or takes a cue and plays billiards with the seamen. In this way the chaplain finds innumerable opportunities for having heart to heart talks with the men in a relaxed atmosphere. His spiritual helpfulness may be indirect, but there is reason to believe that it is very important in giving the seaman who is alone in the world a sense of family and friendship and "belongingness" so that the Institute is indeed his home.



### THE SEA CAN HEAL

For those with trouble in the heart  
Winds and the waves will soothe the smart;  
Since all those hurts which men may feel  
The sea in time will soothe, will heal.

By JERRY DOANE

From "Salt Water in Their Veins"  
Fine Editions Press, N. Y.

'Luminated

By F. Harold

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## The Piece-Off

(Continued from Page 2)

I took their places between the shafts. Off we went, lickety-split, the frightened natives in the seats, at a pace equalling that of the famous harness-horse Dan Patch. I won the mile-long race and collected the bet but only because Steve got tangled up in a funeral procession and had to follow it to the crematorium.

Standing apart from us during our reminiscences, the captain who accompanied Steve began showing impatience. Steve leaned close to me and explained from the corner of his mouth: "He's the skipper of the new ship I'm joining. We're on our way to the Customs House now to sign articles for a trip to the Far East, and we're late. I'd better shove off before he blows his cork. I'll be seeing you again, Jim."

"Sure, I'll see you again, Steve, somewhere. Take care of yourself, old man."

Steve thrust out his hand for a parting shake, and as I gripped his fingers I felt something—a crumpled piece of paper — being transferred from his palm to mine. The thought flashed through my mind that he was giving back the sawbuck I had slipped him twelve years before, and was passing it to me under cover of a hand-shake to spare me embarrassment in the presence of his new skipper. Seamen sometimes exercise surprising delicacy in helping one another. With an airy wave of his hand Steve said "So long," and falling into step with the captain, moved off toward Camp Street.

I squinted at the wadded paper in my hand and looked away, but my eyes snapped back to it in astonishment. Steve had made a whopping mistake. Quickly I rose and limped after him.

"Steve, wait!" I shouted. He stopped. "You've made a helluva mistake, — lookahere," I said as I got

near to him. "This ain't no tenner. You musta dug in the wrong pocket."

He regarded me with a crooked smile, eyes twinkling, as he began sidling away.

"Oh, no," he said. "I don't make mistakes no more, Jim. I ain't forgot what you done for me in New York . . . and anyways, you're so skinny now I'm sure a lot of square meals won't hurt you none. And good luck . . . I'm off for Yokohama tonight."

He left me standing there, fingering the piece of paper. It was a bank note all right, but not for ten bucks. No indeed! The little square of green I held was legal tender in the sum of One Hundred good American dollars.

So that's how it is with seamen. They are not always on their Sunday behavior, but their instincts are right on the ball. On every waterfront, at this very moment, some horny-handed son of the fo'c'sle is staking a fellow-seaman to a meal or a flop . . . or helping him over the hump without fanfare or hope of reward.



Drawing by J. Rulon Hales

## A Message from the Director of the Seamen's Church Institute of N. Y.

THE Seamen's Church Institute of New York is one of the outstanding examples of our "Church at work with its sleeves rolled up." Although it is home for the several thousand seamen who enter its doors daily, it is essentially a missionary work.

Its great ministry is one of friendship. To seamen who come from the seven seas it offers a helping hand in a multitude of ways. Most of these men are normal in every way but in dealing with so many thousands we run into nearly every problem that exists. Since the beginning of our American Merchant Marine seamen have been taken advantage of by unscrupulous waterfront characters and are subject to many evil influences. Our experience has made us familiar with the problems these men are constantly facing. Our every effort is bent toward ridding the waterfront of rackets aimed at the seamen and in assisting them when they become the victims of such conditions.



Rev. Raymond S. Hall, D.D.

The Institute is more than a hotel for seamen, it is a real shore home run by the Church. In order to carry on our ministry to seamen we require voluntary annual contributions. We hope you who travel on ships will help the seamen who assure your comfort and safety when at sea. As we serve seamen coming from every state in the union and foreign countries as well, we offer to you an opportunity to share in this great missionary work. Your contributions help the Institute offer thousands of seafarers an "anchor to windward" when economic tides swirl around them, and here at "25 South Street" they find a measure of emotional security.

Please make your gifts payable to the Seamen's Church Institute of New York and mail to Harry Forsyth, Chairman Ways and Means Committee, 25 South Street, New York 4, N. Y. Contributions are tax exempt.

## Thanks for Christmas Boxes

Over in Liverpool there is a group of old seamen known as "The Ancient Mariners." No one in this club is younger than seventy and the senior member tops the ninety mark. Chaplain Evans, the head of the Mersey Mission to Seamen, wrote us last Fall that these old tars had known "the brunt edge of the stick" in the postwar period. He explained that most of them lived on very small pensions in one room quarters. They received a soup luncheon each day at the Mission where their clubroom was located, and he thought a bit of Christmas cheer would mean much to them. It was therefore agreed upon and Mrs. Evans kept the whole plan of the Christmas Boxes "a secret." Here is her subsequent letter describing the giving of the gifts.

Dear Friends at 25 South St.:

"It is impossible for me to describe the joy which your wonderful parcels gave to the 80 members of our "Ancient Mariners" Club as I find it difficult to express adequately my personal thanks to you for so generous a gift. We had a Christmas dinner for them and subsequently distributed the boxes after I had told them exactly how they had come to have such lovely presents. I don't suppose that in all their hard life they have ever experienced anything quite like it before. The contents, if I may say so, were delightfully imaginative and appropriate. Representatives of an older generation, as they are, there's hardly one of them who smokes cigarettes—they all cherish their old pipes—and to find themselves the possessors of a pipe, pouch AND tobacco was something beyond their dreams. Each parcel contained an addressed card to a friend in the States and I know that many of them have written (or got someone to write) a deeply appreciative "Thank you." Their gratitude was then expressed for the lovely pullovers (sweaters) which will last some of them for the rest of their lives; and so the examination of the contents went on. How is it possible to thank you, your helpers and the donors for such a munificent gift?—and for the inexpressible pleasure and happiness it gave these fine old seamen. On their behalf as well as for myself, personally, I send you all very heartfelt thanks."

Dear Institute Friends:

"Enclosed is a check for \$22.48 from the men of St. Paul's Church. It's a contribution for your Christmas Boxes. It was raised on the "spur of the moment" by auctioning off a pumpkin pie which was left over after a dinner meeting! The boys really went to town, didn't they? Bidding for one pie! They had a lot of fun and hope the seamen do also on Christmas Day."

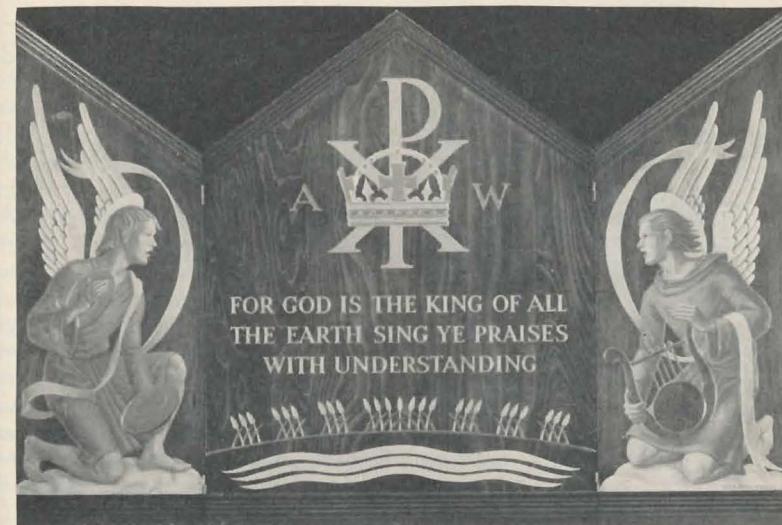
Mrs. K — J —  
Chatham, N. J.

Write to the Central Council, 25 South St., New York 4, N. Y., for information on filling Christmas boxes.

Besides the boxes that went to sea and to our Marine Hospitals, some were sent to Hamburg for British seamen who would be in that port on Christmas Day. Miss Marjorie Guthrie, who at one time was on the staff here at 25 South Street and who is now Warden at the "Flying Angel" Mission in Hamburg, wrote as follows:

*"The parcels have arrived—safely carried by the S.S. Flying Enterprise to the "Flying Angel." Thank you and all concerned very much indeed for including Hamburg in your Christmas festivities, and thank you also on behalf of all the seamen who will receive your gifts. Our main party here will be held on Christmas Eve. There is no knowing yet how many or what ships will be in this port on December 24th but we are assured of at least enough to make a happy evening of dancing, games and supper. Unfortunately, the traditional Christmas Dinner cannot be managed, but we are laying on a good spread of cold meats and salad and plum pudding with various side "fixings." As last year, we will probably be followed up the hill to our historic English church by the majority of our guests when the Padre and I go up for the midnight service there and the evening will end in candlelight and peace. Needless to say, your parcels will be the high spot of the early proceeding and I do want the members of the Central Council to know how greatly appreciated is their interest and help. I hope that the lads will write you themselves later on. The Chaplain joins in sending thanks and the season's best wishes. I can well visualize the S.C.I. festivities and we will indeed think of you amongst "Absent Friends" when we drink the Christmas toast."*

## Triptych in a Marine Hospital



Triptych painted by Nina Barr Wheeler, the gift of Mrs. Junius S. Morgan, President Citizens Committee for the Army and Navy, which is used in the Marine Hospital at Ellis Island for worship services conducted by one of the Seamen's Church Institute's chaplains. The Institute gives flowers each week for the altar and these are later distributed in the ward for tubercular seamen. The altar cloth, the gift of Miss Eleanor Mellon, was made by Mrs. C. Enderle of the Central Council.

This triptych is set up in the Recreation Hall each Sunday afternoon and the patients from the wards who are able to walk or come in wheelchairs attend. Fifty hymn books were given in memory of Mrs. William Scaife, a former volunteer at the Institute.

### "SO SHINES A GOOD DEED . . ."

My dear Mrs. Burke (Sec'y Central Council)

You cannot know what a pleasure it was to me to know that the expressed gratitude of the sailorman to whom I had sent a box last year was being used to win others to fill boxes this year.

Life is too full of many interests but I have wanted to tell you that this man, Edward L. Shea, was so grateful for my response to his "Thank you" and this led to my sending him from time to time various things which he could use in his association with the other men at the T. B. Sanitarium at Otisville, N. Y. They had a little "party" and wrote to thank me dubbing me "The Little Admiral out in Iowa."

Shea was discharged from the Sanitarium the 1st of June, I believe, but is still under the care of the New York Department of Public Welfare and is living in New York City. They have given him promise of an opportunity for training to become a male

nurse but the classes do not begin until September. Meanwhile, his living is being paid for by the Department, I understand. He writes me not infrequently and I have much enjoyed his letters. Not long ago I sent him a copy of the somewhat popular out-of-doors book, "Hound-Dog Man," for which he was most grateful and wrote me that he, in turn, after finishing it had sent it to "Rocky," a lad at the T. B. Sanitarium who as Shea expressed it, "took to me as if I were his father." He also wrote "You see how a good deed is carried on." Therefore, when you wrote me that you were using his "Thank you" of last Christmas, I communicated with him telling him of his "good deed."

I am asking for two boxes for this coming Christmas.

With all good wishes to you and your co-workers,

Very sincerely,  
Mrs. J. C. BOYD

## Saga of the *Rochambeau*

By René Cruz

THIS is the story of the U.S.S. *Rochambeau*, a wartime troopship in the Pacific. She was formerly the *M/S Marechal Joffre*, a French passenger liner on the run between France and Japan and was seized by the U.S. Navy in Manila at the outbreak of the last war. Her original French crew, under American command, brought her to the States, to San Francisco. There she was rebaptized the *U.S.S. Rochambeau* (after the Count of Rochambeau who commanded the French expeditionary force during the war of Independence). She was then converted into a troopship and was ready for a new career. She got a new crew of 500 young American seamen just out of training camp. The prospect of their first voyage on her filled them with excitement. It was the first time most of them had ever seen a ship.

Finally one night we took our human cargo, 3,300 soldiers on their way to fight, suffer and die for their country and for civilization. That first troop embarkation is still very vivid in my mind. They came aboard in several lines with only the "clop . . . clop" of their feet on the gangplank. Everyone seemed to feel the gravity of the moment. In the darkness, all the soldiers looked alike, carrying their rifles, a large pack, and a helmet. Once on board, they looked curiously at the ship and the sailors. The sailors looked curiously at the soldiers. Once in a while the line would stop, one of the soldiers would ask in a low voice: "What is the name of this ship?" "ROCHAMBEAU," twenty eager voices would call out and the line would move along.

The next day found us at sea bound for New Caledonia, a French island in the South Pacific. But we did not know our destination until we got there.

We were in a convoy of several cargo and troop ships all heavily

armed and escorted. Day after day we ploughed toward our destination and life aboard became a monotonous routine. Early in the morning before sunrise — reveille, general quarters, later — breakfast, muster on station, and the usual hours of work or watch, then in the evening — general quarters, at sunset we stood at attention while the ship's colors were lowered to the sound of the bugle. This was followed by a voice over the loudspeaker commanding: "Darken Ship! Darken Ship! Smoking lamp is out. Smoking is prohibited on all the weather decks."

Ship's personnel and passengers totaled almost 4,000, which was a big crowd in such a small space. During the day the decks outside were absolutely jammed with soldiers, lying down or sitting or standing, playing cards or reading. They would emerge from their compartments after gen-



A rescuing party of four men and a doctor . . .

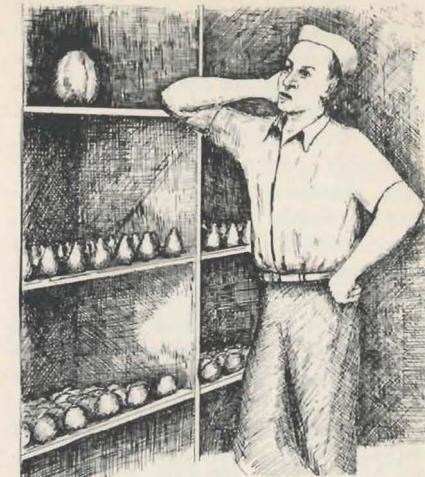
eral quarters in the morning and take possession of every inch of space that was available. First come, first served.

Feeding such a big crowd proved to be a problem. The first day when lunch time came, 600 men were still waiting in line for breakfast! From then on the Army was fed only two meals a day.

Smoking was prohibited inside the ship at all times. The only place where you could snatch a puff without running the risk of going to the brig was in the "head." It soon became the crew's smoking room; in fact, the night life of the ship centered there. People unable to sleep used to go there for a smoke or to read and even a crap game would start once in a while.

The *Rochambeau* was equipped to make her own fresh water by distillation. Once the apparatus broke down and as our reserve of fresh water was short, we were strictly rationed, regardless of the tropical heat. I could not keep my mind from running to the thought of saloons, cold beer, wine and everything else cold and drinkable. One evening after dark, a storekeeper and good friend, Minassian, whispered in my ear, "Come with me down in the storerooms, we'll have a nice drink." Delirious with joy at the thought of some nice cool beer or maybe a bottle of wine, I followed him down dark stairways, through trap doors, feeling our way in the darkness of the throbbing ship. Finally, we closed a final trap door after us, turned on a light and he told me to sit down on a sack of onions. Then he handed me a jug of cool water!

On our way back our ship carried wounded, and some civilians. Once we were told to make reservations for a French Admiral and his party. He was to board the ship several days later in Tahiti. We had one melon left in the storerooms. By order of the supply officer, it was reserved for the Admiral. The storekeeper was told to keep a sharp eye on it and he would report every day on the



Drawing by René Cruz  
". . . The melon is rotten, sir."

condition of the melon: "The melon is alright, sir." Several days later we hit Tahiti. The Admiral got on board and soon after the storekeeper rushed to the supply officer who said:

"The melon is rotten, sir."

Once during a stay at some South Pacific island, one soldier, waiting for his turn to disembark, climbed up the aft mast which was an old-fashioned, very high mast. Four hours later when his company was called to disembark he was still up there unable to descend. A rescuing party of four men and a doctor had to climb up the mast and lower the culprit by ropes.

Trips were all alike; all uneventful. Nothing hit us. The first glamour had worn off for the young sailors and they had become tough, hardened seamen, quickly assuming old Navy traditions.

The *U.S.S. Rochambeau* was lucky. She had always been lucky, always escaped danger. Once in the beginning of the war, in Manila, the Japanese bombed and raked the city and the harbor defenses at will, unopposed. Almost every ship in the harbor except the *Rochambeau* was sunk. One day there were ships sunk on either side of us, several others ablaze and the *Rochambeau* suffered only a broken porthole from bomb

concussion. When we left Manila we sighted a Japanese squadron at night, saw them very clearly in the moonlight. They did not see us. We always escaped the tough spots. Several ships were sunk in Port Darwin, Australia, just after we had left the port. Another time a Japanese submarine fired two torpedoes at us. They missed. The worst thing that ever happened to the lucky old *Rochambeau* was a terrific storm between New Zealand and Australia, a storm that caused more damage to her than the whole Japanese empire had been able to effect.

Just before being converted into a troopship, she crossed the Pacific from Australia to San Francisco protected by two enormous guns, at least 25 inches, and made of wood and canvas! No Jap ever dared show his face to her with such gigantic defenses!

So the war drew to an end, and in March, 1945, the *Rochambeau* was turned back to France. A French crew retook possession of her in New York. She was rebaptized the *Marechal Joffre* and thus ends the story of the U.S.S. *Rochambeau*. Now she has been reconverted into a peace-time passenger liner and is again on her pre-war run between France and Indo-China. She earned no special glory but she did her work with honor and modesty as a good ship must.

#### Note:

Tom Hanrahan, latest "LOOKOUT" illustrator, an Army veteran turned deckhand, studied at Pratt Institute, Brooklyn, majoring in Illustration with the hope of pictorially describing sea-stories and presenting his own marine experiences. He returns to the sea each summer and it was this July in a Gulf Port that circumstances turned the amateur student into a professional artist to the benefit of all hands. His ship's Master had not provided cash for the crew as the ship put into port for emergency repairs. Tom was talented but shy, but his shipmate Bill, though lacking the talent, had the brass. So the two, armed with Hanrahan's sketchbook and Bill's boldness, toured the harbor's night spots with Bill "selling" Tom's talent. The price: a pitcher of beer for a portrait sketch. The beer flowed faster than Hanrahan's pencils, and soon "art lovers" were

adding currency until the ship's crew, who didn't have a dollar among all of them, were sharing in the revelry until Tom became the "most talked-about artist" in the South. Hanrahan makes his home between semesters and ships with his mother in New Hyde Park, L. I.

## Ship News

### THREE SHIPS ESCAPE PIRATES

HONG KONG, Aug. 7 (AP). — Three steamships from Canton arrived in Hong Kong today after a gun fight with pirates in which one Chinese passenger was killed and another wounded. The Wuhsieh, Chih-man and Yunghsing were sailing together for protection. Ships' officers said the pirates attacked from the banks of the Pearl River eight miles from Canton shortly after midnight. Guards aboard repelled and the ships quickly steamed out of range.

### CLIPPER LINE TO SAIL FROM SOUTH STREET

A. L. Burbank & Co., 17 Battery Place, announced the establishment of the Clipper Line, a new cargo liner service from New York to Havana, Cuba, and Mexico.

The Clipper Line will offer regular fortnightly service with fast, new Swedish-flag vessels, from Pier 20 East River and Peck Slip.

Ships to be employed on the line are the Bokefors, 5,500 tons deadweight; the Exefors, 5,000 tons, and the Erik Bank, 3,500 tons. Regular calls will be made at Havana, Vera Cruz and Tampico.

### 50 SHIPS BRINGING LUMBER FROM WEST

Fifty American ships are engaged in bringing more than a billion board feet of lumber a year from Pacific Coast mills to East Coast distributing centers, the American Merchant Marine Institute announced.

The fleet, described as "an important contribution towards easing the nation's housing shortage," is made up of twenty-six Liberty ships, thirteen Victories, one C-3 and ten C-4 ships. The fleet makes up the bulk of America's industrial shipping there being only ten other ships employed on the route. Before the war 171 ships served intercoastal dry cargo trades.

The sizes of timber carried vary greatly, the institute said, ranging from three-inch planks for apartment developments to lengths eight to fourteen feet for house framing. An average Victory Ship cargo brings 5,500,000 board feet, or enough lumber to build approximately 400 seven-room houses. Larger C-type ships can load more than 8,000,000 board feet.

## Ship News

### MORLEY SETS SAIL WITH CONRAD RELIC Ship's Wheel, Bound for London.

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### "DAVEY JONES' LOCKER"

### Unusual Entry in Seamen's Sculpture Contest.

Merchant Seamen-sculptors have been bringing in their carvings for the Sculpture Contest sponsored by the Seamen's Church Institute of New York.

One of the most unusual entries just received is "Davey Jones' Locker," a combination sea chest and bar carved of mahogany by Chief Mate Edward Turpin of the United Fruit Company's freighter *Junior*. On the top of the chest is a hand-colored pictorial history of famous ships, a meteorological map, and the location of notable shipwrecks. It took Mr. Turpin 270 hours to make and carve the sea chest and 450 hours to draw the charts. On the port side of the chest is carved in bas-relief Fiddlers' Green, the legendary heaven where good sailors go, and in the company are carvings of famous sailors like Columbus, Ulysses, Long John Silver, and Capt. Josiah Slocum, (who made a 'round-the-world voyage in a small boat, alone). On the starboard side of the chest is carved a Yankee clipper-ship sailor with his girl, and a bottle.

On the front of the chest is an actual steering wheel, which when spun hard a' starboard raises the cover and inside instead of gold moidores and pieces-of-eight is a bar with space for eighteen bottles and thirty-two glasses. Around the brassfittings on the exterior of the chest are carved quotations from old sea ballads.

Mr. Turpin, whose home is in Truro, Mass., has been going to sea since 1921 and with the United Fruit Company since 1928. He sailed as an able-bodied seaman aboard the full-rigged sailing ship *Tusitala* in 1927 in command of Capt. Roland Barker. He also sailed in the America Cup Races aboard the *Weetamo*. He received his mate's license after studying at the U. S. Maritime School at Fort Trumbull, and he is the co-author with Wm. MacEwen of the Merchant Marine Officers' Handbook.

"Davey Jones' Locker," as he calls his combination sea chest and bar, will be on exhibition with the sculpture submitted by the other seamen contestants in the Janet Roper Room at the Institute, 25 South St., until Nov. 15th. The exhibit will be open to the public from 3 P.M. to 11 P.M. daily. Winners will be announced in the November LOOKOUT. The judges are well-known sculptors: George Lober, Alfred Van Loen and William Zorach.

(Reprinted from N. Y. Times,  
August 20, 1949)

## Book Reviews

### THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN NEMO

A Narrative Poem

By Robert Hillyer

Alfred A. Knopf, N. Y., \$2.75

Captain Nemo, hero of Jules Verne's "The Mysterious Island" is the chief character in this poem by the 1934 Pulitzer-Prize winner. Two war-weary American poet-sailors are present at the Captain's death aboard his submarine yacht anchored near a volcanic island. Although all of the lines are not lucid, the over-all picture is, and the poetic imagery and brilliant conception of the poem keep the reader interested until the final page.

M. D. C.

### NAVIGATION THE EASY WAY

By Carl D. Lane and John Montgomery

W. W. Norton & Co., \$2.95

"Any one who knows how to read, add and subtract can learn to navigate."

So say the authors of this book, and they seem to be about right. They start out with a simple explanation of how to plot a line of position from fixed known landmarks, and they then transfer so deftly to lines of position plotted from heavenly bodies that the reader hardly knows that he has gone into celestial navigation.

The use of time-diagrams, an important feature of accurate navigation, is properly stressed. Many amateur navigators often compute their position far inland simply because they have not started their calculations with a good time-diagram.

The discussion on the sextant is very useful, but of course, it would take some time to learn to use the instrument in actual practice. The chapter on sextant errors is well done, except that the diagram on refraction shows rays from a celestial body as bent upward instead of downward. However, on the whole, the diagrams are very good throughout the book.

This work is a short-cut to navigation, and does not take the place of Bowditch or Dutton. It does not attempt to cover the handling of boats, Rules of the Road, etc., but it should prove very useful to a student who wants to learn about navigation without going through the intricacies of how the science was built up. It deals principally with celestial navigation.

Reviewed by

COMMANDER WILLIAM AVERY,  
U.S. Power Squadron

### THE MYSTERIOUS STRANGER

By Felix Riesenbergs, Jr.

Dodd, Mead & Co., \$2.50

The author of "The Crimson Anchor" (Herald-Tribune Award, 1948) has written another book for young men with an interest in sea adventure, authentically told by one who sailed in the American Merchant Marine during the war. Son of Capt. Felix Riesenbergs (whose tales of sailing days such as "Under Sail" are classics), he has inherited his father's love for the sea. He has a real flair as a teller of swift, action-packed yarns with a Liberty ship, the San Francisco waterfront, the fog-bound channel of the River Plate and the docks of Buenos Aires as picturesque background for an exciting story of ruthless criminals out to get an eye-witness to a murder, (the witness being 17-year old Tommy Mardon on his second trip to sea). The author's sailor-characters are convincingly drawn.

M. D. C.

### THE LAST STRONGHOLD OF SAIL

The Story of the Essex Sailing-smacks, Coasters and Barges

by Hervey Benham

Chanticleer Press — 1948 \$3.50

To write a book with as general a topic as THE LAST STRONGHOLD OF SAIL that will appeal even to readers not especially interested in old sailing vessels nor in the region concerned, a writer must have the skill, the knowledge and the love of his subject that will make him able to kindle something of his own enthusiasm in his readers. Hervey Benham has these and in his leisurely, chatty account of this vanished fleet of Essex sailing smacks, coasters and barges in the wide bight between Margate and Felixstowe into which the Thames River comes down from London, he makes his readers live with him something of the life of this region. Here craft has an ancestry going back to Roman and Saxon times and beyond the dawn of English History. We read stories of smuggling, of storms, shipwrecks, of heroic rescues and we learn the merits and faults of the various types of vessels that sail or sailed these waters.

## Dog Watch Songs

### LOWLANDS LOW

(The Golden Vanitee)

(VERSE)

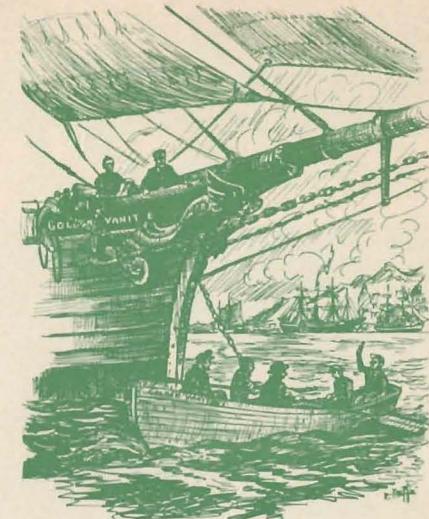
She was a lofty ship, boys,  
As she put out to sea,  
She goes by the name of  
The Golden Vanitee.  
She's likely to be taken  
By a Turkish roving canoe  
As she sails along the Lowlands,  
As she sails along the Lowlands, low.

CHORUS

Lowlands, Lowlands,  
As she sails along the Lowlands, low.

(VERSE)

There once was a lass  
Who was waiting on the quay  
O I know a ship, and a gallant ship is she,  
Of all the ships I know  
She is far the best to me,  
And she's sailing in the Lowlands, low.  
And she's sailing in the Lowlands, low.



(Drawing by  
Norman Maffei, Able-bodied Seaman)

Cho:



Lowlands is a very old song, probably Scotch in origin. There are many versions, but the above was sung to THE LOOKOUT editor some fifteen years ago by William Berry, a Cape Horn sailor, who served as chanteyman on many a full-rigged ship. On some ships "Lowlands" was sung as a dirge, when the seamen were at the pumps in threatening weather. On other ships it was sung in the first or second "dog watch" (4 to 6 P.M. or 6 to 8 P.M.). This fine old fo'c'sle ballad, plaintive and melodic, has been preserved in both America and England under various titles. The Kentucky mountaineers sing about the "Mary Golden Tree"; the English about the "Sweet Trinity," but Yankee clipper ship sailors sang of the "Golden Vanitee."

\* \* \*

Readers who would like the sheet music (standard size, 9 by 12 inches) of this song, including piano arrangement and ten verses, are invited to mail fifty cents to THE LOOKOUT editor, 25 South Street, New York 4, N. Y. If there is enough interest expressed in these old "Dog-Watch Songs" the Institute will publish a complete collection of them.

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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," 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."

Contributions and bequests to the Institute are exempt from Federal and New York State Tax.