

# The LOOKOUT

AUGUST 1954



SEAMEN'S  
CHURCH  
INSTITUTE  
of NEW YORK



**T**HE SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK is a shore home for merchant seamen who are between ships in this great port. The largest organization of its kind in the world, the Institute combines the services of a modern hotel with a wide range of educational, medical, religious and recreational facilities needed by a profession that cannot share fully the important advantages of home and community life.

The Institute is partially self-supporting, the nature of its work requiring assistance from the public to provide the personal and social services that distinguish it from a waterfront boarding house and so enable it to fulfill its true purpose: being a home away from home for the merchant seamen of all nationalities and religions.

A tribute to the service it has performed during the past century is its growth from a floating chapel in 1844 to the thirteen-story building at 25 South Street known to merchant seamen the world around.

## The LOOKOUT

VOL. XLV

AUGUST, 1954

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**THE COVER:** Menacing though it seems, the great beard of a tugboat's nose fender is really benevolent. It cushions the tug's tremendous pushing power and keeps it from punishing the vessel it means to help.

# The Lookout

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No. 8



Among the models on display at the Marine Museum is the forerunner of today's Seamen's Church Institute, the first floating chapel, shown here at the lower left.

## The Growing Fleet

Ship Models Come from Chiefs of State

**T**HE President of Italy, the Prime Minister of South Africa, the Emperor of Japan and the Generalissimo's Lady have not often been involved in the same international enterprise. But one example — unintentional though it may have been — lies in the four handsome models from four nations democratically sharing quarters at the Marine Museum of the Seamen's Church Institute of New York.

The Union of South Africa started out as a refreshment stand for the ships of the

Dutch East India Trading Company — a stopover where fresh stores and water could be taken aboard. This oasis of the oceans was established by Captain Jan Van Riebeeck, who sallied forth with the blessings of the Company in the good ship *Drommedaris* and landed his pioneering group of hardy Dutchmen in Cape Town on April 7, 1652. The local Hottentots took a surly view of the situation when it became apparent that this was no fly-by-night expedition, but con-



Curator W. E. Greyble holds the *Drommedaris*, a gift of the Prime Minister of South Africa. Left to right are: the *Manzu Maru* donated by the Emperor of Japan, a gondola from the President of Italy, and a Taiwan fisherman from Mme. Chiang Kai Chek.

soled themselves by driving harsh bargains for sheep and cattle and then stealing them back on the first opportune moonless night. But the colony held and grew despite its commuting livestock and Cape Town and the *Drommedaris* became the Plymouth and *Mayflower* of South African history.

The miniature *Drommedaris* model is a three masted galleon-type and carries a gold relief of her namesake, the camel, on her stern. The steering wheel was yet to be contrived by some ingenious fellow, so the *Drommedaris* was guided from below decks by a whip staff, a kind of crude tiller. Though the little model carries the official good wishes of Dr. Daniel F. Malan, Prime Minister of the Union of South Africa, eight assorted dignitaries had a hand in the diplomatic protocol of its deliverance here.

The second distinguished acquisition of the Museum is a slender Venetian Gondola, the likes of which have rarely been seen even in Venice. The hull is of smooth-grained oak and the deck of black teakwood. She tapers and arches upward

at either end and her fittings include black leather seats puffy with springs, decorative velvet drapings and red carpeting. Two tiny gold seahorses champ on metal "bits" held by black silken "reins" and between them a gracefully carved gold inlay sets off the elegant darkness of the wood. Although a gondolier usually maneuvers with only one pole, two finely shaped oars are carried by this regal craft, gift of Luigi Einaudi, President of the Italian Republic.

Flying the brilliant red, white and blue flag of Nationalist China is a modern, brightly painted fishing vessel of Taiwan (Formosa). A railed "extra" deck extends up and over the prow of the boat, and serves as a perch for spearing fish. A lookout bridge spans the width of the pilot house, from which cautious Formosans may spot the approach of a school of fish, or of the deadlier game of the troubled Chinese waters. The model is the gift of Mme. Chiang Kai Chek.

Nine feet of metal, wire, wood and paint wrought in the minutest detail comprise the *Manzu Maru*, a Japanese round-

This ancient slave ship plied the Mediterranean under the Turkish ensign. It is on loan from George Dannenberg, who constructed the model.



the-world steamer of the late thirties, and a gift of Emperor Hirohito of Japan. All the appurtenances of a fully equipped steamer are readily visible, down to the oars for the lifeboats and tiny white lifesavers on the rails.

Other models are making their cautious way through diplomatic channels to the S.C.I. Museum.

Charles Howard was Lord High Admiral of Elizabeth's fleet, the First Earl

of Nottingham, and a Knight of the Garter; in other words, quite a fellow. He commanded the 80-ship British fleet sent forth to battle the massive "invincible" Spanish Armada in 1588. From his flagship, the *Ark Royal*, he directed the captains of his ships, including no less a figure than Sir Francis Drake, in maneuvers that outwitted and outfought the Spaniards, sinking or crippling 75 galleons of their 129-strong force.



A. B. Chris Svendsen enjoys a well-earned smoke as he views his handiwork on the *Vliessingen* of Netherlands, which this year observes its 200th anniversary.

The model was built in 1754 and looked every minute of its age when received by the Museum.

The Museum's 6-inch *Ark Royal* is as ornate and proud a warship as one could wish, with fanciful images of Neptune, the English lion and a radiant cross painted on its sails. George Dannenberg, the model maker, has depicted its crew at their leisure, kneeling and squatting on the deck, absorbed in wagering on a vigorous game of mora.

The second of Mr. Dannenberg's contributions to the Museum is a Mediterranean slaver, garish and sinister in its gilded and scarlet trappings. A golden serpent curls on its bowsprit and gold wreaths encircle each of its twelve cannon. Two triangular sails and twenty oars are its propulsion. Delicate scrollwork, brilliant colors and opulent cabins belie its sordid trade. The crescent and star of Turkey ripple from its mastheads. Turkey was once the clearing house for the slave trade of the Mohammedan world of the Far East.

Recently restored is a model that predated the ship — the model was constructed in 1754 and served as a "blueprint" for the builders of the *Vliessingen* of Netherlands, which was completed in 1756. Some of the hand-woven, centuries-old ropes and rigging are intact, though the original tattered and crumbling sails

This Viking ship was donated by J. A. S. Thorsen, whose family owned it over 100 years, according to Museum Historian Captain R. E. Copley.



had to be removed. A few pieces of misshapen, hand-cast cannon form the nucleus of her restored 38-gun armament.

She was built in the twilight of Holland's reign as the chief maritime power of Europe, and was probably named for the major port city of Vlissingen, which was at that time still clogged with the ships of the vast Dutch fleet.

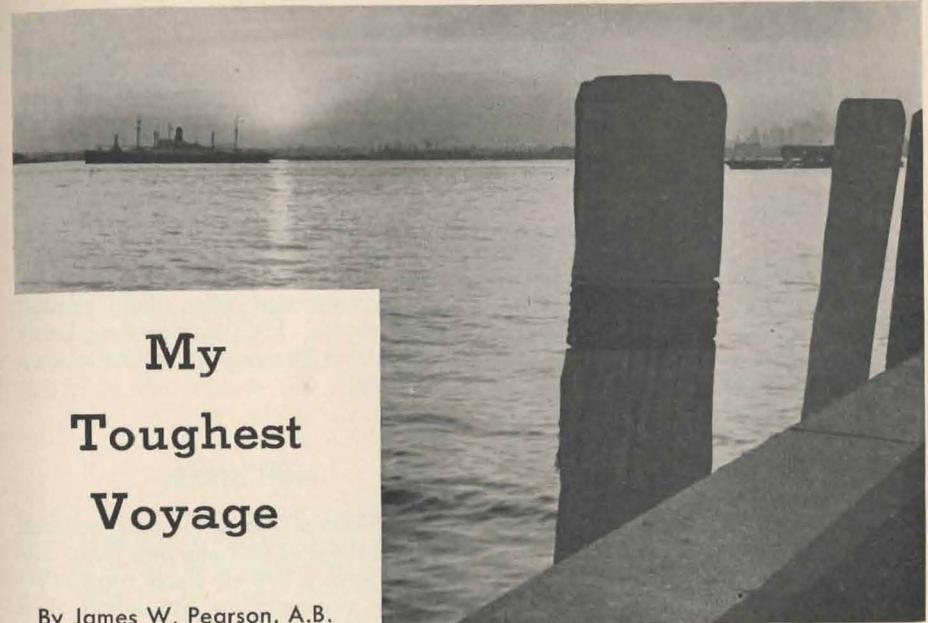
Among the odd gear found deep in the musty holds of the *Vliessingen* is a 3-inch mustachioed drummer, hand carved and painted. He wears a blue tunic, red trousers and high peaked hat, smudged by the reverent fingertips of generations. His eyes are black and tend to pop. His manly, brass-buttoned chest is of heroic proportions. He stands stiffly erect, brown knapsack in place, yellow drum cocked, ready to beat out the martial rhythms of heaven-knows-what shadowy and forgotten battle.

The two-stack cruise ship *Prinzessin Victoria Louise* is currently being spruced up by A. B. Chris Svendsen. She was built in Hamburg in 1900 and her design incorporated some innovations sketched out by the Kaiser himself. Her career was short and tragic. During a routine cruise to the West Indies in 1906 she struck and sank on an uncharted underwater mountain newly birthed in the fury of a quake. Her captain shot himself and went down with his ship. The *Victoria Louise* was named for the only daughter of Kaiser Wilhelm II and carries a tiny, symbolic maiden as her figurehead.

In the steamship annex of the Museum is a new diorama installed by the Isbrandtsen Company. It is an artistically lighted revolving stage, set with scenes from four of the twenty-seven different ports of call made by the Isbrandtsen round-the-world steamers. Authentic sets present typical inward-bound views of Egypt, Japan, Ecuador and India.

Since its founding in May of 1953, the Institute's Marine Museum has developed one of New York's finest maritime collections.

Visiting hours are: daily 11-6, Saturdays 12-5; Sundays 12-4.



## My Toughest Voyage

By James W. Pearson, A.B.

First prize, Artists & Writers Club Essay Contest

I'll have to admit right now that my toughest voyage has never been logged, its course never pencilled on any chart. I can't even give you the name of the ship. My toughest voyage is still to be sailed and my hell ship is yet hull down on some horizon of the future.

This is nothing I dread. Actually, it is something I look forward to. Not insanely of course; for I believe most seamen feel the same way about this as I do. We won't appreciate it when it arrives and we may not even recognize it. In fact, we may never sign articles on a "toughest voyage." It could be something that is always just over every seaman's horizon. A ship and a trip off the the ways of Sheol, but, for all that, a job we'll throw our cards in for.

I say this because what true sailor has ever wanted nothing but romance runs, fair winds and following seas? A captain's paradise? We'll sail within this compass of calm and security often enough and gladly; yet the half-promise of wilder waters and unholy watch partners is always in the wind and in the sun-

risers and it's the reason we never really unpack our bags anywhere. The sea has set a lure before us: this half-promise that there is a "toughest voyage" with a ship and a seaway fit to challenge every man. Just to meet the challenge is its own prize. This is only a half-promise, true, but the adventure of uncertainty is a good part of any seaman's wages. Thus a "toughest voyage" we can expect and look forward to.

It may be that many seamen are unaware of this — that is part of their wages. Certainly it must seem unsound to people who do not follow the sea. Yet it is those ashore who sing the joys of homecoming, not seamen. Channel fever on the way in is a pleasant distemper and the pay-off line a real fiddler's green — but tying-up does not compare with letting go. Sailing day is still the best day and its joys the greatest for any real seaman. The horizon and beyond, with untried seas, ships and shipmates, the very reason why the "toughest voyage" will always remain to be met and remain so very important.

## POPULAR PORT

Taking in its stride the longshoremen's strike of last March, New York has still docked more ships than any other port in the country, according to mid-year statistics supplied by the Maritime Association.

Twenty-two per cent of 26,340 vessels entering American ports during the first half of 1954 came to New York. The nearest competition was Philadelphia with twelve per cent. Others rank in the order given: Los Angeles, Baltimore, Hampton Roads, San Francisco, New Orleans, Houston, Boston, Seattle, and Portland, Oregon.

New York's nine per cent drop below the figure for the first half of 1953 is attributed to the month-long March strike during which nearly 300 ships were diverted to other ports. Not all the blame can be assigned to March, however, for the figures were slightly below 1953 in every other month except February, which showed a small gain.

## SOMETHING NEW

A new Hudson River passenger pier is scheduled for completion by summer of 1956, according to plans and specifications announced by Vincent A. G. O'Connor, Commissioner, Marine and Aviation Department.

Costing 4½ million dollars, the two-story fireproof terminal will be called Pier 94 and is slated to be leased by the Italian Line. With the addition recently of the *Cristoforo Colombo*, the Italian Line has five large liners calling regularly at New York.

The Port of New York Authority, meanwhile, has signed a fifteen-year lease

with American Export Lines calling for a modern three-pier passenger-cargo terminal in Hoboken. Piers 1 and 3 there will be renovated when their present leases expire. Five foreign-flag liners dispossessed by the move will be seeking new sites.

## HIGH STAKES

The Guatemalan revolution resulted in the sinking of just one small ship, the *Springfjord*, a British vessel completing the last voyage of a five-month time charter to the Grace Line when she was bombed by an insurgent fighter plane. However, the loss set at 1½ million was not inconsiderable.

Together with her cargo of coffee, cotton and lumber, the bombed vessel precipitated claims that will eat up the profits from 3 billion dollars worth of future marine insurance business. The episode serves as a harsh reminder of the trust placed daily in merchant mariners who must bring such cargoes safely from shore to shore.

## CONTEST WINNERS

First prize in the 1954 Essay Contest sponsored by the Artists & Writers Club for the Merchant Marine has been won by A.B. James W. Pearson, whose winning entry appears on page five of this issue of THE LOOKOUT.

Writing on the theme, "My Toughest Voyage," Seaman Pearson speculated that his "hell ship" was still "hull down on some horizon of the future." In a split decision Pearson's story nosed out those of John P. Ader and George W. Clark, who were awarded second and

third prizes respectively. Their essays will be carried in subsequent issues.

Judges of the Essay Contest were John Mason Brown, John K. Hutchens and H. James McCurrach.

The Artists & Writers Club was established by the Institute in 1945.

## SPEAKERS

The Speakers Bureau of the American Merchant Marine Institute has a substantial roster of steamship people available for talks, at no cost, before church groups, fraternal organizations, and community and educational associations. The general topic of "Ships and America" is used for all such engagements.

Requests for speakers should be addressed to the Bureau of Information, American Merchant Marine Institute, 11 Broadway, New York 4, New York.

## COMPETITION

The strong comeback of West Germany in the shipbuilding industry has British competitors worried. A slump in orders has caused comment in the House of Commons where assurance has been sought that the pre-war poverty will not return.

While Britain still leads the world with a tonnage building at present totalling three times that of West Germany, she has lost considerable business recently to her rival across the Channel.

Complacency born of the post-war boom is blamed for the loss of many customers. Germany, furthermore, is enjoying a labor cost advantage that promises to force England to bring her own cost down. The shipbuilders and shipowners have urged taxation cuts.

## MODESTY

In dry dock recently to have her bottom scraped, the superliner *United States* turned real coy: no pictures, gentlemen — please.

The ban was requested by the Navy's Bureau of Ships to prevent the copying of the vessel's hull design, a prime factor in her blazing speed.

## SUBSIDIES IN REVIEW

Government aid received by the merchant fleets of sixty-five countries is the subject of a condensed report issued recently by the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service in Washington.

The report presents the research of fifteen international transportation majors, seven of whom have sea time under several national flags.

Government aid to shipping is shown to be a long established policy with forty-five of the nations, including all of the leading maritime powers.

## ELLIS ISLAND

Economy and efficiency have inspired a plan to shift the facilities of the Immigration and Naturalization Service from Ellis Island to their twelve-story general office building at 70 Columbus Avenue in Manhattan.

The Public Health Service withdrew from the Upper Bay island in 1951 and since that time the Coast Guard has also moved out its port security operations, leaving the prim, isolated site available for a new tenant. The New York City Department of Correction has expressed interest in the location.

# The Purser

## Knows All

### The Answers

By Doug Anderson

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# The Breeches Buoy

OCCUPYING a place of honor in the Athens home of a Greek sea captain named Katulas there has been, these past decades, a short stout piece of line. Doubtless many visitors have been told how on this light, almost thread-like strand the lives of twenty-three seamen once depended.

Pummeled by the wind and seas until she was a wallowing hulk, the Greek tanker *Paraguay* was finally driven aground on the storm-lashed coast north of Cape Hatteras. A Coast Guard surfman from the Kill Devil Station heard the grinding of her plates as she heeled broadside in the combers. Squinting against the dark December gale, Surfman Harris could make out her silhouette breaking the gray and indistinct horizon.

Ripping the percussion tape from a Coston flare, Harris held it high so the brilliant burst of light could be seen by the crew of the grounded tanker. Harris' watchmate back in the lookout tower also spotted the distress flare and sent out the alarm, phoning Nag's Head and Kitty Hawk for additional help.

The wreck was about three hundred yards off shore, well within the range of the Lyle gun that was rolled onto a small knoll nearest the *Paraguay*. The little brass cannon cracked sharply against the gale and sent its 17-pound projectile trailing a light line across the stricken vessel.

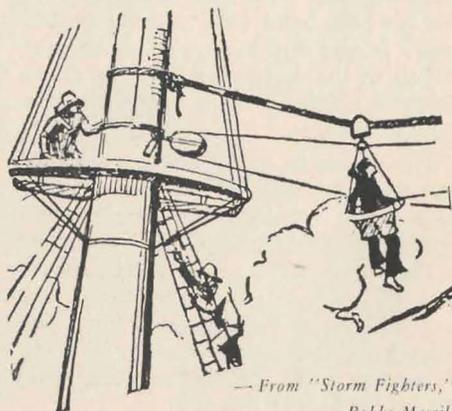
The tanker had already broken her back and only a hinge of plating held her together. Frantically, yet carefully, the Greek sailors hauled on the slender line until a hauser and a pulley threaded with a whip line emerged from the boiling sea. Following the instructions included on a tally board, the hauser was fastened to the creaking foremast, and somewhat below it the pulley was made fast. The Greek sailors acted on desperate faith, for they had no inkling of what these resourceful Americans were going to do next in order to rescue them.

However, common sense was on its tip-toes among the shipwrecked men and when the weird breeches buoy — a life-saver with crazy canvas pants — came jouncing out on the hauser, they knew exactly what to do. There being no women or children aboard, the first to be placed in the breeches buoy was an injured young sailor.

The Greek seamen watched in amazement as their messmate was wafted over the angry combers to safety on shore. However, it took a grueling six hours before all twenty-four men had been rescued from the tanker, and the breeches buoy seemed somewhat less than magical to many of the survivors who took a fearful drubbing in the surf when the ship rolled toward shore and the hauser went slack.

But the miracle was there: out of the cannon's mouth, not death, but life, as the slender line was spat sharply into the storm. Government regulations notwithstanding, Captain Katulas was successful in his petition for a piece of that miraculous line by which he and his men had been snatched from certain death.

The breeches buoy has met thousands of sailors in its time, most of them in dramatic circumstances similar to the situation of the Greek sailors. Although three-quarters of a century has passed since the breeches buoy was adopted by

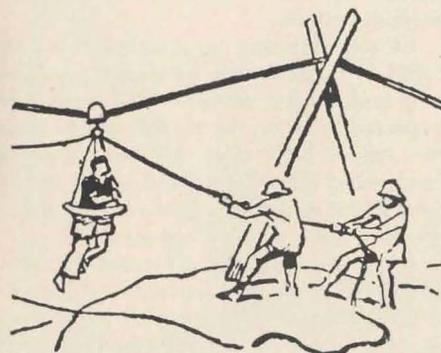


— From "Storm Fighters,"  
Bobbs-Merrill

the United States Life Saving Service, the life preserver with the crazy canvas pants is still standard equipment at all Coast Guard stations. Having the beautiful simplicity characteristic of all ingenious devices, the breeches buoy and its associated gear have undergone remarkably few changes over the years.

Today's Lyle gun closely resembles its ancestors. It is a small brass cannon weighing 185 pounds on its carriage and having a 2½-inch bore. The 19-pound projectile fits nose first into the barrel, with an eyebolt at the base to which the wetted shot line is tied. When fired, the projectile is reversed into nose-first flight by the drag of the line. Under the adverse conditions that usually prevail at the wreck site, the range will seldom exceed 400 yards, which is also about the maximum distance that a taut hauser can be stretched over the surf for the breeches buoy to slide on. Throwing a projectile that is ten per cent of its own weight, the cannon "kicks" ferociously. A practice charge of 1¼ ounces of black powder sends it back six feet. A 4-ounce charge knocks the cannon end over end, and with the 8-ounce maximum charge you might have to go hunting for it, according to one observer. For shorter throws the Coast Guard has also adopted a .30 caliber rifle fired from the shoulder.

Once the shot line, made of either braided linen or flax, has been laid across the wreck, the whip line is bent on for the crew to pull out through the surf along with the pulley and tally board explain-



ing in French and English what must be done. When the pulley, with the whip line already threaded through it, is made fast to a mast the hauser can be bent on and pulled out to the wreck. On the shore side the hauser supporting the breeches buoy is passed over a tripod and drawn taut to a sand anchor. The hauser must clear the waves, but if all the slack is taken from the line it will be parted by the rolling of the vessel.

From here on the breeches buoy operation is mainly a matter of muscle, an ordeal of labor for the Coast Guardsmen who must heave away for hours, first on the weather whip drawing the empty breeches buoy out to the ship and then on the lee whip pulling it back with a swaying human cargo. Naturally, from the hauser's midpoint the going is all uphill. It usually takes fifteen or twenty minutes for each man brought ashore.

When the last man has left the vessel how does the Coast Guard get its hauser back? Well, the answer to that one was thought up long ago: by means of a hauser cutter, a simple device that chomps the hemp fiber close to the mast after having been pulled into position by the whip line. The pulley and a few feet of Government rope circling the mast are all that is left on the wreck, and when the weather clears, the block, too, is usually recovered.

While most breeches buoy rescues have been carried out on rather desolate and unpopulated sections of beach, crowds have a way of collecting, owing to the length of time the rescue operation takes. In 1914 when the three-masted lumber schooner *Charles K. Buckley* beached off Long Branch, New Jersey, the meddling crowd became a serious problem. However, the seven crewmen who lost their lives in this disaster which spared but one man actually had themselves to blame. No fewer than nine lines were shot across the vessel, but no one had the sense to haul any of them in. The sole survivor said later that the captain had asked, "What does this mean — for us to grab a line and jump off?" While he deliberated a wave carried him to his death.

Martinson, the survivor, finally did grab a line that had fallen right across

his shoulder and leap overboard. When the automobile lights flooding the scene revealed this, the crowd took matters in its own hands by grabbing the line and running inshore with it. Martinson came through the wreckage-strewn surf at terrifying speed. Fortunately, the line did not part and the sailor was not decapitated, so the exultant mob dragged him off to a hospital.

Today's improved navigational aids have made groundings a rare occurrence. Also today's propeller-driven vessels are much less at the mercy of the wind than

were sailing craft. But when such mishaps do occur, the breeches buoy still remains the best bet for a rescue. Helicopters seem to be a better solution until one considers the gales that usually rage at a shipwreck scene. Conditions have often been so bad that cameras could make no record, and flying has been out of the question.

Few sailors who have ridden the breeches buoy through a smashing surf will argue its comfort, but when the chips are down, nothing in the world looks better coming along a hauser than that life preserver with the crazy pants.

## Adopt A Ship



The American President Lines' *Lightning*.

**P**LEASANT Valley School in Gladwin, Michigan is now the foster parent of a ship, the *Lightning*. The townspeople there have already taken a proprietary view towards the new "ward" of their 34-pupil school. They have been flocking to see merchant marine films, and will display a picture of "their" freighter at the next Gladwin County Fair.

The *Lightning* is the first merchant vessel to be spoken for under the rejuvenated Adopt-A-Ship program for American schools. The adopted ship and its school will correspond about once a month and in this sugar-coated fashion young landmen will learn of the vital part played by our merchant fleet in maintaining our economy and our defense while being plied with tales of ocean

perils and ports of call. The informality of such a relationship should also give pupils an insight into life and work aboard a merchantman and some first hand observations of distant places and foreign peoples.

Eleven shipping companies have offered forty passenger liners, cargo ships and tankers for adoption and more are expected to be on the market by the time the school bells ring this fall. Many a landlocked schoolhouse will be the auxiliary home port of a vessel ranging thousands of miles over distant seas.

Inquiries may be addressed to Mrs. Fred N. Hansen, Chairman, Adopt-A-Ship Program, Women's Organization for the American Merchant Marine, Inc., 17 Battery Place, New York 4, New York.

## OLD SALEM HOUSE

Here is New England as in Hawthorne's prime,  
When witchcraft fired the minds of Salem folk.  
This secret stairway, worn by tread of time,  
And heavy batten doors, can still evoke  
The spell of mystery that old wives knew.  
The house is tranquil now in its repose  
And ancient poplars seem as if they, too,  
Relax against intrigue of bygone foes;  
When oldtime hosts sent many a clipper ship  
To ply the seas, and looking towards the bay,  
The ghostly sea gulls seem to rise and dip  
In wake of homing ships: as in the gray  
Of dusk old Salem wives still wait the tread  
Of sailing men come home from Marblehead.

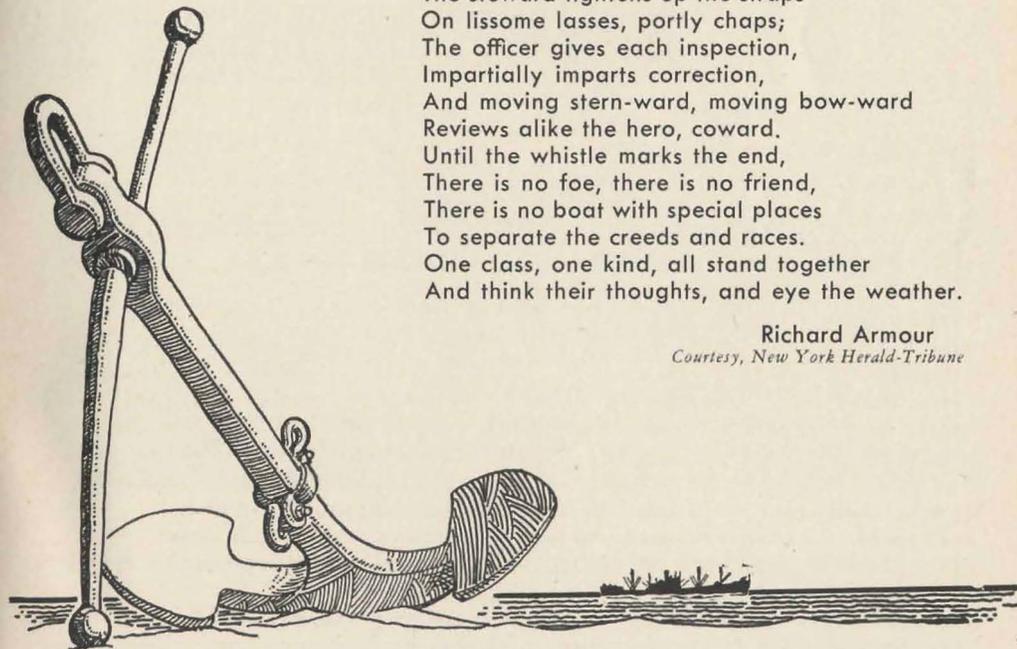
Adelaide Long Lawson

## ATLANTIC CROSSING: BOAT DRILL

Here mingle First Class, Cabin, Tourist,  
Unlettered immigrant and purist,  
The ones with money, those who lack it,  
Each swaddled in his buoyant jacket.  
The steward tightens up the straps  
On lissome lasses, portly chaps;  
The officer gives each inspection,  
Impartially imparts correction,  
And moving stern-ward, moving bow-ward  
Reviews alike the hero, coward.  
Until the whistle marks the end,  
There is no foe, there is no friend,  
There is no boat with special places  
To separate the creeds and races.  
One class, one kind, all stand together  
And think their thoughts, and eye the weather.

Richard Armour

Courtesy, *New York Herald-Tribune*



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CHAPLAIN FRANCIS D. DALEY, *Assistant to the Director*

## LEGACIES TO THE INSTITUTE

You are asked to remember this Institute on 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 suggest 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.