

*The*  
**LOOKOUT**



*Photo by Marie Higginson*

WINTER COMES TO NEW YORK HARBOR

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE  
OF NEW YORK

VOL. XXXII NO. 2

FEBRUARY, 1941

## Orison

O Eternal Lord God, who alone spreadest out the heavens, and rulest the raging of the sea: Be pleased to receive into Thy protection all those who go down to the sea in ships, and occupy their business in great waters. Preserve them both in body and soul, prosper their labours with good success, in all time of danger be their defence, and bring them to the haven where they would be; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.  
(Missions to Seamen)

# The LOOKOUT

VOL. XXXII, FEBRUARY, 1941

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by the

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CLARENCE G. MICHALIS  
President

THOMAS ROBERTS  
Secretary and Treasurer

REV. HAROLD H. KELLEY  
Director

MARJORIE DENT CANDEE, Editor  
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## LEGACIES TO THE INSTITUTE

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

I give and bequeath to "Seamen's Church Institute of New York," incorporated under the laws of the State of New York, located at 25 South Street, New York City, the sum of.....  
.....Dollars.

Note that the words "of New York" are a part of our title.

A Copy of our "Bequest Booklet" will be sent you on request.

# The Lookout

Vol. XXXII

February, 1941

No. 2

## Salute to Sailor Town\*

By C. Fox Smith

THE little streets of Sailor Town  
They are not fair nor fine,  
That straggle with their sooty slates  
By Mersey, Thames and Tyne,  
By Humber and by Severn sea,  
From Hull to Solent side,  
The little streets of Sailor Town—  
The shabby streets of Sailor Town  
That know not wealth nor pride.

The little streets of Sailor Town  
This day they mourn their dead  
That give their lives in death-sown  
seas

To bring a people bread;  
No day that adds not to the tale  
Of those that come no more  
To little homes in Sailor Town,  
In little streets of Sailor Town,  
In grimy streets of Sailor Town  
That suffer and endure.

The little streets of Sailor Town  
They are not rich nor grand,  
But Death and Glory walk this day  
Their pavements hand in hand.  
Come fire, come steel—they cannot  
break

The courage proud and high  
Of humble folk in Sailor Town,  
In little streets of Sailor Town,  
In gallant streets of Sailor Town  
That know the way to die.

\*Reprinted from "PUNCH"

# Adventures of the "Jean Jadot".

By Kermit W. Salyer, A. B. Seaman

THE Belgian freighter, "Jean Jadot", could well be a ship right out of fiction. She has had enough adventure for a dozen ships, but she steams blythely on, encountering new experiences with every turn of her screw.

For weeks and weeks she was tied up at a Brooklyn pier. She lay there day after day awaiting orders. Belgium seemed as far away, as inaccessible, as the moon. Finally, when it appeared that she would rust away in indolence, orders came for her to get under weigh. She sailed in convoy for Liverpool.

Aboard her were two very good friends of the Seamen's Church Institute, Van —, the radio operator, and Willie —, a seaman.

And, like the ship, Van and Willie have had their share of adventures. Van has been stopping at the Institute for a number of years. He knows war in all its terribleness. In World War I he was but a lad, but he was in the midst of the melée. He was one of the heroic Belgians who stopped the Kaiser's men in 1914. At that time he was connected with the Signal Corps and had many harassing experiences in No Man's Land repairing communication lines. He received the Croix de Guerre for his services to king and country in that war.

When he sailed, he was restless. He wanted to return home and contact the enemy again.

Many of you probably wonder how the Belgians felt about King Leopold's capitulation to Hitler. Van approved his King's action. He says that it would have been mass murder to hold out against the Nazis, and subsequent events have proved him right. He says that the English and French had already begun to crack at that point anyway, and the Belgian capitulation, coming when it did, caused the

Belgians to be the scapegoat, receiving full blame for the Flanders debacle when it would have happened anyway.

Van has figured in many shipwrecks and rescues at sea. His latest adventure along that line occurred a few months ago in mid-Atlantic. He was at his desk one day aboard the "Jean Jadot" when a frantic SOS came crackling in through his earphones. He took the message: "SOS — TORPEDOED BY GERMAN SUBMARINE," and this was followed by the name of the ship and the position of the attack. The ship was the "Regent Tiger," a British oil tanker.

Van relayed the message to the skipper on the bridge and upon checking the position of the stricken ship, they found that it was but a few hours from them.

They steamed full ahead for the torpedoed tanker. A few hours later they picked up a great column of heavy oil smoke on the horizon, and Van, his work at wireless finished, started snapping away with his little Kodak. He got some striking pictures and later sold them to the *New York News*.

The crew of the *Regent Tiger* were standing by in their boats just off the burning ship. The "Jean Jadot" approached and took them aboard. A few days later they were landed at an English port.

Willie also was anxious to get back to Belgium. He was a rare-wood and veneer merchant in Antwerp and Paris before the present war. At the outbreak of hostilities he volunteered for service, and since he had had a few years' experience at sea, he was put aboard ship. Belgium fell after he left home and for months he heard nothing of his family. He didn't know whether they were dead or alive. He was desperate, and then, just as he was

about to give up all hope, a letter came through from his aged father and mother saying that they were well. But what experiences they had passed through!

In trying to hide from the Nazis they had passed through hell itself. Since the minions of Hitler had ravaged the country there was very little food to be found anywhere. Nothing edible remained in that once fruitful region.

Willie said that he would rather they had died than have to suffer so. But he was told that he was very wrong, that old people are malleable and that even if they have been dependent upon their children for years, they can adapt themselves to new hardships. Old people cherish the opportunity to show the younger generations that they can still "take it."

The "Jean Jadot" sailed in convoy for Liverpool but she returned alone. A few weeks ago she nosed into New York harbor after having lost her convoy in an Atlantic gale.

When she arrived, it was learned that Van was missing. He is a casualty of the war, but a casualty of the pleasing aspect rather than of the bloody side. He has been placed in charge of the Belgian radio office in Liverpool. More power to him — and that is not meant as a pun.

Willie is a gunner now since the "Jean Jadot" has acquired a four-incher on her poop.

The night they arrived in Liverpool the Germans attacked the city furiously, raining bombs indiscriminately upon anything and everything in sight. Though the ships in the harbor were the main target, the "Jean Jadot," which was anchored in the roadstead, escaped injury.

She escaped injury, but she did not escape shrapnel. The deadly scraps from the bursting bombs and shells beat a tattoo upon her steel decks all night long.

The sailors, thus getting their

first taste of war, were very eager to collect pieces of shrapnel as souvenirs. Everytime a piece landed on the deck a souvenir-hunter would fix his eye on it and when there was a lull in the bombing, he would dash out and grab his souvenir and bear it triumphantly away.

By morning they were so sick of looking at shrapnel that there would have been a massacre if anyone had mentioned souvenirs. Bucketful after bucketful of the scrap steel was swept up and dumped over the side.

After a berth was cleared for them they went in to the dock and prepared to discharge their cargo of food and other necessities which they had brought over from the States.

The stevedoring was interrupted many times by the air raid alarms. And during the raids the stevedores would dash for the sheds and deal out the cards for a game of cribbage or pinochle and if the game was not over when the "all clear" signal was given, they kept right on playing until it was finished. Why let such a small matter as discharging a ship, or such an insignificant thing as a war, interrupt a good pinochle game?

It is reported that most of the stevedores are old men and young boys, the strong huskies having been put in uniform.

Willie said that when he went to a play or to the movies that an air raid alarm invariably caught him while he was on his way back to the ship. Of course, he had to duck into a shelter. And in this way he spent most of his night. He stayed in one shelter almost all night and that cured him of going out. He spent the remainder of his nights aboard the ship.

Toward the end of their stay in Liverpool the "Jean Jadot" was barely missed by a huge bomb which landed on the quay about 25 yards from the ship. The bomb did not explode and so was fenced off

until the demolition squad could get around to it and take it up. But, somehow, due to crossed orders, a squad came out and covered it up with earth and left it. In the meantime the "Jean Jadot" had moved to another berth in order to take on fuel for the return trip across the Atlantic. A few hours after she had moved from her first

berth the hidden bomb exploded and demolished the quay entirely, killing a number of men.

If the "Jean Jadot" had remained there a few hours longer she would now be a pile of twisted, torn metal in the mud of Liverpool harbor.

It seems that Providence is caring for that ship. What will her next adventure be?

## Crew Saves Blazing Ship

### EDITOR'S NOTE:

In the Officers' Room, Netherlands Room, Apprentices' Room one hears these days much talk of the war on ships, with accounts of sinkings, rescues, and many acts of heroism on the part of officers and crews. Each week also, THE LOOKOUT editor receives from London a report from "The Journal of Commerce and Shipping Telegraph" which records many heroic deeds of merchant seamen fighting for Great Britain. Because most of these stories are not reported in detail in the American press, we are printing a number of them here because we believe that LOOKOUT readers will be stirred, as we were, on reading of the gallant courage and devotion to duty of merchant seamen. To quote from King George's speech at the new session of Parliament:

"The staunchness of the men of the Merchant and Fishing Fleets has added lustre to the ancient traditions of the sea."

"WE sailed with a cargo of 11,200 tons of gasoline and we brought in 11,000 tons." That is how one of the officers of the motor tanker *San Demetrio* described his voyage in the convoy attacked by the German "pocket battleship" on November 5.

They sighted the raider about 4:30 p.m. and as the officer reached the bridge the *Jervis Bay* was already flying signals telling the convoy to scatter. The men of the *San Demetrio* described the *Jervis Bay* as "standing up to the enemy like a hen standing up to a great tom cat while her brood of chickens made off."

Before long shells started to fall round the *San Demetrio*. She was badly hit, and the order was given to abandon ship. The boats dropped

astern, and 10 minutes later they saw her start to blaze. Another ship came up astern and the raider shifted her fire to a new target. The shells whined over the boats and they pulled away, losing touch in the dark.

In one boat were 16 officers and men, among them an American seaman and a seaman from the Shetland Islands, whose knowledge of boat work in the heavy weather which lay ahead did much to save the *San Demetrio* herself as well as the boat's crew.

The weather had been fine, but by midnight a full gale was blowing. They lay to a sea anchor, keeping the boat's head up to it with the oars. The Shetland Islander sat at the tiller, the second officer said, as "he knew all about small boats." By dawn great seas were running. They sighted a Swedish ship, but they could not reach her, nor did she see the boat, — at one moment buried in the trough of the sea and at the next running on its crest.

At mid-day they sighted a tanker to leeward, and at 5 p.m. they got alongside. It was their own ship, the *San Demetrio*. She was still burning and gasoline lay on the water all around her, so they decided not to board that night, and pulled ahead of her hoping to drift with her through the night. When dawn broke she was not in sight.

The weather had moderated. It was now possible to put a sail up and by one of those extraordinary chances of the sea they fell in with the *San Demetrio* again and got

aboard. She was white hot amidships, her bridge and accommodation were gutted. There was a fierce fire still burning aft, and she was down by the bows.

Below the engineers set about getting steam on the pumps in an engine-room flooded to the floor plates, while on deck the remaining hands fought the fire with buckets and fire extinguishers. There was gasoline washing over the decks, and every time she pitched more gasoline gushed up through the shell splinter holes.

The main difficulty when once the engines had been got going and the ship had been brought to an even keel, was the compass, which had been shot from the binnacle and, though replaced, behaved in a peculiar manner. That night when steering north by compass, they found the Pole Star dead astern, so after that they gave the compass up and sailed by a mixture of stars and weather.

The American sailor cheered everyone up by saying "they were

bound to hit something sometime between Narvik and Gibraltar". There was not a man among that 16 who failed in courage or humor. Two days after getting back on board, the greaser, who had been at his post all the time, died of internal haemorrhage; he was buried at sea.

Only three other men from the total crew of 42 are missing. That this was largely due to the action of the master, in taking the difficult decision to abandon ship when he did, is borne out by the testimony of those who brought the ship safely home. The fact that only one of the two boats regained the ship was pure luck.

Eight days after the raider's attack, the *San Demetrio* made a landfall. She had no signalling flags. They had all been burnt. The only flag she had left was her Red Ensign and that had been flying throughout her adventurous voyage — a symbol of the Merchant Navy's courage and determination.

## Heroism During Attack on Liner

AMONG the many acts of heroism which stand out in the story of the attack by a German bomber on the Canadian Pacific liner *Empress of Britain* was that of the commander, Captain Charles Howard Sapsworth.

Standing on the bridge until it was burning away beneath him, he encouraged his anti-aircraft gunners as they battled with the German plane until all were killed or wounded and the guns out of action. The Nazi raider then continued to machine-gun the bridge. Captain Sapsworth is among the survivors.

Attempts were made to save the liner after she had been abandoned, but she blew up and sank while in tow.

Captain Sapsworth joined the

Canadian Pacific in 1912, and was in command of the *Empress of Australia* before taking command of the *Empress of Britain* in September, 1938. In May, 1939, he had the honor of bringing the King and Queen back to England in the *Empress of Britain* after their Majesties' tour of Canada and the United States. During this voyage the King conferred the insignia of the C.V.O. on Captain Sapsworth.

Like most famous shipmasters of the trans-Atlantic fleet, Captain Sapsworth began his seafaring life in sail. During the Great War he was in command of liners transporting troops from Canada to this country.

The conduct of the whole crew adds another chapter to the story of

British maritime courage and resource.

After the attack a member of the crew made everyone laugh by asking the bosun's mate when he was going to finish painting the alleyway! Another member of the crew "cheered" everyone by saying "it was only 109 miles to swim!"

In the course of the statement announcing the loss of the liner the Admiralty and War Office said that "the resolute and efficient handling of the Empress of Britain's anti-aircraft defences contributed largely to the high proportion of the total complement being saved."

Out of the total of 643 on board, 598 have been accounted for.

It is feared that Mr. Redmond, the chief engineer, was drowned.

One of the survivors, Mr. James East, was a member of the liner's crew when she was commissioned nine years ago, and he was in one of the ships engaged in the Dunkirk evacuation.

Mr. J. Bramley, an engineer, said: "The boat I was in overturned. A large number was in it, and I think all but seven were lost. I was in the water 5½ hours clinging to the upturned boat."

Describing the bombing of the liner, one of the crew said it was an overcast morning, and the German plane suddenly came out of a low cloud without warning. It shot down in a steep dive, dropped its bombs, and raked the decks of the ship with machine-gun fire. Some of the bombs missed, but others hit the target, and very soon the liner was an inferno of flames.

Another seaman said that he was below when the bombing started, but he rushed on deck and saw the bomber low in the sky over the ship. Despite the ruthless machine-gunning of the decks and the raging flames which quickly raced along the whole length of the ship, there was no panic. An anti-aircraft gun was put out of action by a bomb

so that the ship was unable to reply effectively to the attack.

A steward said that although some bombs dropped wide of the mark, the plane continued to circle and machine-gun the ship before dropping a second bomb, which set the decks ablaze from stem to stern. "It was like an inferno," continued the steward. "My only means of escape was the port-hole through which I scrambled before flinging myself into the sea."

Another survivor said that although many of the crew were unable to make the boats there was not the slightest sign of panic. The bombing, which was all over in less than a quarter-of-an-hour, occurred at 9:30 a.m., and many of the crew were unable to make their escape for some hours, but each man conducted himself with exemplary coolness and obeyed orders despite the rapid extension of the flames.

Referring to the ship's doctor, who is comparatively new to the sea, another survivor said that they had nothing but the greatest admiration for the way in which he climbed at great personal risk from lifeboat to lifeboat tending to the injured.

Engineers kept the engines going, though they had to wear gasmasks to exist in the smoke and fumes through which the ship's powerful lights could not penetrate.

**"The mind of the master of a vessel is rooted deep in the timbers of her, though he commanded for a day or a decade, and this injured captain had on him the stern impression of a scene in the greys of dawn of seven turned faces, and later a stump of a topmast with a white ball on it that slashed to and fro as the waves went low and lower, and down. Thereafter there was something strange in his voice. Although steady, it was deep with mourning, and of a quality beyond oration or tears."**

**From "Men, Women and Boats"  
By Stephen Crane.**

## Cargo Ship Fought Air Raider and Fire

**I**N a recent broadcast, Mr. Ronald Cross, British Minister of Shipping referred to the heavier losses of merchant ships in recent months, and asked his listeners to help British seamen by wasting nothing, by economising where they could. "So you can provide," Mr. Cross said, "an extra margin of shipping; and extra shipping is extra war effort in the hands of our seamen."

"I will give you an account of the action in which the cargo motor-ship *Sussex*, of 11,063 tons gross, drove off the repeated attacks of a German aircraft, despite the serious damage she had sustained.

"The *Sussex* was making her way to this country, via the Cape, with a general cargo including wool from Australia. A large wooden locker had been built between decks and in this were stored many tons of explosives, packed in steel cylinders.

"She had an anti-aircraft gun and an anti-submarine gun. Her gunners had been practising during the voyage, amusing themselves with our own aircraft when they flew over, training their guns on them and short of firing on them treated them as enemy aircraft. Her master, Captain P. B. Clarke, encouraged the pilots to dive bomb the ship so as to practise the gunners in what might be in store for them.

"One morning, off the Irish coast, as daylight was breaking, an aeroplane was seen flying high up in the sky. The gunners were already standing to. The machine seemed to make signs of recognition from the air, but suddenly there was a hail of bullets. The captain at once gave orders to fire. The aeroplane came on overhead and dropped two bombs, and unluckily they both scored hits.

"One bomb exploded on the fun-

nel. The funnel crashed down on the deck and did serious damage. The other bomb burst on a hatch and started a fire in the cargo of wool. The gunners were infuriated by the success of the attack, and worked their guns with every ounce they had.

"One gunner—a lad of 18, called Croxford—was badly wounded by the German's bullets and was burned by one of the bombs, but in spite of his wounds and loss of blood, in spite of orders from the bridge to go down to his bunk, he refused to leave his gun and stuck to his post. Twice the German came round to attack, but the fire was too good for him and he had to turn away.

"Knowing he had hit the ship the German thought he had got her beaten and signalled her to stop. There was only one answer and that came from her guns. The master was not giving in, nor was his crew. And so three times more the German tried to attack, and three times more that hard driven gun held him off. Then he gave up.

"But in the meantime, the fire started by the second bomb was raging fiercely down below. All hands who could possibly be spared were fighting to prevent it spreading; the wooden locker full of explosives stood just above and flames kept leaping all about it. The men knew very well what fate awaited them if they were beaten by the blaze. Hoses were kept playing on the steel containers, to keep them cool, but after all their splendid efforts one exploded—but only one.

"A boy, an assistant steward called Trundle, had climbed to the top of that locker of explosives and from there he played his hose wherever the fire threatened most, knowing full well that at any moment he might be blown to bits; but there he

sat and worked and joked.

"At last, but not until the afternoon, they managed to get the fire out and thankfully Captain Clarke set his course for home. The sea was rough, his wireless, compasses, chronometers, everything on the bridge and in the chart-room was smashed, but the engines were unharmed. A boat's compass was all he had to steer by, and even that was not too good, so he steered while he could by the sun.

"Later that night he knew he was out of his course; then they ran into fog. They were rammed by a trawler; luckily only lightly. But that fog proved a blessing in disguise. Nature's best-black-out hid the showers of sparks that poured from the hole where the funnel had stood. At last Captain Clarke got his bearings from a patrol boat and eventually he brought his ship safely to port.

"That is only one of many stories of the pluck of the men of the Merchant Navy. They are not a fighting force, but they brave the fighting forces of the enemy with all the courage of men fully trained



and equipped in arms. I hope to speak to you again of the fine conduct of our British merchant seamen; aye, and of our Allied seamen, too. For I would that you could share with us, who know these things, our pride of the men who sail these days under the merchant flag of Britain."

The *Sussex* is owned by the Federal Steam Navigation Co., Ltd., which is one of the companies in the P. and O. group, and was built at Clydebank by Messrs. John Brown and Co., Ltd., 1937. A feature of the ship is the provision made for the carriage of refrigerated products, and her cargo capacities are refrigerated about 520,000 cub. ft., and general about 222,000 cub. ft., making a total of 740,000 cub. ft. The whole of the cargo space, with the exception of No. 6 hold and the upper 'tween decks fore and aft, is entirely insulated. Two sets of Brown-Doxford oil engines give the ship a speed of 17 knots.

Captain P. B. Clarke, the master of the *Sussex*, has been going to sea for nearly 30 years. He served in the Navy during the last war, and when in command of Q-boats was twice rescued from the sea. He took part in the Zeebrugge raid.

Interviewed after the broadcast by Mr. Cross, Captain Clarke was full of enthusiasm for the courage and resource of the officers and men of the *Sussex*. He said that when one of the containers holding explosives did explode it was only by a miracle that the remainder were not ignited. The woodwork all around, and, indeed, some of the cases of explosives, were scorched and blistered.

Captain Clarke stated that it took some hours to extinguish the fire, and the chief officer, Mr. Leonard Cann, of Plymouth, reported the incident in which the assistant steward, F. Trundle, of London, remained on top of cases of explo-

sives, playing the hose on them to keep them drenched and shouting jocular remarks to the other men.

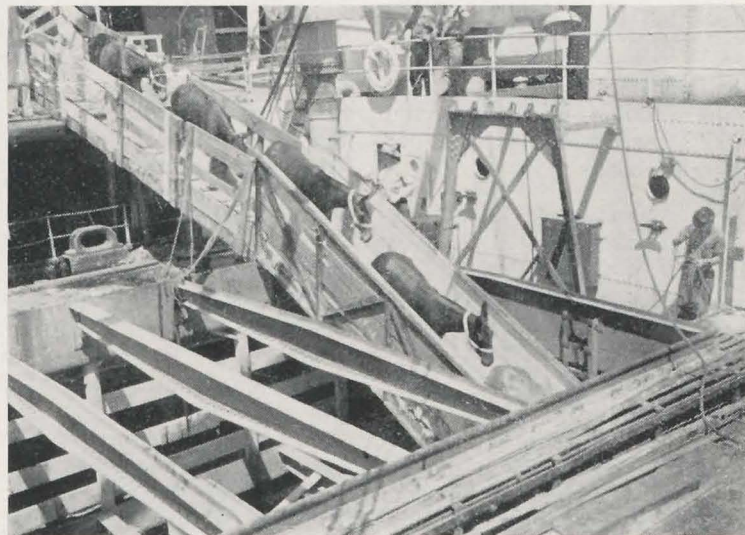
Numerous members of the crew, Captain Clarke added, were cut by flying splinters and at one time the ship was a "veritable shambles". When they reached port, however, only five men required hospital treatment. A first-aid station was rigged in the saloon in charge of Mr. S. Gee, the steward, who did excellent work in bandaging the injured.

"To the enemy," Captain Clarke remarked "we must have appeared in a hopeless mess, as smoke and flames were pouring out of the ship and we were going round in circles. But our guns were firing and we all hoped the enemy would come within range again."

Captain Clarke particularly commended the work of Mr. Cann, Mr. J. Anderson, of Banff, the chief engineer, and the eighteen-year-old ordinary seaman, P. Croxford, who, although suffering from burns and wounds in the shoulder, refused to leave his gun-station.

## Unusual Cargoes

The "S.S. *Scottsburg*" of the Lykes Bros. Steamship Co., New Orleans, carried an unusual cargo on a recent trip from the Gulf of Mexico to Istanbul, Turkey. The transportation safely of a herd of mules (see illustration below) and a cargo of phosphate and sulphur is certainly an unusual combination! Another interesting cargo was that carried by the Grace liner "*Nightingale*" recently. When the voyage began there was a Chilean pony named "Chinita" aboard, being shipped to New York by Mrs. Alan Corey, Jr., as a Christmas present for her father, William Russell Grace, Director of W. R. Grace & Co. Before the freighter docked at her pier "Chinita" had given birth to a filly, while the ship was off Cape Hatteras. The filly was promptly named "Nightie" after the "*Nightingale*". A veterinarian of the U. S. Bureau of Animal Industry issued health certificates permitting the landing of the ponies.



Courtesy, Lykes Bros.

# Maritime Briefs

## Why the "Yucatan" Sank

A shipwreck in the Institute's back yard is rather a unique experience, yet that is what happened when the liner "Yucatan" sank last December right at her berth, Pier 15, East River, while loading cargo and fuel. The marine experts figured out that the slack water and the slack fuel in her tanks affected her balance, and others said she was "tender", meaning that she responded too quickly in coming back from a list to either side. The "shipwrecked" crew spent the night at the Institute. Meanwhile two divers made repeated trips under water to seal port holes so the "Yucatan" could be refloated.

## Eighteen Days Adrift

By The Associated Press

AN EASTERN CANADIAN PORT, Jan. 20.—Four emaciated British seamen told tonight of the agonized deaths of twelve lifeboat mates by exposure—some driven mad from drinking salt water—in the eighteen days they tossed on the frigid North Atlantic after an Italian submarine torpedoed the 1,562-ton British freighter "Carlton".

Eighteen other men from the "Carlton", they said, had put out in another lifeboat and have not been heard from.

Brought here today aboard a British freighter, the four were hurried off to hospital as soon as the rescue vessel docked. Two of them had badly frozen feet, and all were suffering from extreme exposure.

They said the "Carlton", bound from Great Britain for South America, put up a gallant fight with nothing but a Hotchkiss machine gun.

The "Carlton" sighted the submarine at 7:30 a. m. Dec. 20 and started running. As the submarine came within range the crew opened up with the machine-gun, but the firing was ineffective.

Finally, the submarine maneuvered into position and let the freighter have a torpedo.

None of the crew was killed in the explosion. All thirty-four got away in the two lifeboats about 500 miles off Ireland.

The two boats became separated on the heaving seas.

First to go were four East Indian firemen, least accustomed to the North Atlantic weather. They drank salt water, the survivors said, then lay in the bottom of the boat and chanted native death songs before collapsing.

The cook went mad, the survivors said, and pulled the plugs from the bottom of the boat. Then he leaped overboard. His mates pulled him back into the boat, while others rammed the plugs back in place. He died shortly afterward.

The victims were buried with ceremony at sea by Chief Officer George Robinson.

## The Wayward Schooner

A little schooner named "Bluebird" defied the salvage company which had contracted to sink her outside of New York harbor because she was what is termed "a menace to navigation". Captain William Van Frank, head of the Van Frank Marine Salvage Company had an \$1,800 contract with the U. S. Army to sink the vessel. He chartered tugs at \$20 an hour and the schooner was towed out to sea and her seacocks opened, but the wayward vessel refused to sink. Again Captain Van Frank tried to sink the schooner, put in ballast, but this time she turned bottom side up, dumped her ballast and beached herself about half a mile off Great Kills, Staten Island. One cannot help but admire the plucky little craft for not wishing to go to Davey Jones's Locker. As we go to press we learn that she has been broken up and will be burned.

# Wartime Activities at the Seamen's Church Institute of New York

ALWAYS geared to meet emergencies, the Seamen's Church Institute of New York is meeting the present wartime emergency with vigor and efficiency. Since World War II began it has been host to 23 crews of torpedoed or otherwise shipwrecked vessels, representing a total of 500 seamen. The average length of stay for these men was eight days.

Often these shipwrecked crews, suffering from exposure, shock and fatigue, grieving over the loss of shipmates, are eager only for sleep and rest from their long ordeal with wind, wave and the weapons of war. Some of the crews have been snatched from "Davey Jones's Locker" by the gallant officers and crews of passing vessels who have turned off their courses to rush to the rescue when hearing the faint SOS message from stricken vessels.

Among the services rendered these victims of war at the Seamen's Church Institute are the providing of food, beds and clothing and such incidentals as tobacco, shaving equipment, etc. Often the men have lost all their personal belongings and arrive in New York wearing makeshift clothes contributed by crews and passengers of the rescue ships.

The majority of the rescued crews are now British, but earlier in the war crews of Finnish, Danish, Dutch, Belgian, French and Norwegian vessels were also sheltered.

As a further evidence of the Institute's ability to meet emergencies as they arise, we are called upon to care for 259 child evacuees from Great Britain for several weeks. Our facilities being of such an extraordinary nature, it was possible to provide separate dormitory floors and private elevators took them to recreation rooms set apart for their use. They were under the care of the American Committee for the Care of European Children (Mr. Marshall Field, Chairman) which



provided nurses and companions until such time as the children were delivered to their sponsors.

There has also been set aside a Dutch Room for the use of Netherland seamen and similar recreation rooms for both Belgian and British seamen are now being prepared. Thus will the seamen of these nations find a "little bit of home" when they come into the Port of New York.

As the war at sea continues, therefore, with its terrible toll of ships, the Seamen's Church Institute stands ready to welcome and befriend merchant seamen who need help. Since 1844, the services of the Institute have been functioning, day and night, year in, year out, in peace and in war, providing active merchant seamen of every race, rating, age and creed with SAFETY for their persons, money, mail and baggage; COMFORT for their bodies and INSPIRATION for their minds.

To help the Institute carry on this important welfare work we need YOUR generous support.

We have already received some response to our appeal for more Red Letter Days (see January LOOKOUT). A gift of \$273.97 will reserve a Day on the Institute's Red Letter Calendar.

Kindly mail contributions to the  
SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE  
OF NEW YORK

25 South Street, New York, N. Y.

## A Skipper in Difficulty

By Frank Reil\*

WHEN a captain performs a sea rescue—and a good many of them are not as thrilling as they sound—he immediately becomes a hero and long columns are written in his praise. But when a skipper really needs just a few kind words in his behalf is when he is in difficulty and in a jam.

Consider the case of Capt. George V. Richardson, master of the United States liner Manhattan, still aground\* on a sand bar off West Palm Beach. Here is one of the most able masters in the American merchant marine caught in the most embarrassing position that can confront a mariner. In all probability the accident was not his fault but as master of the ship the blame and responsibility fall on him.

In the 30 years he has been going to sea, he has compiled a record that any master would envy. Since 1925 he has been in command of many ships whose voyages have been successful and without incident. Much of the time he has been in the line's intercoastal service and has passed by the very spot which now holds his ship fast.

But now that he is at the top of his profession and is held in high esteem by all who know him, Captain Richardson finds himself the "goat" of this incident. We have only the utmost sympathy for him.

Captain Richardson's predicament and how he must feel as his ship booms on the Florida beach recalls something that Joseph Conrad, a veteran shipmaster himself, had written about the stranding of a ship and its effect on a captain.

Having experienced several groundings himself, Conrad knew what he was talking about when he wrote the essay, "The Grip of the Land", contained in the volume "The Mirror of the Sea". In the well-titled essay he said:

"More than any other event does

\*EDITOR'S NOTE: On February 3rd the S.S. Manhattan was refloated. All passengers were removed safely the day after the grounding.

stranding bring to the sailor a sense of utter and dismal failure . . . after all, the only mission of a seaman's calling is to keep ships' keels off the ground. Thus the moment of stranding takes away from him his every excuse for his continued existence. To keep his ship afloat is his business; it is his trust."

Continuing in this same gloomy mood, Conrad found that "the grip of the land upon the keel of your ship, even if nothing worse comes of it than the wear and tear on your tackle or the loss of time, remains in a seaman's memory an indelibly fixed taste of disaster.

"Stranding is a more or less excusable mistake. A ship may be 'driven ashore' by stress of weather. It is a catastrophe, a defeat. To be 'run ashore' has the littleness, poignancy and bitterness of human error."

Calling it a "heart-searing experience", Conrad depicts what goes through a stranded captain's mind and the mental torture he undergoes as he keeps asking himself the question, "How on earth did I get there?"

"There remains with the commander a distinct sense of loss," continues Conrad. "It's an acquisition, that feeling. A man may be the better for it, but he will never be the same."

Conrad, a somber man who was a student of psychology, was deeply affected by his own sea experiences. As troubled as Captain Richardson must be in his present situation, we feel certain he will arise from it even a better shipmaster.

A big man with iron-gray hair, merry blue eyes, and an engaging personality, Captain Richardson belongs on the sea and as master of the biggest ships this country has. Reprinted from "A Line on Liners" in the

Brooklyn Eagle.

Thursday, January 16, 19'1

## The Army Comes to South Street

On January 4th a U. S. Army Signal Corps detachment of 194 officers and men was quartered at the Institute for a month's stay while manning a special information center at the New York Telephone Building, 140 West Street, for the study of air defense maneuvers for New York and vicinity. Personnel were sent from Aviation Signal Units at Mitchell Field and from Aircraft Warning Companies at Fort Monmouth, N. J., with Lieut. Harry E. Roderick in command. Most were new recruits about 21 or 22 years old, carefully selected after passing strict examinations. The soldiers enjoyed their stay at the Institute, complimented members of the staff on the good food, the fine recreation rooms and the clean, comfortable beds. They particularly appreciated the library where many of them used the technical books on radio, electricity, aviation, navigation, electrical engineering, etc. In their leisure time after work they enjoyed books by Jules Verne, Zane Grey, and other adventure and western story writers. A few read poetry (and a few confessed to writing it!), several studied books on sketching and painting. One soldier-artist did a group of draw-

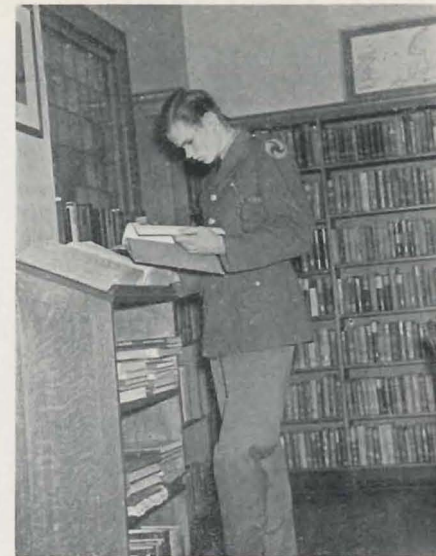


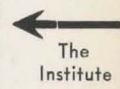
Photo by Marie Higginson

A Recruit in the U.S. Army Signal Corps Looks Up a New Word in the Dictionary in the Conrad Library.

ings of waterfront scenes. They patiently took turns reading the library's only copy of best-sellers like "Oliver Twist", "For Whom the Bell Tolls", etc. The Institute was glad thus to make its facilities available during the month's survey of air defense possibilities for this and nearby states.



A View of Downtown Manhattan before the 6th and 9th Avenue "Els" Were Demolished.





## War Experiences of An American Seaman

THIS is the saga of H. Rios, American-born sailor of Mexican parentage as told to THE LOOK-OUT editor, who left his father's farm in Texas to follow the sea. His first ship was the motor tanker "Vilja" of Norwegian registry, and she sailed on October 26th, 1939 for Yokohama. In this Japanese port his adventures began. First of all, his papers were stolen from him, also his passport but he did not discover his loss until his ship was under way, bound for Port Said with a cargo of oil. The next stop was Roumania, where the "Vilja" loaded 10,000 gallons of Diesel oil for England. At each port Rios, who works below, tried to get duplicate papers and a passport from the American consul, but because of war regulations he was unable to procure these. His ship was under convoy for Liverpool, and in the English channel collided with the British tanker "Fortitude."

Rios was asleep in his bunk at the time of the crash and rushed to his lifeboat station, thinking, of course that the "Vilja" had been torpedoed. Fortunately, the other vessel had hit the bow, so the tanks were not disturbed and it was not necessary to take to the boats. She limped into Manchester for repairs where Rios again tried to obtain papers proving that he was an American citizen. His only evidence of his existence was his name listed on the ship's manifest. Telling of his experiences, Rios laughingly commented: "It would have been easier if I had had a criminal record, but because I was an unknown citizen I had difficulty in proving that I even existed! I was told by the British consul that I was liable to a \$5,000. fine or two years' imprisonment for being in the war zone, but I explained that it was not my fault that I was traveling on a belligerent vessel. When I signed on, Norway had been a neutral nation. I was told also that I could

not desert the ship, as that, too, means a fine. The Captain of the "Vilja" was not keen about keeping me on board, as being an American caused him great worry, but I finally persuaded him to take me along. So we went from Manchester to Gibraltar to Port Said to Tripoli. There were always mines, and more mines. One night two of our convoy were torpedoed. Our ship picked up 49 survivors but three engineers and a fireman were lost. That was what you call a close shave. At Brest, there was an air attack while we were anchored in the harbor, and a ship next to ours was sunk. That was also a close shave!

"At Brest we waited for orders. Our ship was not armed. I went to the French authorities and asked to join the army (This was a few days before France surrendered to the Nazis). They sent me to a British official who asked me 'Do you realize what you are doing?' 'Yes,' I replied. 'I want to help France.' 'But if you do,' he said, 'You will lose your citizenship by joining the French army. Of course, you could be repatriated if America comes into the war, but if she does not, you would be in trouble.'

"So I went back to the ship. The evacuation of Dunkirk was taking place and British and French troops were pouring into Brest. To shorten my story, our ship sailed finally for Capetown where the American and Norwegian consuls got together and decided to send me home to America. I had about 300 crowns coming to me for war bonus and regular pay, but I shipped as an O.S. (Ordinary Seaman) on the "Kentuckian" of the American-Hawaiian Line, returning to the United States. So here I wait, now, for the 300 crowns due me. I can't wait much longer, because I have an offer of another job, and would like to take it, but don't want to lose that back pay."

## Motorboat Show



The Institute's Booth at the Motor Boat Show. Morris Rosenfeld Photo

THE Seamen's Church Institute of New York had a twenty-foot educational booth on the mezzanine floor at Grand Central Palace during the week of the Motorboat Show, from January 10th through January 18th.

The booth featured a large collection of oil paintings of ships made by well-known marine artists, by seamen and former seamen. Among the artists exhibiting seascapes and marine scenes were Alexander

Breede, Charles Rosner, Wynyard Higginson, Charles Robert Patterson, J. Enrique Schlatter, Andrew Winter, Leslie Dawson, Hunter Wood and Cliff Parkhurst.

Marine handicraft such as ships-in-bottles, rope belts, ship models, ship silhouette prints, etc. were also on display. The Institute is indebted to Mr. Ira Hand, Secretary of the Motorboat Show, for his generous cooperation in donating exhibit space.

## Seamen's Art Show

By Frank Reil\*

ASKING a seaman to take instruction in painting is like carrying coals to Newcastle or inviting a postman for a walk on his day off. A sailor is always having a brush thrust into his hands by Mr. Mate and told to paint. It is a chore that never ends just so long as there is paint and a ship to paint.

This is what makes the annual exhibition of paintings at the Seamen's

Church Institute, 25 South St., Manhattan, indeed remarkable. Here are some 40 oils and water colors done by merchant seamen who have shown enough interest in painting to volunteer for instruction under the direction of the New York City Art Project of the WPA. The Seamen's Institute provides the materials for the nautical artists.

\* Reprinted from "A Line on Liners" in the Brooklyn Eagle, Tuesday, January 16, 1941

Of course there is a great deal of difference between a painting on canvas and slapping a brush against the side of a ship or a cargo boom. But generally most sailors have done so much painting at sea that they are in no mood for it when they come ashore and have free time on their hands.

Many of the seamen whose works are on public display in the lobby of the Institute never before painted a picture or showed any artistic bent. But a great deal of talent and imagination is shown in their portrayal of waterfront scenes, such as the East River docks, West Indies beaches, barroom characters and harbor types.

#### They Paint What They See

A 20-year-old artist by the name of Rothstein has ten paintings on display. One of the outstanding paintings in the collection is his study of three waterfront bums with a bottle of "smoke."

The "star" of last year's show, John Solomon, again has some fine paintings on display. Professional art critics raved about this Negro ship's cook last year, admiring his bold strokes and warm colors. With a little training they believe he would make a fine artist.

He paints what he sees in his travels—houses, bridges, lighthouses. He likes to paint scenes he remembers in Casablanca and Puerto Barrios. To him "that pink church over

on the Bowery (St. Mark's) is sure good to look at," and when he returns from his next voyage he will try to get it down on his canvas.

#### Know What They Like

The lobby of the Institute is filled with seamen. Like most people who look at pictures, they don't know what art is but they know what they like. Most of their criticism is directed at maritime inaccuracies. For instance, one barge captain was heard to say: "That barge is loaded with coal, but the artist has her high in the water. He ought to have her set deeper."

A mate pointed to a tugboat and snorted: "That smokestack has a list to starboard and the deck has a list to port! The fellow who did that just didn't stop to think."

Probably the most popular picture with the seamen is a portrait of a West Indies woman in a red dress. Another favorite is a picture of three girls, dressed in chic clothes and revealing fine curves, seated at a soda fountain while a clerk serves them coffee.

#### Realists

The seamen prefer realistic pictures, poking fun at the surrealist and cubist styles. Even the romantic school is unappreciated. A painting of the downtown skyline in soft gray and purple brought only the comment, "Why didn't he paint any lights in the windows?"



Sergeant Abe Samuels and Seaman E. Power Cates Discuss Some of the Paintings by Seamen on Exhibition at the Institute.

Photo by Marie Higginson

## Book Reviews

### AMERICAN FIGUREHEADS AND THEIR CARVERS

By Pauline A. Pinckney

W. W. Norton & Co. \$4.00

Marine enthusiasts will be delighted with this book, the first complete and comprehensive survey of the craft or art of figurehead carving. Figureheads for ships have been a standard form of decoration since the Vikings, and American figureheads are considered to represent the peak of the art which has now died out. The book is profusely illustrated with figureheads from famous clippers. It mentions the Institute's own figurehead, mounted over the main entrance to "25 South Street", of "Sir Galahad" as from an unknown ship, probably American. The book gives full information about the early carvers, craftsmen with personalities and skills, who turned out figureheads for America's young Navy. It records the yarn of the Andrew Jackson figurehead of the "Constitution" which stirred up such a political controversy. It has very useful appendices and photographs of the last figureheads to be carved in this country, viz. for the ship "Joseph Conrad" by Bruce Rogers, and for the ship "Swift" by William A. Robertson in 1938.

M.D.C.

### GOLDEN GATE

The Story of San Francisco Harbor

By Felix Riesenberg, Jr.

Alfred A. Knopf. \$3.50. Illustrated.

Here Felix Riesenberg, Jr. shows much of his sea-captain father's literary skill. Never was more of lethargy, crime, intrigue, fires, mystery, romance and noble achievement crammed into one short metropolitan history. Discovered only in 1769, the marvelous harbor inevitably conditioned the city's character. Sky-sail yarders raced to it from the outer world, and many of their hulks, abandoned in the gold rush, settled into the tide-flats as filling where the sky-scrapers now rise. Ships and steamers of every nation followed and established "Steamer Day" as a tradition. Planes now abound. This is a lively yarn about a lively harbor always loved by San Franciscans, especially this one, for there he first knew and loved ships and seamen.

H.H.K.

### "TOWARD A NEW ORDER OF SEA POWER":

American Naval Policy and the World Scene, 1918-1922

By Harold and Margaret Sprout

Princeton University Press 1940. \$3.75

The role that American sea power will have to play to-day is one of the most important problems facing our country. In "Toward a New Order of Sea Power" the Sprouts give an indispensable background for understanding our present Naval policy. From 1918 through the Washington Conference in 1922 they analyze the decline of Britain as the ruler of the seas, the air power versus sea power controversy, and what American sea power could be and what it has been.

Following the first World War Britain was no longer able to continue the historic Pax Britannica. The problem was to fashion a new order of sea power, and at the Washington Naval Conference a compromise order was reached. The Sprouts believe that the Conference itself dramatically emphasized the potentialities of Anglo-American cooperation and it is their hope that opportunity will come again to realize this cooperation fully as a foundation of a new order of sea power and world peace. Their book dispassionately and clearly shows what tremendous power great navies have wielded in world affairs and what it can mean in the future.

M.A.

### FORE AND AFTERS

By B. B. Crownshield

Houghton Mifflin Co. \$7.50 Illustrated

This is a beautiful volume and a noteworthy addition to sailing ship literature. The place of "Fore and Afters" has been somewhat neglected because of the great appeal of square-riggers, and their place in our history. Capt. Crownshield's book is written from the authoritative vantage point of a Marine architect and member of an old Salem family. It is profusely illustrated with plate and scale drawings. The reader may be interested in knowing that among the yachts and schooners which the author designed was the unique seven-masted steel "Thomas W. Lawson". This book is a "must" for the Nautical library.

A.W.C.

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