

# The LOOKOUT



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SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK

## *The* LOOKOUT

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# The Lookout

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## *Statistics Brought Home*



This is an age of amazing statistics. We read that women spend incredibly larger sums for cosmetics than for religion; that the chewing gum consumed by the nation, if placed end to end, would reach somewhere beyond our ken, etc.; but a figure which recently came to our attention has registered with vital significance.

The industries of this country spend \$150,000,000 annually for welfare work among their employees. This, of course, is the equivalent of half a million dollars for each working day in the year.

In addition, these landsmen employees have access to public welfare institutions, such as playgrounds, hospitals, libraries, settlement houses, etc.

But what of the merchant seaman?

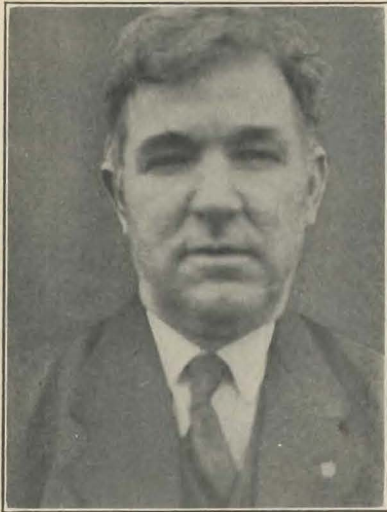
In the nature of things, it may

not be feasible for ship owners to do welfare work as such direct for their men. Some of these companies, however, help their employees through this institution, realizing that it is the most effective way of reaching them.

Perhaps the fact that practically no welfare work is done for seamen, apart from the service that organizations like ours are privileged to extend, will prompt others to make more of it possible by contributing to our work.

And after all, it is not the ordinary sort of welfare work that we do—we do not pauperize—we only give the sailorman an opportunity to help himself by providing a decent home for him ashore.

HARRY FORSYTH, *Chairman,*  
*Ways and Means Committee.*  
25 South Street, New York.

*South Pole Next Stop!*

GEORGE TENNANT

There's going to be some fun on the forthcoming Byrd Expedition to the South Pole, if we may judge from the comedy that unrolls itself before our eyes these days at the Institute.

Tennant is here—Tennant the steward-elect for the expedition—and his assistant Gething, who will cook for fifty-five hungry men for about a year and a half. Never could two more different men be brought together, which perhaps is the explanation for the comedy as well as for their attachment for each other.



ALBERT GETHING

They weathered the Byrd Arctic Expedition together, so that their friendship is no experiment.

Tennant is a stolid, stocky, easy-going fellow who manages to practice thrift and still have the reputation of being the most generous sailor in port; while Gething is a slight little chap who gets into mischief on all occasions and who manages to keep his finances in such shape that he always has enough to carry him through, but no bothersome surplus.

It was Gething who played most of the pranks on the Arctic Expedition, and we venture to guess that the two intervening years have not added sufficiently to his maturity to prevent similar antics on the way to the South Pole.

On the former voyage one of the "scientific gents" brought along his golf clubs and balls, much to the delight of the dyed-in-the-wool seamen on board, especially Gething. Gething told him (being English born), "It's a good job you brought your golf things along, sir, and you'll be needing them. We've got links below decks where you can play," and he directed his innocent victim to the ship's chain locker!

Another unsuspecting rookie was sent to the crow's nest for fresh eggs, while others were misled into the belief that they would pick up mail from home at "mail buoys" along the way.

Gething is apparently rehearsing for the coming voyage now, for he told us almost convincingly that there is a polar bear who acts as pole-bearer sitting on a chunk of ice and holding the pole aloft so that Commander Byrd will have some-

thing to attach the American flag to when he gets there.

All this is Gething's lighter side. We dispose of the matter of his character and ability by quoting a letter which Commander Byrd wrote him two years ago:

"My dear Gething:

"As our expedition is about to disband I feel that before doing so it is my duty as well as my pleasure to record in a letter your splendid services incident to our flight to the North Pole.

"I find that one of the peculiarities of Arctic expeditions is that men's qualities and true natures soon show themselves.

"Where, in civilization one may never really learn to know one's neighbor in years of acquaintanceship, in the Arctic it is extremely difficult to cloak one's true nature, even for a short time.

"Early in the Expedition you stood out as a splendid sport and an ideal man for Arctic expeditions, and that, I believe, is a great test of a man.

"Your job has meant that very largely you have been out of sight most of the time, and I have been impressed with the simple and straight-forward way

in which you have pursued your duties.

"All members of the Expedition as well as myself, Gething, are greatly indebted to you. You have proved an able worker, a fine cook, a good sport and a loyal gentleman, and by your work and spirit have merited the wholehearted thanks and appreciation of every member of this Expedition.

"Yours very sincerely,

"(Signed) R. E. BYRD."

More specific proof of Gething's qualifications as cook appears in Tennant's testimony that he can conjure up a brew closely resembling coffee in flavor, but made from dried peas.

He has a father and mother, three sisters and a brother in Toronto, and he confesses unapologetically to having occasional fits of the "crying blues" at sea.

Gething and Tennant both remember wistfully that when the *Chantier* left New York for Spitzbergen all the rest of the crew had someone on the dock to see them off, and they don't propose to have another similar experience. They have therefore asked several members of the Institute staff to be their

next-of-kin when they set forth for the Antarctic, "and," suggested Gething, "you might bring along some of those bright-colored paper streamers to throw after us."

Needless to say, we shall consider it a great privilege to see them off in a festive manner befitting the momentous and historic occasion.

Tennant is still busy with his supplies for the expedition. Most of them have been ordered, but he has afterthoughts from time to time, the latest addition being baseballs and bats—a real American touch, with the South Pole as the home plate, no doubt.

"Take our pictures? Sure you can," said Tennant. "We'll look like Beery and Hatton in the movies—little George here and fat me. Say, when I saw that last picture you took of me and realized how fat I am, I went a whole day without eating. I do think of my figger!"

"But you're making too much fuss over us. Byrd and Bennett were the only real heroes on the North Pole trip. Like brothers, those two were—like brothers, and both of 'em princes."

## Another Institute Outpost



OUR CHAPLAIN

Toothpaste plays its part in the work of the Seamen's Church Institute of New York—not so obvious a part as might at first be assumed. It serves its usual purpose amongst our sailors, to be sure, but it has an additional mission in life. One of our chaplains uses it as a point of contact with the merchant seamen in the U. S. Marine Hospital over on Ellis Island—

toothpaste and smokes and stationery.

Through one of these mediums he strikes up a friendly acquaintance with over four hundred patients, gaining their confidence and opening the way for service more vital than toothpaste.

Until the Institute placed a chaplain in the hospital, there was no one to whom the sick

seamen there could look for spiritual advice and comfort—no one to conduct the services when a sailor embarked on the “long voyage home.” Now our Chaplain goes through the wards daily on his errands of mercy and cheer.

Time was when the Ellis Island Hospital was given over entirely to the care of immigrants, but the War and immigration restrictions have changed all that. The number of immigrants coming to us has been so materially decreased that it is seldom that there are more than thirty-five requiring hospital care. These are entered on special contract with the Immigration Department, but the main function of the hospital is to provide for active merchant seamen who have served on American ships within two months—they need not be American citizens. No other nation renders a similar service, even to its own citizens.

But it is the privilege of this Institute to provide a special human touch in the person of our Chaplain.

He conducts religious services on Sunday mornings for the “up” patients, and at all times

his advice is available on spiritual matters if it is wanted; and if a patient requests a clergyman of any particular denomination, our Chaplain is glad to arrange for such a visit.

This is by no means the extent of our service, however. All visitors to patients are referred to the Chaplain first, which gives him an opportunity to keep out unscrupulous runners and lawyers who seek to “sign off” seamen who have met with accidents at sea, and to thus nullify their rightful claims for damages or workmen’s compensation.

Our Chaplain also arranges for all recreation for patients, including a weekly moving picture show and an occasional musical entertainment. Another task which he assumes is that of undertaking to get jobs for discharged patients, especially for those who may not be quite strong enough to return immediately to the strenuous tasks of their calling. This particular phase of his work is more arduous than usual during the spring season when the quiet of the hospital seems to irk and every sailorman who is able to hobble about feels an urge to get back

into harness again.

The Chaplain brings to this situation a humane and intelligent understanding of men, based upon long and successful experience as an army chaplain, in Mexico as well as overseas dur-

ing the War, and also as rector of a number of parishes. His real joy, however, is in his personal contact with the men of the Merchant Marine whom it is now his privilege to serve on Ellis Island.

### *To a Fellow-Worker*

Our sincere congratulations are extended to the American Seamen’s Friend Society, who have just passed their one-hundredth birthday.

We cannot but feel a warm kinship for this organization with whom we have such a vital common interest—the welfare of the seafaring man.

Over one hundred years ago a group of masters and mates petitioned the church people of New York to extend religious help to sailors in other ports. They had witnessed the telling service of the Port Society in New York and of the British Sailors’ Society of London, and they felt it should be extended to the four corners of the world.

As a result of their petition, the American Seamen’s Friend Society was organized in May, 1828, with the purpose of being

national and international in scope.

By a strange coincidence, they first opened their New York home in 1843, the same year which saw the organization of the Seamen’s Church Institute of New York. For sixty years they served the sailor down on Cherry Street, until in 1903 their property was taken over to make way for the Manhattan Bridge.

In 1908 their present home at 507 West Street on the North River was opened. They serve an entirely different section of the waterfront which in no way conflicts with nor duplicates our efforts. In fact, we are working and always have worked together to make life ashore a bit more tolerable for the sailor-man.

Again we salute an old friend passing the century milestone!

*Polly & Son*

Carl Carlson, true sailor that he is, likes animals of all sorts; and his wildest dissipation is to go ashore in a tropical country, invade the market place, and indulge in an orgy of monkey and parrot purchasing.

Fortunately he is a genial, likable youth and his shipmates and officers are apparently willing to tolerate his menagerie on the return voyage. According

to Carl, there are cases on record where the Old Man himself has taken a personal interest. In fact, one Captain acted as nursemaid for an ailing marmoset, sitting up with him at night, and giving the little fellow the freedom of the bridge during convalescence.

Carl recently breezed in from a voyage to Para with a zoo just about equal to Noah's in num-

bers if not in assortment. He had the discretion to bring only two of his troupe to the Institute, however—an elderly parrot of sedate deportment and a flapper of tender age. Polly Père speaks Brazilian, English and profanity, but may always be counted upon to conduct himself with dignity and decorum. Polly Fils, however, is more of a problem. He appears to be a man-eating bird with a particularly insatiable taste for noses and ears.

Carl's first move upon arriving at the Institute was to apply to the Clinic for treatment for what remained of his nose after an attack by Polly Fils. Our doctor took a liking to the bird and Carl generously (and perhaps actuated by the smarting nose) presented him to the Clinic.

Polly Père has gone off on further journeys with Carl, but Polly Fils has been added to the Institute staff, where he divides his time between devouring sunflower seeds and getting himself into predicaments. The joke was on him when he managed to stretch over from his perch on a picture frame and get hold of a stubby nail in the wall with his devastating beak. He let go his foothold and there he hung

sputtering away angrily until a rescue party took pity on him. It must be said in his favor, however, that even in these trying circumstances his vocabulary was quite beyond reproach. We are hoping for the best in this respect. In our sheltered Clinic, Polly should pick up nothing worse than a few medical terms.

Old Bill has been coming to the Institute for years. The fact that he has lodged here means that he has been sober, for others are not admitted, but it is rather generally known that Old Bill has had frequent tumbles from the water wagon.

Complete reform might be too much to hope for, as a first step at any rate, but one of our chaplains undertook to reason a bit with him with the hope of a gradual conformity to Mr. Volstead's ideas.

The chaplain talked generalities for a few moments until Bill began to feel at his ease, and then came to the point. He leaned toward Bill, looked him straight in the eye, and asked in his calm serious way, "Bill, do you drink?"

Bill brightened and lowered his voice to reply, "Yes, I do, sir. Have you got anything?"

*Sea S-language*

Mrs. Roper, whom we continually quote as knowing just about as much in regard to sailors as anyone on earth, states with finality that she never heard a seaman shiver his timbers. It may be done in books like "Little Lord Fauntleroy," but we have failed to locate anyone within the four walls of the Institute who ever heard the expression on bridge or deck.

Lacking from the sailorman's vocabulary are also many other salty expressions which the landlubber would like to think adorn his speech. The sea-going man who speaks of living a decent life until he gets to Heaven as "taking this ship into Port on an even keel" is a decidedly poetic exception who would have to explain himself to his shipmates if he expected to be understood.

It is quite possible to talk with Institute sailors all day long without hearing a single expression that savors of the sea unless perhaps a phrase now and then that has worked itself into our everyday language and which has long since lost its original nautical significance; for in-

stance, "making headway" or "knowing the ropes."

When our sailors talk among themselves, however, they have a slang vocabulary all their own as is the case with many a class of workmen. One of the commonest expressions of this sort which greets our ears at 25 South Street is "on the beach," meaning penniless or "broke." A sailor frequently gets into this predicament through being "rolled," which is just another way of saying he had his roll taken away from him.

Goodness only knows where "Monkey Wrench Corner" originated or why, but it labels the chief sailor "hang-out" in each port. It is the official meeting place of merchant seamen. In New York it is our Institute; in New Orleans it is a certain United Cigar Store; it doesn't have to be a corner at all.

If you chanced to meet one of our boys on the street and asked him his calling, he wouldn't tell you he is a sailor, nor yet a seaman. He would say, "I'm on deck," which means the same to him. "I'm midships," would be his way of informing you he is

an officer, and "black gang" would indicate that he works in the engine room.

Even the landsman can figure out that "taking on a cargo" is eating; "going into dry dock" is entering a hospital for treatment; and "slipping one's anchor" is dying, although this expression is now seldom used except by the old-time sailor who did duty before the mast.

These old-timers are forever recalling the good old days of wooden ships and iron men by way of being a bit contemptuous of any of our modern sailorboys who may be within earshot.

But these youngsters know how to strike back if they want to take the bother. Of course there is the obvious retort that these are the days of iron ships and iron men; but the more crushing reply describes the sailing ship—the goddess enthroned in the old-timer's heart—as a "rag wagon." That always ends the argument.

"B. A." not only shortens Buenos Aires conveniently, but it obviates the possibility of mispronouncing the name—an ex-

pedient which may recommend itself to the uncertain landlubber. "Yoko," "Alex" and "Rio" need no identifying.

In fact, it is seldom that the language of our seamen requires interpreting. It is quite intelligible and unsalted except when a group of real seafarers get together and then it is almost necessary to eavesdrop to learn the lingo.

Shanghai Red has a reputation as a singer. When he is in port, he is quite generous about performing for our Thursday stunt night audience, and having an almost inexhaustible repertoire, he welcomes suggestions.

"You're a Million Miles from Nowhere, When You're One Little Mile from Home," was requested by one of the Institute staff as Red stood on our improvised stage hesitating as to his next selection.

"Aw, youse don't want that," he advised feelingly. "Some of them guys back there ain't got no homes."

Shanghai Red has none either.

*Vignettes of the Seaman*

Merck & Son are now a close corporation—very close—after a long period of estrangement.

Three years ago the senior Merck returned to China where he has been a missionary during most of the lifetime of his seventeen-year-old son Alan. Alan has always adored his father and begged to be taken to the Orient, but as usual he was left behind in America to pursue his education. He was unspeakably hurt and he ran away to sea to drown his grief if possible.

Then it was the father's turn to suffer. For three years he has tried every means he could conceive to get in touch with the boy, but Alan ignored all communications that reached him.

Mr. Merck recently returned to America, his foreign missionary days over, and set about to find Alan. We heard that he was in one of the United States Marine Hospitals, but when we investigated we found that he had been discharged only the day before, leaving no address. We watched for him at our Relief Desk, suspecting that he might apply for help until he could get a sea job.

Of course he came. Of course he withstood his father's attempts at reconciliation for a time; but all's well that ends well, and after a lengthy discussion at the Institute, Merck & Son went off smiling.

Scotty—one of the numerous Scotchmen coming to the Institute, all answering to that name—sat huddled in a corner of the reading room. He looked unusually woe-begone. There was no mistaking the fact that everything was all wrong.

"Just come in from a mean trip," he confided willingly.

"Bad weather?" we asked.

"No."

"Bad food?"

"No."

"What then?"

"O, it was the cargo."

"What was your cargo?"

"Missionaries."

Much more questioning divulged the simple facts. Scotty's ship had brought back six missionaries from Africa, and Scotty was out of tune with the whole universe because one of them could not state with any degree of certainty who made the devil.

It is a subject which has interested Scotty these many years, and when a "preacher guy" couldn't answer it, he lost all hope of ever solving the riddle.

Pete has just arrived at the calamitous end of an attempt to commit matrimony by mail. He spent twenty dollars on the experiment and it has proved a total loss. It made him reminiscent.

"My brother married the first girl I ever had, and he's been washing dishes ever since. This makes twice I've been stuck."

And then he added philosophically, "Three times and out!"

Peterson got into mischief out on the Pacific Coast, and then he got into jail. He escaped and came East, deeply penitent and chastened by his experience. He was picked up, however, by a vigilant police system and committed to a penitentiary near New York for three years.

He kept in touch with Mother Roper during that time writing her the gist of his musings, for thinking was his chief past-time. He was philosophical about his

predicament. No one was to blame but himself and his punishment was merited.

He looked forward with dread, however, to being sent back to the Coast to complete nine and a half years of his sentence. The first year was to be spent in solitary confinement as a special penalty for his escape. The only redeeming feature was the prospect of the trip across the country. After his long confinement within four bleak walls, he looked forward to his brief glimpse of the hustle and bustle of life from the train.

But the unexpected happened. Peterson appeared at the Institute one spring day and asked Mother Roper's help in getting him a job. The courts had discovered extenuating circumstances surrounding his misdeed in the West which, added to his good behavior in the eastern jail, had won a pardon for him.

He had learned his lesson; and his freedom meant life itself to him, for had he served the balance of his sentence, he would have been beyond the ambition and enthusiasm of youth when he emerged.

Now he has a "stand-by" job on a laid-up ship—a "sadder and



a wiser man." His chances for success may be judged from this fragment of one of his letters to Mrs. Roper, written from prison:

"I am thoroughly in accord with what you say about environment. It is what one makes it, not only here, but anywhere. It is not the least bit of good for anyone in a place of this kind to blame others for his incarceration or to rant against society for the gist of it all is that he is here and society owes him only one thing and that is the chance to make good on his return to the world again; and so to this end he must utilize his time to the best possible advantage and not become a victim of his environment so when he goes out to fight the battle of life he will be girded against failure."

A special informal Mother's Day service was held at the Institute.

Doubting that anything adequate could be said on the subject, our Chaplain made the announcement: "We're not going to have a regular service. I just want every man here to close his eyes for two minutes and think

about his mother. You'll all be the better for it."

Two minutes passed and five, and more, and then they began to go out one by one, faces serious and eyes downcast. What was in their hearts, probably no one will ever know. That's the way with our sailors.

When the word "seaman" enters the ear of a New York City policeman, there is a click in his mind and he immediately thinks of 25 South Street.

This fact accounts for a recent telephone message from Coney Island. Jake Johnson had been discovered down there in a shabby rooming house. He was seriously ill with pneumonia; the windows were closed; and a gas heater was energetically exhausting what little oxygen was left in the room.

Jake had gone down there to repair motor boats during the dearth of sea-going jobs this spring; but he was our ward by virtue of being a merchant seaman. We took him to a hospital, but it was too late. All we could do, a few days later, was to place poor Jake in our little lot over on Long Island amongst our other friendless sailormen.

## WANDERLUST

By RICHARD HOVEY

I am fevered with the sunset,  
I am fretful with the bay,  
For the wander-thirst is on me  
And my soul is in Cathay.

There's a schooner in the offing,  
With her top-sails shot with fire,  
And my heart has gone aboard her  
For the Islands of Desire.

I must forth again tomorrow!  
With the sunset I must be  
Hull down on the trail of rapture  
In the wonder of the sea.

—THE SEAMEN'S JOURNAL, *October, 1927.*

The merchant marine sailor is one of the most picturesque figures in our modern life.

He sails the seven seas on freighters that nose their way into out-of-the-way ports and pick up all sorts of cargoes for our use—necessities, luxuries, gimeracks.

He risks his life in all kinds of weather to protect these cargoes. And he has to develop a deep philosophy to do it!

Then he comes ashore—the loneliest man in the world.

Doesn't he challenge your interest?

We tell you true tales about him in THE LOOKOUT. Won't you subscribe for some of your friends and thus help us to serve thousands of these merchant seamen?

THE LOOKOUT,

25 South Street, New York City.

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