

# The LOOKOUT

JUNE 1958



SANTA MARIA

SEAMEN'S  
CHURCH  
INSTITUTE  
of NEW YORK



**T**HE SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK is a shore center 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 give the Institute its real value for seamen of all nations and all faiths who are away from home in New York.

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

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**THE COVER:** Summertime, and the livin' is easy when the *Santa Maria* is in port. Built as a Coast Guard cutter, the *Santa Maria* now works as a banana boat and plies the same Caribbean waters that her namesake did more than four centuries ago. Photo by Leslie P. Young.

## In the Tradition of the Sea



Gracing the luncheon table at the Institute on International Mariner's Day was Candy Jones Conover, "World Trade Queen." Shown with her, below, left to right, are Franklin E. Vilas, president of the Institute, Dr. Raymond S. Hall, director of the Institute, Alexander O. Stanley and Arthur E. Baylis of the Board of Trade and Captain Lars Bjotvedt.



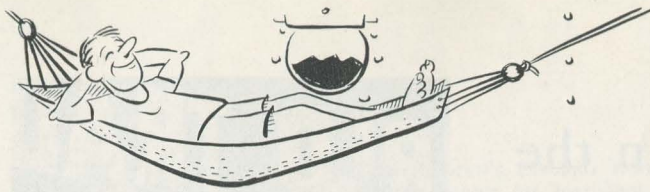
For bravery: Arthur E. Baylis of the Board of Trade presents the "Tradition of the Sea" award to Captain Lars Bjotvedt at ceremonies held at 25 South Street.

**F**OR his prompt action in rescuing five survivors of the stricken German sail training ship *Pamir*, Captain Lars Bjotvedt of the Isbrandtsen cargo vessel *S. S. Saxon* has received the third annual "Tradition of the Sea" award of the New York Board of Trade. The award was presented May 23 at a luncheon held at the Seamen's Church Institute of New York in honor of International Mariner's Day, an event of World Trade Week.

On September 23, 1957 the *Pamir* went down about 600 miles southwest of the Azores, in the violent winds of Hurricane Carrie. Responding to a distress signal from the sinking ship, Captain Bjotvedt spotted what looked like a stick bobbing on a heavy sea about a mile and a half away. Approaching the object, he saw

that the stick was the mast of the only surviving boat, with five men aboard. The survivors were rescued and later transferred to the Navy transport *Geiger* for medical care and put ashore at Casablanca. Only six men — five of them rescued by the *Saxon* — survived the disaster.

Sharing the spotlight at the luncheon, which was held in the Institute's new International Seamen's Club was Candy Jones Conover, the 1958 World Trade Queen. Miss Conover received gifts from the consuls of 24 foreign countries, gifts symbolizing world trade and the friendship of nations. International Mariner's Day, held in cooperation with the New York World Trade Week Committee, was sponsored by the Institute and the New York Board of Trade.



There were those who liked the hammock . . .

## The Hammock — Pro and Gone

IN England, a land where tradition dies hard, a 400-year-old era is coming to an end. A few months ago a bulletin from the Royal Navy announced that "The hammock — a traditional feature of life in ships of the Royal Navy since 1597 — is being discarded and will in time disappear from all warships." The action was taken, the official announcement said, in the interests of "habitability," a term which was not defined any further but which, like our word "togetherness," no doubt has all sorts of comfy associations and will make warship living ever so much more pleasant.

In British shipping circles the reaction was mixed and, it must be confessed, mild. London's *Journal of Commerce* let loose with an "Eheu fugaces" and went on to point out that Royal Navy men had repeatedly testified that once they had mastered the initial feat of getting into their hammocks and staying there, they had never slept better. Glasgow's *Nautical Journal* bemoaned the sad generations to come when British moppets would hear the evergreen song, "Drake he's in his hammock till the great Armadas come . . ." and have to be told what the thing was that Drake was sleeping in. "The news," they wrote, "is nevertheless sad . . . 'Jolly Jack' armed with his 'bag n' ammock' carried his comfortable little world around with him. In a trooper, man of war, shore billet, tent, hut or railway truck, a sailor slung his hammock and felt immediately at home." On this side of the Atlantic, a member of the British consulate in New York reported that as far as she knew, all Jacks were not quite so Jolly. Her brother had been a Royal Navy trainee at HMS Chatham during the war and had once complained bitterly to his training officer

about the rigors of hammock life. He was blasted with what must be the classic Chief Petty Officer's retort on that subject: "Hammocks were good enough for Lord Nelson, and they're good enough for the likes o' you."

Although the relationship between sailors and hammocks is popularly assumed to be about as old as that between the chicken and the egg, there are no such hoary ties. Until fairly recent times (historically speaking), sailors had been accustomed to sleeping anywhere they could lie down and on just about anything that would soften up the deck a bit. One writer reports that in the 1500's, sailors on English fishing vessels thought nothing of curling up on a load of fish and drifting off to dream of sweeter things. Then along came none other than Christopher Columbus, to whose already impressive list of accomplishments must now be added the fact that he introduced the hammock to European ships. Columbus and his men found that the natives of the West Indies had been using nets of cotton, which they called *hamacs*, as beds for a long time (so had the natives of Brazil, who made their nets from the bark of the *hamack* tree) but Columbus didn't know about them. At any rate, he brought hammocks back to Europe and they began to catch on, slowly it seems, for the Royal Navy did not declare them official until 1597, when it authorized payment for 300 bolts of canvas to make "hanging cabbons or beddes . . . for the better preservation of their (the seamen's) health."

Hammocks were the perfect answer to the problem of small ships and large crews. They could be hung up anywhere, often among the cannons between the decks of the vessel. They could be removed

during the daytime and their space utilized for other purposes. They were hygienic. They were cool in summer and not too cold in winter. In emergencies, they could be used to plug a hull damaged by gunfire or collision. In short, they were a huge success.

The American Navy found hammocks useful too, as did other European navies. At the time of the American Revolution, a distinguishing feature of a man-of-war was the netting fitted on top of her rails for the stowage of hammocks. When they were not serving as beds they doubled in brass as a good bulwark to stop the small shot from the enemy's guns. In 1873, the Navy was considering using the versatile hammock, this time filled with cork, as a life-preserver.

Hammocks were also used on merchant ships, of all countries, for many years. On some of the sailing ships they gave way to "better" sleeping quarters, consisting of a board and a mattress known politely, in the language of the fo'c's'le, as a "donkey's breakfast." Donkeys would have adored these straw masterpieces, but sailors felt a bit less affectionate about them. They had the persistent habit of settling fore and aft, so that a man almost always found most of himself sleeping on the bare boards. If a sailor couldn't afford the price of a mattress, and some couldn't, he just slept on the boards, and that was that.

In the course of the years progress limped slowly on, and today on merchant ships both hammocks and straw mattresses have given way to comfortable beds with good mattresses of the beauty-sleep variety. The sailor of today does not seem to miss the humble hammock at all. "Why they went out with high-button shoes," an American seaman at the Seamen's Church Institute said indignantly. "When I was in the Navy during the war they issued them alright, but we used them to stow our gear — not to sleep in." "Hammocks

died with the sailing ships," said a man who used to go to sea on British vessels. "Once they got engines and some space they didn't need those blasted things anymore!" However, a Norwegian captain at the Institute confessed that he found the hammocks of yore so delightful that he has made one — out of canvas and ropes, traditional sailor-style — to sling up in his own house.

Who uses hammocks today, now that their last fortress under the White Ensign is gone? Well, on foreign training ships where boys cross the oceans under sail, bedding reverts back a century too, and hammocks still hold forth. On regular merchant ships, sailors sometimes sleep in hammocks when they are voyaging through tropical waters, slinging them up on deck on hot nights to enjoy the sea breezes. And, of course, people with gardens use them to laze away a summer afternoon in. In South America, the home of the hammock, they are still going strong. In many villages in Brazil and Colombia, the kind of hammocks a man has in his home (single or double bed style) is a mark of class distinction. The Cearense people of northern Brazil are especially devoted to them. They hang hammock hooks in every room of their houses and always prefer to sleep in hammocks, no matter how fine their home or beds. In the interior, "hotel rooms" consist of four walls and a pair of hooks; the traveler has, of course, brought his own hammock. In good weather, everyone sits under the trees swinging in his hammock. And as one writer sagely puts it, "The hammock may explain why the northern Brazilian and notably the Cearense seldom speaks unless he has something to say. Silences that become so painful in less enlightened regions, where people sit upright gazing at one another, among Cearense are filled with a gentle, meditative swaying."

Which is as good a reason as any for hammocks.

— FAYE HAMMEL



. . . and those who didn't.

There was music and dancing, soft drinks and soft lights to set the scene for the opening party at the Institute's new International Seamen's Club. Dances and entertainments will be held regularly in the new room.



For Men of the Seven Seas . . .

## A New Club at 25 South Street

THE international code flags "KQF" atop the Seamen's Church Institute of New York have been unfurling their welcome sign with renewed purpose since the opening last month of the Institute's new International Seamen's Club, at 25 South Street.

Located on the second floor at the Institute, the new recreational facility consisting of a "cafe" and an adjoining lounge is designed to serve American merchant seamen and the seamen of more than 40 other nations whose ships come to New York each year.

At the opening party, over 100 seamen and about 50 young women from church groups and organizations danced to the music of the three-piece Teehan Band. Seamen from five British and Scandinavian ships came to the Institute by special bus from the isolated Port Newark area, joining American seamen at the clubroom. All hands gave the new club a hearty endorse-

ment. One sailor said, "I've been to seamen's places all around the world and this is the finest I've ever seen."

Earlier, at a preview showing for more than 100 guests from the marine industry and foreign consulates, Dr. Raymond S. Hall, director of the Institute, said that in planning the club an "all-out" effort had been made to create "the most attractive place in New York for a sailor to enjoy a pleasant and inexpensive evening away from his ship."

Dr. Hall said, "We want this club to serve in a truly international way and we are going to make sure that it does so by arranging transportation to foreign crews from the hard-to-reach areas where their ships often dock. It may sound strange," he said, "that a sailor who spends most of his life traveling all over the globe should be afraid of getting lost in New York City, but that is the simple truth. Our ship visitors have found that the foreign sailor

often expresses an interest in seeing various things in New York, but his ship is usually in port only a short time and he doesn't get many hours ashore. Rather than take a chance on getting tangled up on the subway and missing his ship, he usually stays aboard."

Since the opening of the new clubroom, the Institute has established a bus service between Port Newark and 25 South Street. Seamen "marooned" in the Port Newark area, where an increasing number of ships are docking, have demonstrated a readiness to "chip in" to help meet the cost of the service.

At the new International Seamen's Club, staff members and volunteers are serving as hostesses. Regarding the language problem, Dr. Hall said, "This is a new club, but the seamen of other nations are not new to us. While we hope to have some volunteer hostesses from different national groups in New York, we aren't concerned about a language barrier. We find that most sailors can talk to one another — and certainly men and women can. We are not trying for 'old home week,' serving Swedish meatballs to the Swedes and sauerkraut to the Germans. Rather than give them something they can get at home, we'd like to see them go back to their ships with the kind of pleasant memory that

comes of discovering friends among strangers."

The club's lounge will be open daily from 2 to 11 P.M. The adjoining "cafe" is open from 4 to 11 P. M. In the "cafe", tables for four surround a center area for dancing and special entertainments. Sandwiches, cake, ice cream and beverages are on sale at a lunch counter.

A nautical feature of the "cafe" are its wall lamps — ship's running lights hung from dolphin brackets. This motif will be heightened later by the addition of wall drawings based on a sheaf of tattoo patterns which a sailor left with the Institute many years ago. When these are completed, the "cafe" will be called the "Tattoo Room."

The bright blue and persimmon red of the "cafe's" checkered tablecloth are repeated in the chairs, lampshades and drapes of the lounge and also in the prints by Dufy, Braque, Utrillo and others. On one wall of the lounge is a large mural done by the seamen themselves through the Institute's Artists and Writers Club.

The walls of the two rooms are done in two shades of grey, warm enough in tone to harmonize with the original terra cotta flooring used in the club throughout much of the Institute building.

Hi-fi brings music to both rooms.

A quiet corner of the lounge of the International Seamen's Club, where seamen can read, chat, play cards, or just rest. On the wall is a mural done by members of the Artists and Writers Club.



# The World of Ships

## Joe Sanchez

Braulio Sanchez, 63, barber to the merchant seamen of all nations at the Seamen's Church Institute, died June 1st after a short illness.

"Joe," as he was known by everyone, had seen the sideburns of thousands of his seafaring friends turn from black to grey and then to white, like his own wavy hair, in the 35 years he was a barber at 25 South Street. A barber stands close to his customers, and after 35 years, he stands close in another way, in the way open to people who have had the chance to talk on many occasions of many things.

Joe was a good barber and a good neighbor to men of the sea. As they come ashore in these next months, his many friends will be saddened by the news of his passing.

## BUILDING FOREIGN AID

A measure to lure foreign shipbuilding orders into American yards is now before Congress. Proposed by Senator John M. Butler of Maryland, the unusual piece of legislation would authorize the Maritime Administration to guarantee mortgages on ships built in this country that will eventually fly a foreign flag. Under the existing law, such aid is available to ships constructed for United States registry only.

Terming the plan a "beneficial type of foreign aid," Daniel D. Strohmeier of the shipbuilding division of Bethlehem Steel has stated that the project would create employment in American yards and, by stretching the overhead over a wide range of work, lower the cost of construction of our own ships. If the foreign government failed on its mortgage payments, the United States would have to make good on the unpaid portion of the mortgage — and then, presumably, seize the mortgaged ship. "This is the worst thing that could

happen — we would then have another modern ship in our fleet," said Mr. Strohmeier.

The new law would probably attract various types of bulk carriers, he said.

## UP FROM THE PAST

Workmen digging the foundations for a modern skyscraper on a busy Manhattan street have found the bones of an ancient ship that has been sleeping beneath the pavement for about 300 years.

The find was made at 125 Maiden Lane near Water Street in Downtown Manhattan, an area that was at the water's edge before the American Revolution. They uncovered parts of the keel and skeleton of a ship with hand-made wooden tree-nails, known as trunnels, joining the ribs to the keel. This type of construction was popular in the late 1600's.

Marine historians and antiquarians believe the ship extends under the ground for 60 feet, but further excavation work is too costly. Already, steel corner columns have been driven through the prow of the old ship for the foundation of the new office building.

## REAL JUNK

Pleasure boaters in the New York area who see full-rigged Chinese junks heading their way are hereby warned that this opium dream is for real. Direct from Hong Kong, the sturdy, shallow-draft junk is the last word in Long Island boating circles and is available to yachtsmen with a bent for the exotic at the ordinary price of \$2,000 to \$5,000.

Complete with bamboo rainhats, opium lamps, back-scratchers, and idols to ward off evil spirits, the boats are almost exact replicas — apart from slight cabin changes and spaces for outboard motors — of the

junks that sail the South China seas. A rolled silk certificate of the Cathay junk builder Fran Moon Lum testifies that the junks have been built to rigid specifications. Excellent rough weather boats, Chinese junks have been used for centuries in the typhoon-ridden China seas.

## HARBOR PIPES

Ships can carry just about anything these days, so why shouldn't they come equipped with their own harbors? An English inventor who thinks along these lines has just developed a portable "harbor" without complicated equipment and sea walls, reports the London Daily Mail.

The "harbor," if fact, is as neat a gadget as you could imagine. It is simply a perforated pipe which, when placed on the sea bed, emits bubbles of compressed air that break the wave cycle and smooth the surface of the sea.

If it works as well as Alec Laurie, the inventor, says it does, the harbor in a pipe would remove a major problem of seaborne troop landings and beachhead supply. War Office officials are watching with interest, the newspaper said.

## ME, TOO

The Mississippi River, one of the nation's busiest commercial waterways, may regain some of its old status when the St. Lawrence Seaway is opened next year.

According to *The Forwarder*, St. Louis river boat men are thinking about double tonnage on the Mississippi when the Seaway opens. With ocean freighters coming to Chicago, the St. Louis people hope to bring their share of the new trade through the Illinois River into the Mississippi. "The Seaway will have tremendous impact on the Mississippi Valley. We're planning big things," said one barge operator.

## STAND BY

A plea for ship's radio operators to stay on the job once they've sent out a distress signal has been made by an admiral who's tired of chasing ships in trouble in the dark.

Vice Admiral John M. Will, commander of the Military Sea Transportation Service says it often happens that a ship requests some kind of emergency aid from an MSTS vessel and then closes its radio shack for the night, leaving the would-be rescuer playing blindman's buff — usually going farther away from the ship it's looking for. MSTS vessels answered more than 100 emergency requests at sea, last year, said Admiral Will, many of which were hindered by this practice.

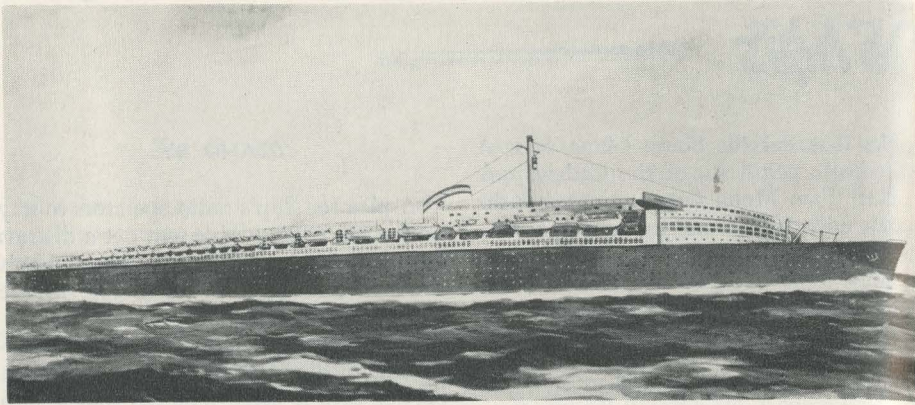
He says he favors a maritime requirement that would make it mandatory for a ship asking for aid of any kind to man its radio continuously.

## COUNCIL MEETS

Delegates from 24 member agencies of the National Council of Seamen's Agencies, including the Seamen's Church Institute of New York, met last month in New Orleans for a conference on "The Role of Seamen's Agencies in the Next Ten Years." Mr. Carl McDowell of New York, executive vice-president of the American Institute of Marine Underwriters, was re-elected president.

Continued in office as vice-presidents for the various districts of the council were Franklin E. Vilas, president of the Institute, East Coast; Hugh Gallagher, West Coast; Scott Osgood, Great Lakes; Emile Dieth, Gulf Coast, and the Rev. William McLean, Canada.

Also re-elected were Clarence G. Michalis, treasurer, Dr. James C. Healey, assistant treasurer, and Orian C. Frey, executive secretary.



Artist's conception of H. B. Cantor's superliners — will they ever get off the drawing board?

## Dreamboat Doldrums

**H**OTEL man Hiram B. Cantor and his projected cafeteria ships are running into some rough weather. Cantor's proposal to build two gigantic superliners that would take 6,000 passengers at a time to Europe for \$50.00 one way (Lookout, October 1956) has met with a tremendous response from would-be travelers, but with so little official backing that he may have to take his project to the other side of the ocean.

While the United States Government, from which he seeks a construction subsidy of \$130,000,000 (almost half the cost of building the two 90,000-ton, 1150-foot superliners) is playing it coy with Cantor, foreign shipping interests are attempting to lure the business of building the ships and the travel bonanza they may create over to their side of the pond. Cornelius Verolme of the Verolme United Shipyards in the Netherlands recently completed a series of conferences with Cantor and is hopeful that his outfit will get the contract to build the liners. He has promised to seek out financial aid from the Dutch government. Cantor is listening to the foreign offers, but he's more interested in getting backing from his own country. Although he's had little success in getting the Federal Maritime Board to support him, Cantor is keeping his fingers

crossed about a bill that's now before Congress which would authorize him to build the liners. "I'm an American," says Cantor, "and I want to build those ships over here. We may have to get a subsidy from a foreign government or we may have to finance privately by a consortium of European insurance companies. But I'm going to try my darndest to build them here and put them under the American flag."

Cantor pointed out that he is seeking a construction subsidy only, not the construction and operation subsidies that most American flag vessels need. "These ships will make enough money to pay their own way," he said. He added that if the ships are forced to go foreign, the American economy would lose out on a potential of over 20,000 jobs in shipbuilding and related industries, 2,700 permanent berths for merchant seamen and millions of dollars in tax earnings. Construction of the ships has been recommended by Clarence B. Randall, Special Assistant to the President, in a report on international tourist travel. In wartime, the vessels could be quickly converted into aircraft carriers or troopships. "Right now is when they can really do a job," says Cantor. "What's more important for peace than building a low-cost bridge across the Atlantic?"

At least one American group agrees

with Cantor completely. They're the planners of the Port of Boston, anxious to make the hub the western terminus for Cantor's ferry service. "Boston is an ideal location for us," said Cantor. "It has the largest passenger pier in the world — the \$15,000,000 Commonwealth Pier — a beautiful deep channel, a harbor that is virtually unused and proximity to one of the country's largest airports and rail centers. Besides," he added, "it's 174 miles closer to Europe than New York, which isn't interested in the project."

Cantor says his ships will "outshine anything now afloat for beauty; they will be like two floating Fontainbleaus. The decor will be heavenly." All rooms will be equipped with twin beds, private baths, showers and air-conditioning. Swimming pools, skating rinks, concert halls and theatres will provide diversion on the four-day crossing, not to mention an enormous shopping center, a veritable floating free port. Economy will come from the lack of fancy frills and special services and from taking meals on a pay-as-you-go basis. Although \$50.00 is the minimum fare, there will be 1,000 berths available at this price; outside, upper-deck cabins

### A TAX REMINDER

Remember that *actual* cost of gifts to a philanthropy is net cost after taxes. The Government is a silent partner in all such contributions. It shares the cost. And the higher your tax bracket, the bigger share the Government will bear.

ALL CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK ARE TAX EXEMPT.

would go up to about \$125.00. (Minimum tourist-class fares to Europe on most major shipping lines are about \$190.00).

Calling the shipping industry a "gold-braided industry that has not gone ahead with the times," Cantor aims his pitch at "the little fellow." "Most wage-earners can't even afford to go to Europe in tourist class," he says, "and what they get there is nothing great. Tourist cabins don't even have what any self-respecting motel has — a private bath and shower in every room. That's what we intend to give our passengers. That's the American way."

### IMPROVING THE PORT:

An architect's drawing shows the \$1,000,000 combined marina, seaplane and helicopter landing and waterfront service station and parking garage which will be built by New York City's Department of Marine and Aviation on the East River and 23rd Street. Construction of the facilities, to be leased to the Gulf Oil Corporation, will begin in September.





Menhaden fishermen bring in the purse boats.

## Last of the Chanteys

WHEN Walt Whitman heard America singing a century ago, the music of many trades was a resounding chorus throughout the land. Today, the roar of machinery has dinned out the personal song of the laborer, and perhaps nowhere has the silence been louder than on board ship, where the age of the lusty sea chantey died with the "flat hiss of the steam engine." However, a group of men who make their living from the sea today still sing as they work, and their songs, never before brought ashore, are about to be recorded for posterity.

These men are the fishermen of the menhaden fleet. In bringing home 2,000,000,000 pounds a year (the nation's largest single catch) of the small, surface-schooling fish known collectively as menhaden but regionally by such names as porgy or bonyfish or mossbunker, they have evolved a sea chantey tradition of their own. With the introduction of hauling machinery on their boats, that tradition, too, is in danger of dying out. Before the last note is sounded, private collectors, like Mr. James Wharton who

gathered the texts for the songs reprinted here from the New York Times Magazine, and the Library of Congress are making an effort to get down on paper and tape what well may be the last of the chanteys in this country.

Menhaden fishing is carried on in almost all of the eastern and Gulf coastal states, from Maine around to Texas, with most of the 300-vessel fleet working out of New Jersey, Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina and Louisiana. The men, 20 to 30 in a crew, go out in slim, speedy Diesels, each ranging from 30 tons upwards. Each boat has two distinguishing features — an enormous hold amidships capable of receiving up to 700 tons of fish, and a gigantic crow's nest about 70 feet above the deck — a remnant of the days before planes did most of the spotting of schools of fish. When a school is sighted, the ship launches three small boats, nets are spread over the water and the fish are drawn up and dumped into the cavernous maw of the mother ship. As the men strain to draw in, or purse, the nets, a work song binds their labors into a common rhythm:

*I would go home —  
Ain't got no ready-made money.  
Lord, turn my money green,  
Lordy, Lord, Lord,  
Turn it green.*

When the haul is good, the men have particular reason for rejoicing, because they are paid on a share-of-the-catch basis. Even those who almost never sing join in when a great school of fish is trapped:

*Ol' red rooster  
Don't crow like he uster.  
Done got old,  
Lord, Lord,  
Done got old.*

And here is another song for jubilant occasions:

*Three white horses side by side,  
One little horse I'm goin' to ride —  
Oughta been there ten thousand years  
Drinkin' of the wine,  
Wine, wine,  
Drinkin' of the wine.*

When a haul is poor, nobody strains his vocal chords.

Although menhaden fishing is generally a profitable way of making a living, there are such things as periods of poor catches. Then the share-paid crew may get restless, and the captain's big problem is getting them to stay. A holdback system penalizes any man who quits before the end of the season. It evoked songs like:

*Oh Cap'n don't you know,  
Oh Lordy,  
Crew goin' to leave you,  
Goin' next pay day,*

*Oh Lordy, Lord, Lord  
Next pay day.*

Despite the threats, few of the men leave. They keep coming back until they are old men, for in one good menhaden season, they can sometimes make enough money for the whole year. Theirs is fair weather work and they have little labor to perform except when fish are actually sighted. The menhaden fisherman has one of the most pleasant of all fisherman's jobs, and he knows it.

Folk-music authorities do not know how menhaden chanteys originated, but they believe they are improvisations. Menhaden fishing probably got started in New England, where the Indians taught the early settlers how to grind up the bony fish into rich fertilizer. It then spread to southern ports where menhaden were more plentiful, and Negro crews were hired to follow the migrating schools of fish. The Negro influence on the music is strong. There is practically no rhyme to the songs, but they are buoyant and humorous. These are not songs of hard, grinding toil on the stormy ocean; rather they reflect blue skies, good winds and the promise of riches on the surface of the sea. No wonder the menhaden fisherman sings:

*Ol' big, black spider,  
Oh Lordy,  
Goin' round bitin' everybody,  
But he didn't bite me,  
Oh Lordy, Lord, Lord  
Didn't bite me.*



"As the men strain to draw in, or purse, the nets, a work song binds their labors into a common rhythm."



## Book Watch

Although Joseph Conrad's stories were autobiographical enough for him to call them "confessions," he had an acute sense of personal privacy. To a writer who had once planned to reveal too much of his private life in an article, Conrad wrote: "Didn't it ever occur to you . . . that I knew what I was doing in leaving the facts of my life and even of my tales in the background? Explicitness, my dear fellow, is fatal to the glamour of all artistic work, robbing it of all suggestiveness, destroying all illusion." Although Conrad might not have appreciated the slew of literary detectives who are now probing the facts of that life, the reader of Conrad cannot but be grateful for works like Jerry Allen's *The Thunder and The Sunshine*, G. P. Putnam's, \$4.50. In her biography of the "paradoxical, nattily dressed seaman who sought the violent winds," Miss Allen manages to illuminate without intruding, holding a candle in some of the dimmest corners of Conrad's past.

Although the definitive biography of Conrad has been done by his friend and translator Gérard Jean-Aubry, Miss Allen's book is a worthwhile addition to Conrad scholarship, filling in the fine details here and there, throwing various aspects of the life into new perspective. Her central contribution is the identification, for the first time, of the mysterious "Rita" of *The Arrow of Gold*, Conrad's "woman of all time." In telling the real life story of this romance of Conrad's youth over which he fought a duel and from which he parted, in sorrow, to become a wanderer of the seas, Miss Allen suggests some of the reasons for Conrad's "literary obsession with remorse," for his continual reprobating

of "ideals lost in crisis, of loyalties betrayed." In the turbulent months of his love for "Rita," says Miss Allen, may perhaps lie the seeds of the "Conrad mystery."

Miss Allen, as she proved before in *The Adventures of Mark Twain*, is a splendid biographer. She gives a vivid, journalistic account of the political and social milieu that nourished Conrad and yet sees clearly enough into the central core of his work to be able to throw some light on the incredible process by which the common events of everyday life are transmuted, in the crucible of genius, into works of art.

A very different approach to Conrad is to be found in Thomas Moser's *Joseph Conrad, Achievement and Decline*, Harvard University Press, \$4.50. Side-stepping biographical data, Mr. Moser concentrates on a textual analysis of the works in an attempt to uncover the reasons for the marked decline, in complexity and depth, of Conrad's later novels. Mr. Moser suggests a number of causes, among them an uneasy attitude to "the uncongenial subject" — love, to explain this anti-climax of a brilliant literary career. His findings are given in an attempt to separate the gold from the glitter of Conrad's enormous literary output and to arrive at a more just evaluation of his creative strengths and weaknesses. Mr. Moser teaches at Stanford University.

As an aid to present and future Conrad scholars, Kenneth A. Lohf and Eugene P. Sheehy have compiled an enumerative Conrad bibliography, the first of its kind, *Joseph Conrad at Mid-century, Editions and Studies, 1895-1955*, University of Minnesota Press, \$5.00.

## TWO VIEWS OF ONE SITE

### Departure New York City

You are cold concrete  
steel and steal

Rushing people  
autos buses taxis trains

Mashing screeching gnashing noises

Poisonous air dirt and dust  
unto dust get away  
you must

### Arrival Island of Manhattan

Rising from the waters  
aiming for the skies  
you see the greatest  
ever built by man  
the  
Gothic of Manhattan . . .

Hundreds of steeples  
millions of peoples  
aspiring  
approaching  
intermingling with  
the

Heavens.

— Herbert Levine, *Engine Yeoman*

