

# The LOOKOUT



**Funds are badly needed to meet Current Bills for Work on the New Annex Building**

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

## The LOOKOUT

PUBLISHED MONTHLY  
by the  
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INSTITUTE of NEW YORK

at  
25 SOUTH ST., NEW YORK, N. Y.  
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*Subscription Rates*  
One Dollar Annually, Postpaid  
Single Copies, Ten Cents

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*Entered as second class  
matter July 8, 1925, at New  
York, N. Y., under the act  
of March 3, 1879.*

## *When Winter Comes to an Old Sea Captain*

"Bitter and broken by the sea,  
Till there's nothing left but a yarn  
or two  
Of the strength and pride that shipped  
with you  
Out of fifty babbling ports:  
Cast up here on the harbor sand,  
With a land-locked job and a woman  
to sew—  
You who passed Fuega's land  
With your topmast lost in crowding  
snow!  
Derelict, teaching the city-bred  
The trick of ropes and the way of  
sails—  
You who heard the silken bales  
At Bombay thudding down the hatch!  
Skipper now of a summer toy,  
Warning girls when the North-east  
rains—  
You who cleared for Java Head,  
Hoshawara in your veins!"

Someone clipped this poem by Scudder Middleton from the Elk's Magazine and mailed it to the Institute.

It is tragic, of course, but the tragedy of a "skipper now of a summer toy" has its mitigations. At least the old Captain is still active and sailing the seas even though in a reduced capacity. The keenest tragedies are those

where the old seafarers have to "swallow the anchor" and end their days far from the swish of the treacherous sea they used to wrestle with and conquer.

When an old-timer reaches the stage where he can no longer "ship out" we try to get him a shore berth where he can sniff salt water. Sometimes we can give him employment at the Institute which affords him an opportunity to keep in touch with his former ship-mates; but we often wonder what goes on in the stout old heart of such a pensioner when he sees our active young sailormen come and go from their freighters.

Captain Ed is one of our shore wards who depends upon the Institute seamen and staff for all his companionship, but who, with characteristic independence, got his own job. He is night watchman on an old hulk that has been tied up alongside a rickety dock



on the East River awaiting the time when someone will finance the rebuilding of the superstructure that was swept away in a wreck. The hull extends out beyond the dock, an easy mark for careless river craft, especially on a foggy night.

Captain Ed's job is to watch out and prevent such collision; or in case one occurs to be able to report the facts to the insurance company.

"There are hit-and-run drivers on the river as well as on wheels," he explained, "and if they crashed into me, they would most likely beat it, if they could, without waiting to face the music. But I don't look for trouble. I sit back comfortable and trust in the Lord and my red lantern."

So, Captain Ed, who has manoeuvred ships around "Cape Stiff," now "sits comfortable" night after night with a well seasoned pipe and a sleek black cat whom he calls the Bosun, who rubs around his ankles and shares his midnight supper.

What novels and what movies might be made from his thoughts on a starry night. But he is not a story teller. He smiles faintly when anyone suggests that he

must have had some hair-raising experiences in his time; but willing though he is, he cannot talk about them. He doesn't know how. It is like trying to tune in on a radio program when the battery is dead. Captain Ed would be an exasperating witness for a cross-examining lawyer at a trial!

However, an insatiable curiosity about him plus much persistency, succeeded in prying loose a few facts.

Captain Ed joined the British Navy at the age of sixteen, chiefly because all the other male members of his family were in the Army. He went through a year's training and was then made a midshipman on a cruiser assigned to a Chinese station.

His first adventure was ashore in Shanghai. With seven other youngsters, he went rickshaw riding, leaving it to the coolies to select the points of interest that were to comprise their sight-seeing tour. They soon found themselves in a low dive that masqueraded as a cafe. They were surrounded by natives intent upon picking their pockets, but they succeeded in fighting their way out.

It was Captain Ed's first ex-

perience with the dangers that beset sailors ashore, and he profited by it. He made a point thereafter of keeping away from waterfront "joints"; but later as a ship's master he had plenty of opportunity to know what happens to the unwary sailor ashore. Rarely could he keep his crew intact during even a brief call in port.

He is therefore most enthusiastic about the work of the Institute, appreciating full well what it has done toward cleaning up the Augean stables of New York's waterfront. Recently a radical newspaper published a letter from a disgruntled seaman attacking the Institute. Captain Ed saw red, and inspired by his ire, produced a masterpiece in the way of a letter of denial, which the paper also published. He exposed the untruth of the other fellow's statements and wrote an endorsement of our work which, if published in a more widely read periodical, would constitute the best publicity we have had in years.

That, however, was under pressure of righteous wrath. It took real urging and an entire afternoon to get Captain Ed's

story of his worst shipwreck.

He was a sub-lieutenant on a British naval vessel which was equipped with both sail and steam. The engines went bad, as it had been suspected they might do—hence the auxiliary sails—and they were trying to sail the ship through the Straits of Magellan. She proved too clumsy and unwieldy, and just at the entrance to the Straits she became impaled upon a rock. The crew stayed aboard for several days with the hope that they might float her off. They were quite near the Patagonian shore, and each night they had the thrill of seeing the fires of the cannibals come nearer and nearer.

Finally they took to their life boats and toiled away at the oars for five days with the flying spray freezing on their clothing. Then they came to a little trading station and eventually back to civilization.

Captain Ed did service in South Africa during the Boer War when the crew from his ship spent eleven months ashore fighting. He afterwards came to America, sailed under our flag for ten years, and then fought with the Old Sixty-Ninth in some of the roughest encounters in the



American sector in France.

In an unguarded moment, Captain Ed admitted he would like to go to sea again, but ordinarily he doesn't like to even intimate that he can no longer get a job.

"It's seeing different ports all the time that gets you," is his explanation, "and the sea is different all the time too. You never know what it's going to do next."

And still he says with firmness that were he to live again, he most decidedly would *not* follow the sea. "There's nothing to it. You can't have a family or a garden or a dog or anything and there's nothing to save for."

The old Captain had been talking a lot—for him. It was getting dusk now. He knocked the ashes from his ancient pipe, letting them fall on the deck of the old hulk. Then he tweaked the Bosun's velvet ear and rose to light his red lantern preparatory to "sitting comfortable" for another night.

"Tex," one of the many sailor-boys hailing from the Lone Star State and answering to that

name, has decided to go into seamanship quite seriously. He is only nineteen but he already has three years of service on deck to his credit.

He recently signed off his ship, determined to stay in New York to study for his third mate's license as the first step toward being the world's greatest sea captain later on.

One night he was strolling through the theatre district when pedestrians were suddenly stopped to let a fire engine race by. Out of the common interest which this little event gave the crowd, the friendly Tex hit up an acquaintance with a youth who got him a night job in Child's restaurant. It is no ordinary job—Tex wears white shoes and a crisp white linen suit and gives orders! But the important thing is that he has an income which makes it possible for him to go to school during the day.

When does he sleep? He gets all a healthy youngster of nineteen needs "in between times."

If there were more like our Tex, the Merchant Marine would not have to be concerned with the future of its officer personnel.

## Sodas for Sailors



Photo by Parker

The new soda fountain is the busiest place in the Institute these warm summer days, when over two thousand feet seek the brass rail, and two thousand elbows rest comfortably on the counter while two thousand thirsty sailormen consume wholesome refreshments for less than they would have to pay elsewhere.

The first "coffee-and" is

served by way of breakfast at five-thirty in the morning and from then until eleven at night the fountain attendants are on the jump, for these sailors of ours want what they want *when* they want it. They demand quick service even if they have nothing to do for several days but to wait for their ships to go out.

Another thing they insist upon



is absolute cleanliness, which fits right in with the Institute's own ideas of how to run a soda fountain. The counter is kept immaculate enough to support the elbows without damage to even the costliest sleeve.

A lemon-and-lime for five cents is the most popular item at the fountain. Whether it is because of the traditional use of lime juice at sea or in spite of it, we do not venture to state; but the fact is that five hundred men order it daily, thereby qualifying as "limeys." The fountain manager's guess is that this is just an expression of the confidence (nurtured at sea) in lime juice as a panacea.

Next in popularity comes the plain soda at five cents, with chocolate and strawberry flavors in the lead. Ice cream soda costs ten cents and contains a generous portion of ice cream made by our own machinery with no starch or other adulterants.

The fellow who orders up a banana split at twenty cents is in the spendthrift class; for, while he would have to pay at least a quarter for the same thing elsewhere, the expenditure represents almost double the amount of our average soda fountain

check. In spite of the fact that we have hot luncheonette dishes for twenty-five and thirty cents, the great number of five-cent drinks we sell brings the average check down to eleven cents.

The hot dishes have proved a blessing especially during the period when we have had no restaurant. Even during the acute unemployment situation last spring, very few men had to go hungry when they could get a large bowl of soup with two thick slices of bread for ten cents. Less soup with no bread costs ten cents elsewhere where a profit has to be made.

The five-cent pot of tea is the most popular hot beverage, although for a while it looked as if this innocent brew might be our undoing.

Being Boston-bred, we associate Indians with tea, and having come in contact with the Institute's tea history, we still associate Indians with tea.

It happened thus: In line with the general modernizing which took place when the new fountain was installed, the manager decided to use little tea bags. The advantages are quite obvious—no necessity for straining, no accidental congestion of sink

pipes, etc. But our sailormen didn't see it that way. They "want but little here below but want that little strong," if such be the quotation. In their haste to tackle their tea, they poured it before the little tea bags had time to function, and they were quite convinced that the tea bags were of a less potent character than tea at large. Poor fellows, they are so accustomed to being "gypped" ashore that they are likely to be on the lookout for a short deal.

They were vociferous in their objection to tea bags in spite of all the explaining the manager could do. But like all good things, the tea bags eventually won out. The manager painstakingly conducted tea-bag courses several times daily. He urged the customer to possess his soul in patience ("keep your shirt on" were his exact words) and give the tea bag a chance to brew. He then showed the objectors that they could squeeze two cups of strong tea out of one pot, and if they cared to add more water—free of course—they could manage a third cup, and all for a nickel. The result of this educational campaign is

that tea bags are now the order of the day and everybody is happy.

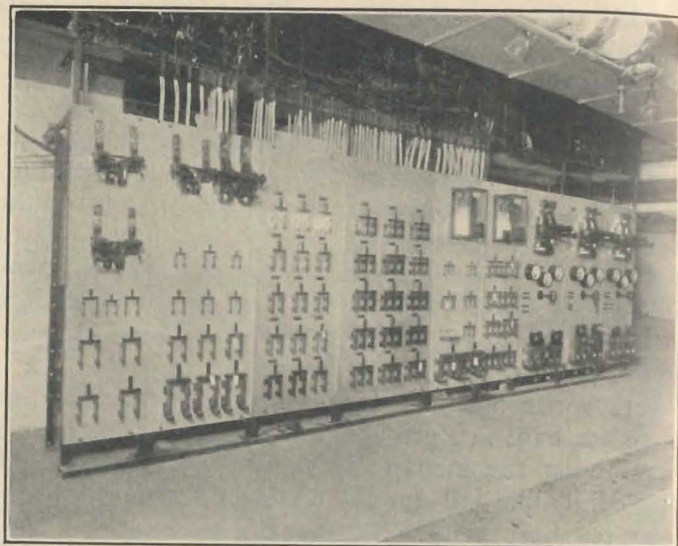
The fountain is decidedly a social success too. Many a sailor brings his ship-mate up for a treat whilst they leisurely discuss atheism or some scientific problem or what-not. And of course this means that while their feet rest on our brass rail they are not patronizing the speak-easies that can be found along the waterfront without too extended a search.

As to the financial aspects of the new fountain, it is holding its own and making ends meet and even lap over a little. Sales are double what they were at the old fountain even though the lodging capacity has not been materially increased. With the completion and opening of the entire annex the new fountain should still further increase its service to seamen and this without being in any way a burden.

One of the Institute "regulars" was discussing a certain lady on our staff.

"She's an awfully good soul," he said enthusiastically, "but she's a tropical old maid."



*Progress on the Annex**Photo by Eddowes*

THE NEW SWITCHBOARD

The New Building is opening up like a flower—petal by petal. Because of our acute need for additional facilities we are pressing various units into service as soon as completed.

We have already reported the opening of the new soda fountain, the Bayliss Entrance Hall, the apprentice room, and the dormitories. The past few weeks have witnessed the inauguration of the new engine room, the baggage room, several officers'

rooms, and the second-floor reading room and lounge.

This last mentioned room is probably of most significance to our sailormen. For many months they have been huddled into temporary quarters, where more frequently than otherwise, there was "standing room only." However, it was the only place on this section of the waterfront where they could come in out of the rain and cold and they were grateful for it.

Now we have a large, airy, sunny room approximately one hundred fifty by sixty feet, where three hundred men may sit and read or swap yarns. And they do! The fact that from the beginning the room has been well filled is a definite evidence of our need for the annex building.

The new engine room, with its three generators of 250, 200 and 150 kilowatts respectively, is the pride of our Chief Engineer, for it has been planned with every consideration for efficiency and facility of operation and it triples the capacity of the old

equipment, which is worn out.

The new baggage room almost doubles the space in the old and it has the advantage of being on one level instead of two as formerly, which of course makes the stored baggage more accessible.

Our greatest need now is for the new cafeteria and restaurant, for which we still require funds. It will cost twenty-five thousand dollars to construct and equip them—not a large proportionate cost compared with the number of men we shall be able to feed daily.

*Bumptious Bill*

The owner of one of the big freight lines running out of New York once in a blue moon takes a few moments out of a busy day for reminiscences. We recently were fortunate enough to happen in upon him while in this mood.

He is known as "Captain," indicating that somewhere in his eventful career he sailed the seven seas as part of the preparation for the eminent position he has now attained in the ship-

ping world. Congress listens and heeds when he expresses an opinion on any phase of our merchant marine, so naturally we are all ears when the Captain summons us to his office. He is a kindly soul, interested in the sailors who man his ships as well as in the profits they bring him—which may not be said of all ship owners.

"We're out for a better type of seaman these days," he said, "and we're getting them. On



the whole I think they're better than in the old sailing days. Sheer brawn counted for a good deal then, and iron discipline was necessary. Sometimes good rough treatment was good for a fellow, too."

The Captain smiled reminiscently.

"I can't help thinking about Bumptious Bill," he went on. "I saw Bill get some good strenuous handling—he deserved it, mind you, but it made a man of him.

"It was back in the early eighties and we were bound for California 'round Cape Horn. There was a college boy on board, a decent sort of chap who did his share, but like everybody else he had to learn. Somehow Bumptious Bill couldn't see this Edwards at all. As a matter of fact, I guess it was a case of jealousy, for somewhere in his rough-neck makeup Bumptious Bill evidently had a hankering for knowledge and some of the other good things in life. But it didn't show on the surface. He was as hard-boiled a customer as you ever saw.

"Finally he got put on the same watch with Edwards and he balked—a little mutiny all his

own. He wasn't going to work with this particular brand of guy—I couldn't tell you the exact language. He even defied the Old Man, which doesn't get you anywhere at sea.

"It got Bumptious Bill into the lazarette, though, way down in the hold. It took most of the crew to grapple with him and put him there at that.

"The Old Man told him when he was ready to work he could send him word, but Bill wasn't the giving-in kind. He stuck it out for three days on bread and water with the rats bothering him all the time. He pounded on the door and begged for deliverance from the rats, but he was told the only deliverance was work.

"Finally he gave in and the Old Man let him out. He was bitten all over, but the biggest change had taken place inside. He set to work pretty game and he even made friends with Edwards, whose nose he had smashed in before the lazarette incident."

The Captain had risen during his tale and he now stood at the window of his skyscraper office looking thoughtfully out to sea. Finally he said,

"Yes, sometimes a good bitter dose makes a man out of a bully—it did of Bumptious Bill."

There was a sureness in the Captain's statement. An enlightening thought flashed across our mind.

"You were Edwards!" we blurted.

The Captain smiled in his quiet, kindly fashion and sat down before his massive desk.

"No," he said. "I was Bumptious Bill."

## Seasick Seamen

No matter how many years they may follow the sea, some sailormen never overcome a tendency to be seasick in very rough weather.

Those who are immune (be they seafarers or landlubbers) are notoriously unsympathetic, and not at all interested in causes, preventatives and cures.

Those who at one time or another have been "laid low," however, have some interesting suggestions to offer, varying widely with the experiences of the sufferer. Each is sure his own remedy is the only effective one and each assures you that to follow any advice other than his own would prove disastrous.

Following are a few of the prescriptions gleaned from a

group of experienced sailormen who were found in our reading room:

Work; soup; will power; raw onions; lemons; rubber collar; eat and forget it; coffee; anything but coffee; baking soda; glass of sea water; sleep.

We seemed to be getting nowhere with our inquiry. Seasickness still appeared to be the great riddle of the universe—at least that part of the universe which is made up of salt water—when an old-timer with a sense of humor offered the best solution. He had been listening quietly during the entire discussion and when we finally turned to him, his eyes twinkled.

"What is the cure for sea-sickness?" he echoed. "Give it up."



*Vignettes of the Seaman*

Mr. Winton stood at the bow of a great ocean liner watching a sailorman flip white paint onto an already white railing. He liked sailors and his liking had found expression in substantial annual gifts to this Institute over a long period of years. But here was a first-hand opportunity. Before him squatted a real sailor, engaged in part of a real sailor's job, while the ship cut a clean path through the sea and the sun made a rainbow in the spray.

"Like your job?" ventured Mr. Winton.

"Yessir."

Mr. Winton waited. A few flourishes of the brush and that particular post was finished. The sailorman picked up his bucket and moved on to the next.

"Yessir, I like my job all right. Good gang, good eats, good pay, good quarters. And then of course, there's this." A gesture with the paint brush indicated the expanse of blue sea. Both gazed at it silently for a few moments.

"Yes, there's this," agreed Mr. Winton, "but what do you do ashore?"

"Stay on the ship on the other side. In New York, 25 South Street. Great place. All the fellows I know go there—no bums. And they sure treat you white. I leave my stuff there just like it was home and I go back every time I'm in port. They don't soak you too much—they're not after your money like everybody else. They sure are white folks at 25 South Street."

It was just an incident in an eventful voyage, but it regis-

tered with Mr. Winton and he doubled the next check he mailed to "25 South."

A woebegone youth invaded our Social Service Department and announced that he had lost his papers. "Papers" mean more to a seaman than to the villain in an old-fashioned melodrama. A sailor's "papers" are his Open Sesame to life itself—the only means through which he can get a job.

In this particular instance the lost property was turned in at the Institute within the hour. Pretty quick work, we thought, considering the fact that the papers were lost nearly three miles away on another section of the waterfront. It was just another instance of "seaman" and "25 South Street" striking the same note in the mind of a city official.

Our Social Service Department had a long siege with Patrick McCoy. He was "on the beach" and had recently lived through a series of assorted vicissitudes. Finally we got Patrick a job ashore to tide him over until we could get him a berth on a ship. All went well for two whole days and then he got word

that his brother had died in the old country. It had happened several weeks before and there was no funeral for Patrick to attend now. He felt he must do something to show his respect for the memory of his brother, however, so he threw up his job!

He was so ingenuous about it that we couldn't get exasperated with him; but at the moment, Patrick is again "on the beach" and we are again in the throes of trying to get him another job.

Taylor is a British seaman about sixty years old. Several weeks ago he came to our Relief Desk to settle an old score. We had helped him out four years ago and now that he was "prosperous," he wasn't going to forget us. He repaid the advance and still had one hundred fifty dollars to deposit in our bank.

Then he began to come in daily to withdraw money. He appeared to be prodigal of his savings, so we questioned him as we usually do under such circumstances. Knowing sailors, his explanation did not startle us.

"There's so many fellows out of work," he confided, "that it



takes all my change seeing they get a bite to eat."

It would have been useless to reason with him.

Several weeks passed before we saw Taylor again. Then he showed up at our Relief Desk, ill from having slept on park benches. We arranged for treatment for him in our Clinic and put him up for a few days. Now he's off to sea again, but some day when his ship comes in (figuratively as well as literally), Taylor will make good his debt. He is the sort of sailorman we like to help, for helping him does not make him lose sight of his obligations.

During the recent hard times, the Bellevue Hospital Ambulance picked up a young man who had contracted pneumonia from exposure. Unemployment had forced him to sleep out of doors. He died in six hours.

The only clue to his identity was a slip showing that he had one hundred dollars on deposit in our bank. Why he had not drawn upon it, we shall never know. At any rate, we did what we could. We traced his next of kin, a sister in Liverpool, and obtained her cabled instructions

to have him buried in our seamen's plot, using his meagre savings to cover expenses.

One of our men has produced a lengthy poem called the "Song of the Sailor." Through many long picturesque verses he tells of his love for the sea above all else, despite its treachery, and he prays that his end may come in a "valley of water." Then he concludes:

"If a brief epitaph is needed,  
You may only mention of me  
That I had no song, no jest, no  
word,  
Just write, 'He went down to the  
sea'."

A telephone message asked that we send John Trent's mail to Beekman Street Hospital. One of our chaplains took it up himself thinking he might be of some further service.

John Trent proved to be an officer who stays with us frequently. He was delighted to receive his mail and took occasion to sing the praises of the Institute. It had befriended him many times, he said. It was the only clean inexpensive place he

knew of in port. "And besides," he added, "even if you don't need anything in particular, you can always find someone at the Institute to talk to."

Talk with a merchant sailor almost anywhere on the Seven Seas and you will find that he has a warm spot in his heart for "25 South Street." It is perhaps even more interesting to know that "so do his sisters and his cousins and his aunts," and of course his mother. This extract from a letter to Mrs. Roper is typical:

"My sons have nothing but the highest praise for your Institute, and we at home are glad there is such a place open for them and other seamen."

We serve all nations and creeds at the Institute without question. We compile no statistics on either matter, but an interesting fact cropped up in our Apprentice Room the other night. Among the thirty-six boys present, eight nationalities were represented — English, Scotch, Welsh, Dutch, French, Luxembourg, Egyptian, and American.

Perhaps a cup of tea and a

game of pool at 25 South Street may play their part in international good will and understanding!

A Chief Engineer is a very important person, and if he is a good Chief Engineer he must necessarily be somewhat aware of his importance. Such is the case with one very good friend of the Institute who usually stays with us when he is in port. In addition to the regulation requirements for a Chief, this particular one possesses a keen sense of humor, and an undisguised love for other human beings.

He recently told us it does him good to see the work we do for seamen. "You know, after all, they're just kids,"—an observation which we make daily at the Institute. "Sailors are really only children when they get ashore. You know, even a Captain is a kid at heart."

"And the Chief Engineers?" we ventured.

"O, a Chief Engineer is different," he told us in all seriousness. "He has to be mature—his position demands it."

"Of course," we agreed, but "Nice boy" is what we were thinking.



THE LOOKOUT,

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