The LOOKOUT

SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE

OF NEW YORK

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The Lookout

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To Our Knitters

We shall need plenty of good warm woolen socks for our sailorboys this winter.

We give them only to the destitute—boys who have been ship-wrecked or who have just been discharged from the hospital—but still we find opportunity to provide hundreds of pairs.

Fort Stanton, New Mexico alone will need socks for three hundred seamen who are being treated in the United States Marine Hospital there for tuberculosis contracted in the merchant marine service.

These men are our wards and we cannot fail them. Sufficient warmth may decide the matter of life or death for them.

Our knitters have never failed us and we know their deft needles will begin to click immediately in behalf of the sailormen who will so much appreciate the fruits of their labors. We shall need the socks three weeks before Christmas.

If required, printed directions may be had by addressing Mrs. Janet Roper in care of the Institute.

Wheeler

Wheeler was the first sailorman to tell us of his encounter with the West Indian hurricane in September.

His ship was on her way up from Pernambuco to Boston with a cargo of coffee beans and a crew of twenty-odd men.

The storm overtook them but did not alarm them, for the vessel was seaworthy and the hatches were safely battened down.

All night long they tossed about in the path of the hurricane, and at four o'clock in the morning Wheeler and two of his shipmates rolled out of their warm dry bunks to go above to stand their watch. The sea and the sky were inky black and the waves were breaking over the deck. Wheeler lingered a moment in the fo'c'stle companionway to fasten his oilskins securely. A groan made him look up just in time to see the faint rays of the mainmast light fall across the dark forms of his two shipmates as a wave carried them into the sea.

"Of course it might have been me," he said without emotion. "It's always like that. It always might be you—and of course there comes a time when it is you." He paused a moment.

"There wasn't anything we could do—not in a sea like that. It was all over for Pete and Joe in just a minute most likely.

"As soon as it got light the Old Man got us all together, and the engines slowed down to half speed the way they always do, and somebody ran a flag halfway up the mast, and then the Old Man read the service.

"It seemed sort of queer and unnatural, all of us there before breakfast in two lines on either side of the skipper, with our hats off, and him reading off two names we never heard before. We just knew them as Pete and Joe.

"That's all there was to it except that we came into port with our flag at half mast—not into Norfolk, you understand. That was just a port of call. It's only the home port where you dip your flag.

"Just after Pete and Joe went over we picked up a wireless from a sloop up ahead of us.

Most of their crew was out trying to make the lumber fast—lumber was their cargo—and one wave took fourteen men all at once. The skipper sent word down I was to watch out for them, but of course it wasn't any use—not in that sea."

"No, ma'am, it wasn't raining. It doesn't rain when the sea's like that. Fresh water kills salt water. Get a rain and she quiets down."

Wheeler is only twenty-four, but he has had enough experiences to last a life-time and to make him the seasoned philosopher that he is.

He is English-born. At the age of twelve he ran away from home and joined the British Expeditionary Forces in France, as a trumpeter.

"I didn't do any trumpeting," he explained. "We were too near the German lines. What I did mostly was to hold the Captain's horse."

He was afterwards transferred to the British Army in Mesopotamia where his experiences were such that he didn't like to recall them until he went back after the War. He decided a visit would be the best way to "get the whole thing out of his system," so he got a ship calling there for a cargo of dates.

Now Wheeler plies between New York and South America—his favorite route—as a member of the "black gang."

"I never have any trouble get-

ting a job. The point is I'll take the jobs other fellows pass up. I don't mind hard work. I've got an eye to my health. I'd rather work harder on a coal burner than to have it softer on an oil burner. When I come up from the coal furnaces, I could eat seven breakfasts, but after oiling——"

Here Wheeler did a bit of effective pantomime to indicate lack of enthusiasm for food.

"Of course I don't drink," he went on. "I like to think I'm an athlete, and drink don't go— no, ma'am."

It is quite obvious that Wheeler doesn't drink and that he does work hard. His clear eye, his clean-cut tanned face and his lithe athletic figure bear out his statements. He also saves his money, dresses well ashore, buys many a meal for hungry sailors, pets the South Street cats, and comes to the Institute with a merry smile and a cheerful word for everybody. He is one of the most likable sailorboys who crosses our threshhold.

"It might have been me," he said. But we cannot help believing that a wise Providence put a detaining hand on Wheeler's shoulder as he came up the fo'c'stle companionway out there in the hurricane.

Institute Neighbors

Walter and Dixie furnish much amusement for our sailormen. These two best of pals live just behind the Institute on Coenties Slip.

We can always tell what day of the week it is by Dixie who ranges from a fleecy white on Monday to a dingy gray on Saturday. While we cannot tell time exactly by the amount of dirt on Walter's little face, still we can approximate by it the number of hours since he has last been seen by his mother.

Walter's favorite sport is velocipede riding with Dixie tied on behind trotting along patiently, perforce.

Many an expressman stops his team at the curb in Walter's block and carries his heavy cases into the building rather than to back up across the sidewalk and ruin Walter's speedway.

Recently a dark and ominous

cloud appeared on the horizon —SCHOOL! Walter was taken to be registered, his faithful Dixie tagging along in his best Monday immaculateness, one ear up and one ear down, and one little tail up and wagging expectantly. He won the teacher's heart and he is to accompany Walter to school twice a week until he commits some overt act which will disqualify him. He will of course be a sad little dog for the remaining days of the week.

We shall miss both of our little neighbors, but the young must be educated!

Walter has a little dog,
Sometimes white as snow.
When Walter steps upon the gas
The pup just has to go.

All Played Out

MUSIC IN THE AIR

All played out.

That is the predicament of the Institute pianos.

Of course they get rather hard use, for our sailormen are husky; but it is not abuse.

On the contrary, sailors very much appreciate piano playing as a special shore privilege—something they cannot enjoy at sea.

It makes no difference whether the player struggles with a one-finger rendition of "Yessir, She's My Baby" or whether he fairly well masters the intricacies of Liszt's Second Hungarian Rhapsody, he just loves to play our pianos.

It is a simple homey pleasure that whiles away many a dreary hour—a bit of recreation we should hate to deny our boys just because we are all played out.

Will someone give us a good sensible second-hand piano that still has a tune or two left in it?

Lifeboats and Lifeboat Crews

By HARRY RUSSELL, An Institute Seaman

Editor's Note:—We herewith print excerpts of an article by one of our younger sailormen, which appeared in the Neptune Log in connection with the annual International Life Boat Race sponsored by the Neptune Association. We regret not having sufficient space for the entire article, for it reveals an extensive knowledge of marine history, a keenly analytical mind, and a literary knack which the casual reader might not attribute to our merchant seamen.

The romance of life lies in the long vistas of years which have been relegated to the realms of the past.

Man, the slave of an insatiable curiosity, has vented his craving for discovery in science and nature. These have yielded a vast fund of knowledge into his prying hands. Discovery has followed discovery, and they have only whetted his appetite for newer worlds to conquer.

Foremost in the ranks of these fields which have succumbed to the blandishments of our hardy explorers is the intractable sea. Having yielded her secrets after centuries of black dread and doubt, the rolling waters of the seven seas still exact their toll from among those venturesome souls who dare to challenge her dread moods and amorous graces.

Not without a struggle does the seafarer pay the toll the vengeful waters demand. Drawing knowledge from the higher sciences, he applies them to his needs and utilizes them in his combat with the realms of Father Neptune.

Vast is the number of the inventions which man has used in the struggle through the centuries. Vaster still is the number of lives which have been torn from the grasp of the sea, to pursue their allotted span and course on earth.

Surely one must admit that one of the chief factors among those which have been seized by us in the unrelenting strife is the lifeboat, a symbol of courage, and the weapon of countless heroes who have fought a life and death struggle with the merciless ocean.

The history of the development and use of this tiny craft as a safety factor would fill hundreds of pages in a volume devoted to marine architecture and development.

Its birth lies far back in the obscure reaches of history, of which we have no record.

Of course the lifeboat never functioned as such in the early days of marine pioneering. It is the outcome of the gradual increase in size of those early open boats until they were sufficiently large in size to accommodate a small vessel on their decks to prepare for an emergency.

When the directive properties of magnets were discovered and more effective methods of sailing were devised, the need for larger and larger vessels was found to be imperative.

The advent of sail in navigation permitted a wider scope in the construction of ships than would have been possible otherwise. Hence we see the growth of the bi-reme, tri-reme, etc., which played a large part in the naval warfares and engagements of those days. These larger craft found it expedient to carry smaller boats on their broad decks to enable them to communicate between ship and shore when anchored in port; a distance not negotiable by the larger craft due to her deeper draft. Consequently they observed that these small boats also offered them a much desirable opportunity of saving themselves should they ever be forced to abandon their ships. They built these small boats to withstand heavy weather, and when the occasion arose they fought their way back to land, after losing their ship at sea.

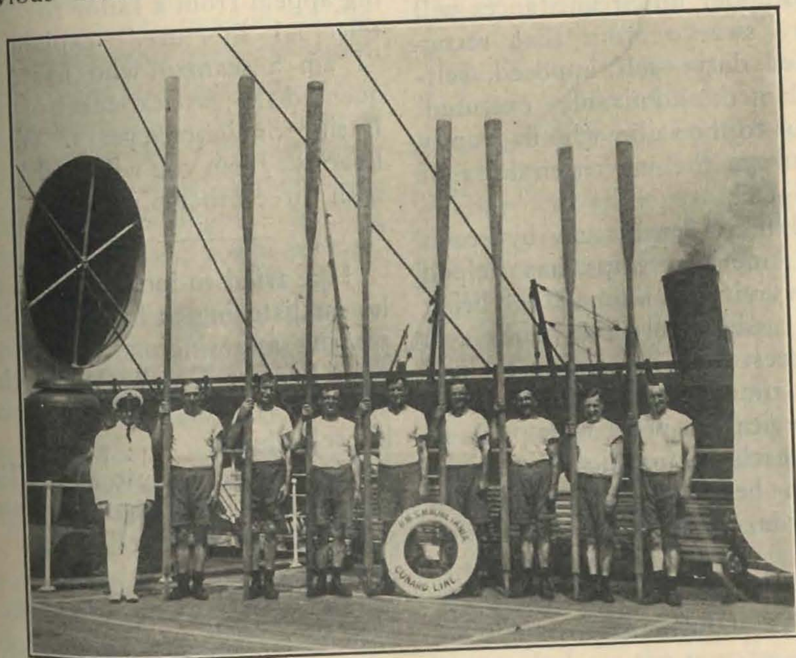
It was soon found advisable to expend more and more care in the designing and equipping of these small boats, and during the seventeenth, eighteenth, nineteenth and twentieth centuries, we have a wide variation in types, and designs of lifeboats, which were indicative of the trend of development in different countries. The longboat, the whaleboat, the dinghy, and even the captain's gig found their way aboard ship, and a duty to perform at times.

At the present time the United States probably has the finest lifeboat service in the world.

The tests and trials to which the lifeboat have been subjected offers a thrilling passage in the history of the sea. Voyages have been made in them of as much as a thousand miles. Hardships and privations have been endured in them, while they sought to cheat the avid sea of its prey, and more often than not they have been successful. Thrilling and bloodstirring have been the rescues effected by them in calm and storm. They have played no small part in the histories of the merchant seamen of all nations.

At one time the American nation held an undisputed position in the maritime field. American ships and sailors plied their trade far afield and made an envious name and record for themselves. Worldwide shipping felt the keen competion engendered by these old Yankee Clippers, and speed was synonymous with the American flag which waved in the breeze above.

The birth of the steamer saw the gradual decline of the American Merchant marine. Until before the war there was hardly an American vessel afloat in deep water, and our ships had almost disappeared from the sea. The late war added stimulus to



WINNERS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LIFE BOAT RACE

a dying industry, and with the dawning of this new day, America has again taken its place among the maritime nations of the world, as a sea power.

Since then she has kept pace with the rest and added undying glory and fame to the men who go down to the sea in ships, by effecting several spectacular records in saving shipwrecked crews, and passengers.

The seamen of the world have an international, unwritten code to which they strictly adhere, and under no circumstances will they swerve from that recognized duty—self imposed, self-ordained, admirably executed. Woe to the sailor who flagrantly disobeys the unwritten laws of the sea!

The recent rescues by crews of American ships has helped to revivify the seaman, and bring his trade before the public eye. Interest has been aroused and the time is not far off when America can point with pride to a merchant marine as modern as the best, with a record of skill and daring in all things requiring courage and ability.

Other nations have been just as conscientious in assisting shipwrecked crews, and distressed vessels, and many are the international tales of heroisms with which a raconteur of the sea could regale an interested audience. These will only show the importance and need of good lifeboats, and skilled men to handle them in crucial moments.

Mrs. Roper received a touching appeal from a sailor for "intelectual literture," explaining "I am a seaman who has frequented the vast expanses of the Pacific for eighteen years. What I receive from you will be shared with three other pirates."

Jake tried to look resigned as he sat listening to his pal lustily playing and singing "The End of a Perfect Day." When the agony was over, he unburdened himself thus:

"Of course I must admit I'd rather hear that than be deaf so I couldn't hear it!"

Vignettes of the Seaman

The approving eyes of a hundred or more sailors rested upon a slight trim little girl in smart tailored costume who found her way into our lobby. She was a stenographer from the Middle West who had come to New York for the Labor Day weekend to visit her "kid brother." He had written her on Institute stationery a few days before and she thought to find him here.

She told her mission to the little group who gathered about her. None of them knew the kid brother, but several wished audibly that they had been born in that role. One of them had a more practical suggestion: "I'll take you up to the Social Service, Miss."

Our records showed that we had found a job for the Kid on a private yacht. A phone call to the yacht club disclosed the fact that the yacht was off on a holiday cruise—no way of locating it.

The big sister (she said she was twenty-eight) lingered to talk about the kid. How did he look when he came to get the job?

We had to admit that he had been in the hospital, and our keen little visitor soon pried loose the information that we had tided the Kid over for a few days.

"O, do let me repay you," she offered eagerly. But our Relief Secretary shook her head. "No, your brother is the sort who will pay us back when he can. It will be better for him if he does it himself. We help sailors to help themselves."

The big sister agreed. Wisdom had come to her in the process of bringing up the Kid. Her eyes filled as she admitted, "I did work rather hard to give him his schooling and I do want him to turn out all right."

We made her promise she would telephone us when she had arrived safely at the home of the relative with whom she was to stay in New York, and we promised to let her know if we heard from the Kid.

It looked rather hopeless, but as it happened Fate took charge of things. An intelligent night telephone operator at the Institute took down the message that

the big sister had arrived safely at such and such an address. Later she got another message telling how the Kid could be reached. The two like names seemed more than a coincidence to her and she decided to do a little telephoning on her own account.

The result of it all was that the Kid was able to spend part of the holiday with his big sister; and she took a night train back to her job, happy and gratified that the Kid seems to be "turning out all right."

Once in a great while it pays to be careless. Charlie Snyder will vouch for this.

He stayed at the Institute one night and departed in the morning to see the town, leaving his wallet, containing fifty dollars and his papers, under his pillow. He had change in his pocket and didn't miss the wallet.

Late in the day a waterfront "professional" clubbed Charlie over the head and Charlie knew no more until he came to in the Broad Street Hospital the next morning. Of course he thought he had been robbed of his wallet. Well, it was all in a life-time, so he reasoned.

But he had lost his hat too, and in his extremity he appealed to the Institute for a cap. He could hardly believe his eyes when we handed him his billfold. He gave the cleaning woman who had found it all she would accept — five dollars. Then he deposited thirty-five dollars in our bank and sallied forth with the remaining ten in his pocket and in his heart a new faith in the workings of fate.

A very pale sailor appeared in our Social Service Department, escorted by a police officer and a stranger. Taylor had broken the law and the stranger had turned him over to the officer. The officer realized that it would be an easy matter "to send the boy up," but there were extenuating circumstances.

In the first place, Taylor had been sorely tempted, and in the second place he had bungled the job, showing that he was not an habitual evil-doer. The officer tried to persuade the complainant to "give the kid a chance."

In answer to the usual police department question, "Where do you live?" Taylor mentioned his only home—25 South Street.

It was the first time our Relief Secretary had ever been called upon to act as judge and she pondered the matter carefully. Finally after two days, she agreed to be responsible for Taylor if the stranger would withdraw his charge.

Taylor passed through some anxious moments pending the decision. He was so a-tremble he could scarcely express his gratitude.

"Perhaps you shouldn't thank me," said our Relief Secretary. "You know it is sometimes harmful to a boy to help him out of a scrape. It might have done you good to be sent up. The only way I can feel that I have done the right thing is to know that you have behaved yourself."

Taylor promised. Then he got a job. He has just returned from it—a long voyage with a good record. Apparently it has done him more good than being "sent up."

We have so many sailors with similar names that we have found it expedient, in the post office, to ask the applicant where he expects mail from.

"All over the world," is the answer we usually get.

Sometimes it is possible to narrow this down a bit. A man with a southern drawl who claimed correspondence possibilities from "all over the world" was asked, "Such as where?"

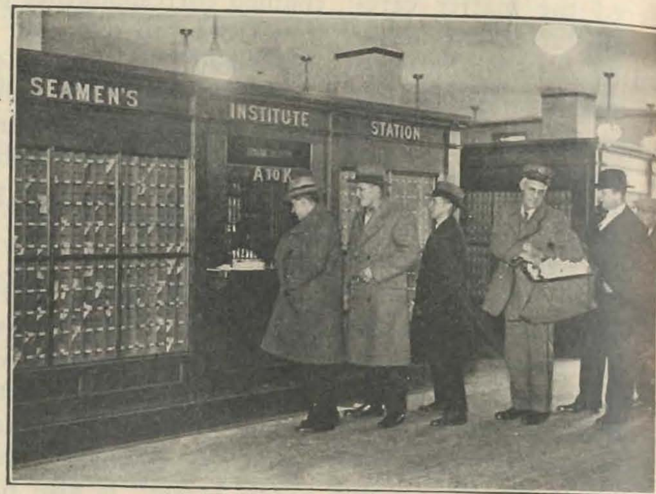
"Why, from Friendship, Alabama," he said, thus identifying himself more unmistakably than had he mentioned any port on the seven seas.

We often mention the fact that "25 South Street" is known to sailors the world over. We have frequent proof that it is.

But now we have happened upon the discovery that "25 South Street" is also becoming known to sailors' sweethearts the world over. A personable blond youth in our reading room first brought our attention to the fact. He sat scowling over a pink letter from a girl in Antwerp. He had met her only once, had taken her to the movies, and had said goodbye thinking the case was closed.

Then along came the pink letter from Mademoiselle Huguette explaining naively that he had neglected to give her his address, but never mind, she knew that all American sailors get their mail at 25 South Street, so *voici!*

A Post Office with a Soul



"You mustn't take the soul out of that work."

This was the command given by the Postmaster General's department in Washington when the Government decided to take over the Institute post office.

A year has passed under Uncle Sam's régime, and he has certainly shown that he has a soul in dealing with our seamen. Many post offices of necessity are dingy affairs where tired clerks go about their duties in a perfunctory sort of way, but not so the Seamen's Church Institute Station.

The office does a business equivalent to that in a town of twenty thousand population, which keeps a corps of clerks hustling. They are never too busy, however, to be human; and the space we rent to the government for one dollar a year glows with friendliness just as it did when we ran it ourselves.

The clerks are conscientious and realize that "rules is rules." Their first allegiance is to the Post Office Department, but they find it quite possible to befriend their sailormen customers without infringing upon Government rules and regulations.

A veteran clerk who has been

shifted about from one station to another in New York City and has finally cast anchor in ours, says that he has never felt so much incentive to serve the fellow the other side of the window as he does here at the Institute. There is something so wistful about a sailorboy, especially a sailorboy looking for mail, that it gets under the skin of even a blasé postal clerk.

The Postmaster himself is a willing slave. He recently worked twelve hours on a stretch when a member of his staff was absent on account of sickness. At about the tenth hour he had a cup of coffee sent up from the soda fountain, suddenly realizing that he had had nothing to eat all day. Then it was that business picked up with a vengeance. A group of Filipinos came to the stamp window. One of them could speak a little English. He asked for a stamp and when the deal was consummated the Postmaster turned to his coffee, but that wasn't all. The group had many wants which their leader could only interpret slowly and with difficulty. Finally, when it seemed that they were completely cared for, the Postmaster again approached his coffee, which was now quite cold. He almost dropped it at a sudden outburst of excited chattering from the entire Filipino group. They had upset the glue pot they had borrowed to seal their letters securely. It was after eleven hours of uninterrupted work, but the hungry Postmaster laughed and turned the sailorboys' anxiety to laughter too. Then he abandoned the coffee idea entirely and set to work cleaning up the glue.

During the war, medals were awarded not for bravery alone, but for service *beyond the line of duty*. On this basis our Postmaster should be well decorated, for each hour of the day sees some little act of kindness that he really doesn't have to perform.

He got a letter from a lonely mother far away, asking him to get her boy to write to her—not a legitimate claim upon a government employee, to be sure, but the Postmaster is "laying for the wretch," and we rather feel that this particular sailor will write home.

Perhaps a second boy will do likewise. The Postmaster handed him a letter, watched him open it, read it hastily and throw it

away. Curiosity got the better of the older man. He read the letter and found that it contained a mother's plea to her boy to write to her. So that was what the young scalawag did with his mother's letters! The Postmaster resealed it and had it delivered again.

Then there's Jerry, the blasé clerk. Jerry spent half an hour pasting up a five-dollar bill for a sailor who had somehow managed to tear it to shreds.

"It was all the money the poor kid had," was Jerry's explanation.

It has also leaked out that Jerry works hand-in-glove with one McArdle, a seaman who sends regular remittances to his sick mother. There are times when McArdle doesn't have quite enough to pay for the registry stamp or the money order fee, and on these occasions Jerry digs down into his own pockets.

We have many unique things at the Institute, and we believe that not least among them is our "post office with a soul."

THE LOOKOUT,

25 South Street, New York City.

Enclosed find one dollar for which please enter a year's subscription for

(Name) ....

(Address) ....

....

(Date) ....

Funds for the New Building are still vitally needed and will be most gratefully received by

JUNIUS S. MORGAN, JR.
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