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Volume I

OCTOBER, 1910

Number 6

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# THE LOOKOUT

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THE SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK  
ONE STATE STREET

## AN APPEAL

**W**E intend to build a new Institute that will be a model to its kind throughout the world. The land is purchased—the best available site in the city. The plans are drawn. We are ready. And still we delay.

It should be begun at once. Otherwise it will not be ready for use next May when our present lease expires. Until it is done we cannot expand our work and help more than a very limited number of the seamen of the port. But we cannot begin until we have more subscriptions. Nothing else delays us and hampers this work. We have raised \$405,000. We need \$285,000 more to completely pay for the land and building.

The Institute relies upon us to secure these subscriptions and start the building. We are doing the best we can, but it is a big undertaking. We need your help as well as your subscription. If all the friends of the Institute would rally to our assistance and carry this appeal to their friends the remainder would soon be raised and we could have our new building, free and clear, by May 1, 1911.

That is what we are asking you to do. Now is the time that your help is needed. Your subscription may be made payable any time before the building is completed, but we must know that you stand back of us and that the money will be forthcoming.

In making this appeal we confidently believe that those who help to make the new Institute possible will find it a continual source of honor and pride, and that, in the future, they will be grateful to us for persuading them to have a part in the building of it. Can you not persuade yourself and others to help us now and generously. The building was described in the May issue of **THE LOOKOUT**.

# THE LOOKOUT

Published by the Seamen's Church Institute of New York

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OFFICE, ONE STATE STREET, NEW YORK

VOL. I.

OCTOBER, 1910

No. 6

## Who Man Our Ships?

Who are the men that man our ships? The question would be interesting under any circumstances, but its interest is enhanced by two facts. One is the abandonment of the sea by native-born Americans. The other is the prospect that continually rises in the patriotic imagination of an American Mercantile Marine. This marine, whenever it is established, will create a demand for American seamen. The government now demands that 50 per cent. of the crews on American vessels shall be American citizens, and it is not likely that this percentage will be decreased. The question of where these American seamen are to come from, then, appears to be a serious one, and it is timely to take an account of our present stock.

There seems to be a lack of sufficient data from which to make up an entirely reliable report on this subject. This Institute and the Seamen's Christian Association maintain, in their shipping offices, record books in which the nationality of every seaman furnished with employment is entered. These records would seem to furnish all the material needed, but that, unfortunately, is not the case.

The work of this Institute is confined almost exclusively to the "deep-water" branch of the trade, while the Seamen's Christian Association concerns itself, quite as exclusively, to the ships on the Atlantic Ocean. The ships engaged in

British trade "sign on" their crews in Liverpool or Southampton, or some other British port, for a round trip, and only vacancies are filled at this port. About 90 per cent. of the seamen on these British vessels are Britishers. That proportion, however, and unfortunately, for the Britisher is about the least desirable employee in the fire-room, does not prevail generally in the trade.

Here is a record of the nationalities of 967 men shipped in the shipping office of this Institute during the early part of this year:

British . . . . .	420	Norwegian . .	9
German . . . . .	240	Dutch . . . . .	9
Swedes . . . . .	230	Spanish . . . . .	8
Russian . . . . .	20	Italians . . . . .	4
Americans . . . . .	13	Cubans . . . . .	3
Finns . . . . .	10	Greek . . . . .	1
French . . . . .	9	Cubans . . . . .	1

Roughly speaking, the percentage of British in the "deep-water" and "Western Ocean" trade is 45; of Germans, 25; of Swedes, 23; leaving 7 per cent. to include all the rest of the nations.

But these figures are not complete, because the coast trade has not yet been considered. These vessels are shipped by other than Institute agencies, and they are equipped, to a very large extent, with Spaniards, Italians and Greeks, although in the winter they attract a great many Germans and Swedes, and a few British.

The impression one gets from lounging in the haunts of the seamen is that

the Scandinavian has entered this trade rather more rapidly than any other nationality. If the records do not show a predominance, this may be due to the fact that during the summer months these Scandinavians are busy on the pleasure boats of wealthy Americans. They secure their own positions, as a rule, and no record is kept of their nationality; hence, the figures cannot be made complete. But from the records at hand it is more than evident that the vessels engaged in over-seas transportation on this side of the world are manned almost exclusively by British, Germans and Scandinavians.

On the American lines, of course, the law is complied with, but the 50 per cent. of American seamen are not native-born, nor any large part of them. They are naturalized Americans, of the same nationality as the rest of the sailormen. The temptation to naturalization is very alluring. The wages paid on these vessels are the highest in the trade. The temptation is especially attractive to the Germans, for the wages at German ports are extremely low. And this naturalizing process will doubtless go on as fast as there is reason for it; in other words, as fast as American lines are created, with their high wage scale, their superior food standard and their better fore-castle accommodations.

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### The Breakwater.

In the preceding issue of THE LOOKOUT there was published, under the title "The Sailor and His Master," a description of what goes on in the average boarding-house given over to the exclusive patronage of seamen in Greater New York. For many years this Institute has battled against the conditions and methods therein depicted,

and still the struggle continues. We believe that we are winning a great victory over the many evils which the sailor himself has earnestly, though vainly, sought to defeat, or has been too ignorant to see that in them was to be found the source of most of his troubles, and hence has failed to oppose them.

Legislation has been helpful, and by its aid much has been accomplished. Another efficient factor has been the strict enforcing of two very important laws by the British Vice-Consul; namely, that every seaman who presents himself for his wages must be sober or he does not receive them; and also that no boarding-house master can accompany a sailor beyond the doors of the Consul's office.

Within that office is the savings department of this Institute. A sensible sailor need not carry one cent outside with him, and, what is more, he is in a condition of mind to decide between the boarding-house masters who present themselves to him as soon as he reaches the pavement.

Until we entered the contest, there was a most disheartening choice of inevitable evils facing the sailor; evils beyond the control of the legislator, evils beyond the control of the Consuls—in fact, beyond all control, apparently. One thing only could be done to make a possible avenue of escape for the victim of the state of affairs in the boarding-houses. That was to give him one more choice, and, regardless of time, money, and even personal safety sacrificed, make it and keep it a clean, square proposition, prompted, not by greed, but rather by practical Christian desire to help these men wherever and whenever they needed our aid.

This we have attempted to do, and years of experimenting with the possible methods of meeting the needs of sailors who seek a place to sleep and eat while on shore have resulted in our hotel department, known as The Breakwater. Legally, it is simply another boarding-house, and its master another master. Yet there is in the minds of all sailors a subtle distinction of which we are proud. It is summed up in a statement which the men often make, to the effect that they never "go to a boarding-house, but always come to The Breakwater." Evidently our attempt has been successful, and now they may choose between a boarding-house of the usual type and The Breakwater. We have proved beyond a doubt that, given the chance to choose a clean, decent lodging-house, the sailor will gladly accept it.

Yet no rosy picture can be presented of the conditions. About the corner, which has always been famous for its brawls, there is gathered the usual group of good, bad and indifferent sailormen. Beside the ashcan, huddled in a shapeless heap, lies a man sleeping off the effects of a prolonged debauch; on the curb, by the entrance, sit a group of "down and outs," drowsily puffing the dregs of their grimy pipes; immediately about the door stand some of the lodgers, who are getting a great amount of amusement from the wild gesticulations, staggering strides and vulgar bravado of an intoxicated man, whose antics serve to pass the time which drags so monotonously along.

If one whose ideas of a "mission home" have been somewhat fanciful were to pass this scene without and enter the building, the interior might present a disillusioning state of affairs. Heavy wire partitions surround the

clerk's counter and separate the lobby from the main floor, which may only be reached through a large sliding door, so caught back on its slanting runway that it is strangely suggestive of a poised portcullis ready to fall and close the "keep" against riotous invaders. The big room that opens before the visitor is dark. The smell of tobacco is strong. A sailor, lately paid off, and more lately relieved of this same pay at the hands of the near-by "gin-mill" proprietor, comes rolling in and makes his unsteady way from the entrance to a chair in the more gloomy recess at the rear of the room. Little or no attention is paid to him, until a sudden clatter and dull thud is heard. A moment or so later he is found stretched out full length upon the floor, still asleep, in spite of a rough tumble from his chair. He is promptly picked up and summarily ejected through the front door. Shortly after this an oath or a bit of vulgar language can be heard from one of those at the game tables, and the offender is promptly informed that he must "cut that out or get out."

It is a relief to turn into the reading-room, where the light is much better, the air is clearer and quite refreshing to one who is not accustomed to such surroundings. Most of the men are poring over magazines or papers. One of them is interesting, for he cannot seem to hold his head up, and finally he sinks asleep, face down, upon the table. The events of the night before might explain his condition, as well as that of a fellow, hitherto unnoticed, who has selected an inconspicuous spot and stretched out upon a bench in this quiet room, where he is least apt to be molested, particularly if he happens to be

an inmate or regular customer of The Breakwater.

The noise of a gong resounds through the building. Supper is being served in the dining-room, where some twenty or thirty men gather for their meals. Forecastle manners prevail, in spite of the unusual presence of a table-cloth. Sober or drunk, clean or dirty, they eat, the majority in silence, others gibbering garrulous nonsense, and a few decently chatting.

An expedition upstairs into the sleeping apartments has a strong effect. The first impression is most favorable. Everything is clean and newly painted; the caretaker passes laden with clean bedding, which would do credit to any thrifty housekeeper. Our first impression is, unfortunately, abruptly reversed, however, for, upon his return with the sheets ready for the wash our vision of cleanliness vanishes. We need not go into details. It will console our visitor and exonerate us if he will but remember that this house, which now accommodates one hundred men, with all its windowless rooms and light partitions, once housed each night, not so very long ago, two hundred, at the rate of ten cents a night. A new building, and that alone, will rid us of our inheritance from a past condition filthy beyond description, before we entered and fought a terrific battle for sanitation and cleanliness. Let him also remember that we cannot always ask where our patrons slept the night before, nor search them to see that they do not carry a bottle of whiskey in the back pocket, nor require them to take a bath before going to bed.

Can this be the place that our pamphlets and appeals praise so enthusiastical-

ly? Can this condition be much better than that of an ordinary boarding-house? Let the reader consider a few facts which follow and judge for himself.

I. There is not one of the many boarding-houses visited by the writer which made any attempt to give its inmates *privacy*. Doors are wide open, hanging loosely from the hinges or taken off entirely, where single rooms are occasionally found. Generally the men are herded three, four, five, even up to sixteen in a room. Do you wonder that the men who are sober draw their belts tightly over their pockets and sleep in their clothes, or that the drunken ones have every cent taken from them. At The Breakwater every man has a single room, with a strong door fitted with a Yale lock, and the key is carefully guarded at the office.

II. Generally, within the boarding-house, no attempt at *cleanliness* is made. The beds have but one grimy sheet upon them; in some cases nothing in the way of covers except a dirty quilt thrown over the stained mattress. Occasionally the luxury of a pillow may be seen. Such a thing as a clean towel is almost unheard of. Then, again, there are miserable facilities for keeping clean. There is occasionally a toilet in some dark corner, but the general rule is that the men must seek a most disgusting place in the back yard. If they wish to wash, there is provided a rusty, greasy hall sink. In some cases the unsanitary basin is in the very sleeping-in-room itself. Judging from these places, the men never take a bath; how can they, without a tub?

What a contrast when we think of The Breakwater, with its clean sheets for every newcomer, sanitary disinfected

toilets, four clean washbasins, and a much-used shower on every floor? Do you blame a man with a spark of decency in him for choosing The Breakwater?

III. Those who have read our previous article know that the boarding-houses do not stand for honest dealing with the seamen. He is cheated out of his wages, overcharged for board and lodging, and shipped with supplies he has never seen and for which he has not an idea how much he is paying. There is a vast difference in the proceedings at The Breakwater. Every man has a receipt for money paid for board and lodging. His wages are deposited in the bank and he holds the receipt. If, for any reason, he has to leave before he has received the value of his payments it is refunded. He may enter our store, buy what he chooses, know the cost of each article, see the very goods he selects put into his bag.

Finally, he is free to apply to our shipping bureau, and there receive preference over outsiders. In this way he may be sure that his job will cost him nothing, and that no manner of subterfuge will be employed in getting him upon ships which he wishes to avoid. All this can and will be more clearly dwelt upon in some future article, on the work of the shipping department. Suffice it to say now that with all its faults, The Breakwater is an hotel for seamen which deals squarely and honestly.

IV. We have dwelt previously so much at length upon the degrading moral influence of the boarding-houses that few words will suffice to convince the reader of the contrast within The Breakwater. Swearing, gambling and foul language are prohibited there. This in itself changes the whole atmosphere

of the place. Drinking is most stringently dealt with. Continually the man who is on the way to become a drunkard is checked, advised and admonished, that he may again regain his ambition and live a temperate life. Within our walls the men are protected from those constant temptations which pursue them elsewhere. If a man desires to be clean, sober and pure, he knows that he will get help at The Breakwater, instead of the curses, ridicule and torment he is subjected to in a boarding-house.

V. Finally, our motive is Christian. We want to be *real* friends of the seamen. Our warm greeting is sincere, for we seek to give, and not to get, and what we give is not all material. How often we can give comfort, companionship, advice. But, above all, here we have men who have chosen to come to us rather than go to others for all things material and social, and we can give them yet more. We can present them with the inspiration to accept all we have to present, so far as it is uplifting in their lives, that is, the knowledge of Jesus Christ, their Master and everlasting Friend. Personal work among the men and Sunday morning services are forces which have an effect. This effect is the strongest argument for our work. It places us in a position to cease comparing ourselves with the boarding-house masters, and forces us to compare the men at The Breakwater with the men elsewhere.

If you have doubted that The Breakwater was useful or helpful to the men, are you not convinced now? If you have hesitated about the advisability of enlarging this most effective organ of opposition to the sailor's foes, you cannot, in the face of these facts, continue to do so and claim a real interest in their welfare.

## THE LOOKOUT

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NOTE—Address all communications to  
ARCHIBALD R. MANSFIELD, Superintendent

### Seven Hundred Thousand Dollars.

The mind of this busy world is occupied with so many cares and thoughts that it cannot find time to inquire very deeply into all of the things in which it is interested. Very often it arrives at conclusions that would be reversed if it had a better understanding of the matter with which it deals. On the surface, for instance, it seems as if seven hundred thousand dollars was too much money for this Institute to put into a building for the benefit of the seamen. But we do not think that it is too much money, and we speak with more than half a century of experience, with as full an understanding of the situation as can be had, and, probably, with as correct an anticipation of the future of this port as anyone. More than that, we are convinced that no adequate work can be done among the seamen for less; otherwise, we would not be struggling to raise so large a sum, when raising money is so arduous and disagreeable a task. Our minds are open, and if anyone can show us how we can do the work that has been given to us to do more economically we will be grateful for their advice. Let us consider the matter.

Naturally, we begin with the land, which precedes the building; but the size and location of the site is determined by the work and its needs. The work has to be done where it can be done. Con-

sequently, the two must be considered together.

We have had experience with cheap locations. The sailormen had drifted away from these neighborhoods, for one reason or another, leaving us in futile isolation. For instance, at just this moment we are being driven out of Brooklyn, where our hotel, The Breakwater, is located, by a combination of circumstances that could neither be foreseen nor controlled, but which was liable to occur at any place away from the established shipping center. There is no economy in choosing a site because of its cheapness rather than its permanent desirability. We must have a location that will remain central to the seamen for all time, and which can be reached without difficulty.

South street is the sailorman's boulevard, and known as such all over the world. Lower South street will always be accessible to the men who man our ships. That is the only place for us to locate, and there we have chosen a site sufficiently large to accommodate such a building as the work demands. It will be convenient to the consulates, where the seamen are signed on their ships and paid off when returning from a trip; that is a very great advantage. It was expensive. It is a strategical location. In the end it will prove economical.

In order to appreciate how large a building is needed the many departments of the work must be known. Let us enumerate them: A church, hotel, seamen's savings department, baggage room, post-office, store, shipping office, reading, writing, entertainment and educational rooms. This is not one institution; it is composed of several, which should all be housed under one roof.

Lest it be thought that we are too am-



bitious or that we are carrying out theories of institutional work, let us recite how the institutional features of this work have grown and why we are in our present situation.

The Institute began as a religious organization, doing the same mission work, along the same lines, that other such organizations have followed. We began with a floating church, moored at a dock on the East River, where we held religious services for seamen and long-shoremen. In a little while we realized that we owed it to the patrons to provide a place for them to lounge during their idle days on shore. They had their mail sent there; they wanted pen and paper to write letters; they wanted books to read; they wanted entertainment of some sort, and so we developed the conventional reading and writing room, which was well patronized. Then the seamen wanted a place to leave their baggage where it would be safe, and a baggage room followed. In this room there are now stored 1,200 pieces of baggage.

At about this time we became convinced that we were not giving these men a square deal. We extended wholesome influences to them when they came to the mission, but as soon as they left its doors they entered into an environment that was calculated to destroy the best intentions of the most robust saint.

We inspired them to be decent, and then shut the door in their faces, leaving them to meet the temptations of the waterfront unaided. The seamen told us we were not treating them squarely. When they failed to keep their promises and broke their resolutions they lost faith in themselves, in the church, and in everything else. They were worse off than they had been before. It was all

true. Everyone who has had experience in this work knows it is true. We could not refuse to expand, and we opened a little boarding-house, where seamen could be provided with a decent home, under good influences, and out of reach of the men who laid in wait to prey upon their weaknesses. You who know the value of the Y. M. C. A. must know what such an institution means to the strangers, fresh from the sea, spending a little while on shore.

The hotel was followed by a seamen's savings department, where the men could leave their money, knowing they would not be robbed and debauched, and knowing that whatever amount they wished to send home would be transmitted safely and free of charge. Without money in their pockets their enemies had less use for them. That alone delivered them from temptation and helped them to be decent.

But, having done all this, we were still assured that we were not making the deal square. The men were dependent upon the notorious Ring, of which we have written so often, for their employment. In order to secure employment they had to give up a good share of their future wages—blood money. That horrible story has been told too often to need repetition. They needed some agency that would secure employment for them in a fair and equitable way, and without mulcting them of all that they earned. A righteous battle was to be fought, so we entered the field.

It was useless to promise employment unless we had employment to offer. We told the ship-owners that we could furnish them with men, and they trusted us to do it. From a small beginning, we have built up a strong employment bu-

reau, which provides employment for about 4,000 men a year.

Now this story is simply a story of growth. We have outgrown all our accommodations. Our hotel, The Breakwater, will not accommodate the men that come to the Shipping Office, and we are compelled to depend upon the boarding-house keeper—the same old Ring that we have been fighting, to help us out. The business of the Shipping Office has reached such proportions that we must be able to furnish more crews than we can recruit from The Breakwater. If we are to keep the business of the ship-owners we must be able to supply the necessary men. If we are to supply work for the applying seamen, we must have ships to put them in. This business, like all others, has its patrons and customers, upon both of which it is dependent for success, and in order to take care of the business we must have a very much larger hotel. That is from the point of view of the work. From the point of view of the seaman there is the same need. More apply than we can accommodate.

In planning the hotel we have been guided by the experience of others, as well as by the demands with which we are familiar. The managers of the Mills Hotels have learned that a hotel built to accommodate less than 500 men cannot be made self-supporting. That is none too large to meet the demands. New York is now the greatest seaport in the world, and 500 seamen make but a small portion of the men of the sea at this port.

The size of the hotel determines the size of the building, because all other departments of the work must be on a proportionate scale. Moreover, in order that discipline may be maintained at sea,

the seamen and officers must be kept separate. They must be housed in separate dormitories, fed at different tables, instructed and entertained in separate classes and social rooms. That practically duplicates our work.

The work demands a big building in an expensive location, and we are on the knees of our work. We cannot alter circumstances; we must accommodate ourselves to them. And complying with the conditions that confront us compels the expenditure of what APPEARS TO BE an unnecessarily large sum of money.

But let those who have thought our request an extravagant one remember that no other institution in the world is doing all the things for the benefit of the seamen that we are doing. Let them compare its building cost with that of the Naval Young Men's Christian Association in Brooklyn, the Mills Hotels and institutions of similar character. Let them add to the things that have been enumerated our relief work in all its various forms, the work of the West Side Branch, the work of our useful yacht, the *Sentinel*. When they have considered all this, let us ask if it is not a good thing to do, a big thing, a necessary thing, and an expensive thing. Is it not an undertaking toward which YOU would like to make a generous contribution and feel that you have a part in it? There is \$300,000 yet to be raised, and this must be done this winter in order to secure conditional gifts of \$75,000.

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We regret that Mr. Charles P. Deems has left us for the winter, while we rejoice that he has entered the Episcopal Theological School at Cambridge, Mass.

## REPORT FOR AUGUST

### Departments.

The following synopsis of the work done in the various departments during the month of July, gives a fair idea of the workings of the Institute:

August, 1910.

#### *Savings Department*

August 1, cash on hand.....	\$15,571.08
Deposits .....	11,080.47
	\$26,651.55
Payments (\$4,949.46 trans- mitted) .....	9,812.87
September 1, balance.....	\$16,838.68

#### *Shipping Department*

Number of vessels shipped entirely by the Institute .....	21
Number of men provided with em- ployment in port.....	101
Number of men shipped.....	214
	315
Total .....	315

### *Reading Rooms*

Total attendance .....	9,669
Letters written and received.....	2,051
Packages reading given.....	501
Number pieces checked.....	608

### *Relief Department*

Assisted .....	47
Sent to Legal Aid Society.....	28
Sent to hospital and dispensary.....	3
Visits to hospitals.....	29
Visits to ships in port.....	64

### *Religious Department*

Number of Services.....	23
Attendance total .....	379
Communion services .....	3
Funerals .....	3

### *\*Institute Boat "Sentinel"*

Trips made .....	21
Visits to vessels .....	24
Men transported .....	91
Pieces baggage transported.....	189

\*NOTE.—Boat in commission only one-half month.