

# KDKF - Afloat

# and Ashore

by Mary Graham Bonner



REV. DR. A. R. MANSFIELD

WORK OF THE SEAMEN'S CHURCH INSTITUTE



AT THE INSTITUTE ENTRANCE



PARTY FOR APPRENTICE SEAMEN

**N**OT long ago the news of doctoring a man far out at sea—by a doctor on land—set us all agasp at the wonders about us, almost unnatural in their infinite possibilities and successes. It all arrested my attention so sharply that with intense curiosity I went to the Seamen's Church Institute in New York city from where I heard this wonder sprang.

Dimly I had heard of this place, this enormous building which meant home to thousands and thousands of seamen from all over the world, and I had heard of its tower and its great green light which was the first light to be seen as a boat came within view of New York. The Institute is situated on the very edge, as it were, of Manhattan island—25 South street, along the water front.

Captain Robert Huntington, principal of the Navigation, Marine Engineering and Radio school of the institute, and Dr. Mansfield, superintendent, have been the ones to accomplish this medical service by wireless.

For the past year KDKF, which is the distress signal sent to the institute radio station, has resulted in treatment of the man sick at sea by a doctor at one of the public health stations on land. The institute has put through this work in a very complete way. It has finally won out in the insistence of the law which makes all ships carry a first aid equipment, a first aid manual (the work of the institute) and a medicine chest. And now, in order to receive his certificate, a ship's officer must have had a course in first aid training.

So that now a man who is sick can be treated at sea by these officers who understand medicine sufficiently to be able to proficiently follow out the directions of the doctors who send their advice and treatment by wireless—following the sending of the man's symptoms to them. Ships outside the radius can have messages relayed by the ships within the radius.

All kinds of illnesses have been treated and now the final arrangement as to the different coastal stations is to be made so that all over the world there will be medical service by wireless. And all this has been put through by the Seamen's Church Institute. The radio corporation pays all the wireless expenses of sending messages with the exception of some of the telephone toll charges and—private individual pays these.

The accomplishment of this as a world service has just been completed. And the place I had known of as that with the green light, which is not only the first to be seen upon approaching land, but the last light to be seen as men sail out to sea again, has been responsible!

Then, too, I had heard of the time ball which dropped down the pole on top of the tower every day exactly as Washington sent word that it was noon, and of the hundreds of glasses turned toward this tower around noon, a simple enough tale but one that had always appealed! For all boats in the harbor take their time from the Seamen's Church Institute time ball.

Of these I had heard, and sometimes of services, sometimes of entertainments and—up to the time of the long distance medical treatment—of the transference of a ferry house along the water front into a comfortable, heated, lighted relief station for the great number of unemployed seamen this year. This they too had put through with the cooperation of the civic and naval authorities.

It was very difficult, I found, to discover who was the inspiration back of each enormous accomplishment. Archibald R. Mansfield, D. D., the superintendent, was the one who everyone else told

me, had put through everything. But Dr. Mansfield treated that with scorn, and went on to explain just who were the individuals responsible for the many and devious splendid things accomplished there. In fact there was this spirit everywhere. There is absolutely no desire for self-glory in anyone I met—a rare thing to be found in a large organization.

Over seventy years ago a pious gentleman from Boston found his boat stranded on the New England coast. He found shelter, however, in the inn of a small coast town. It was Sunday. The pious gentleman sent out word to the various ships which had sought shelter in the storm that there would be a service that Sunday morning in the parlor of the inn, and there was such tremendous response that soon afterward a floating church was to be seen in New York harbor. For it showed seamen enjoyed a service.

Next some men from Trinity parish went down every Sunday to the wharves and asked the men to come to services. And the Seamen's Church Institute had grown out of these beginnings and the Protestant Episcopal Church Missionary Society for Seamen in the city and port of New York. Since 1906 it has been known as the Seamen's Church Institute of New York.

It was Reverend Dr. Mansfield who made the Church Institute what it is—who struggled his way through the almost insurmountable difficulties which loomed and intruded and threatened. Time and again his life has been threatened. Time and again he has been watched and followed by men carrying firearms waiting for an opportunity to get even with him, for he has been the bitter enemy of these vultures who have fed for years off sailors. Vultures who have not waited for death—they have been more remunerative living—but for the incapability on the part of the sailors which they have produced through the liquor they have sold.

The life around the wharves of a great city is not one well known in other parts of a city's life. Vaguely one imagines that sailors are apt to get drunk when they come to port. Vaguely one imagines that a good many of them are enticed by women and pretty generally left broke some good time before their ship sets sail again. But few know the combine which existed for years and years and which it seemed would never be broken.

It was a system against seamen by masters of ships and keepers of "boarding houses." The masters of the ships directed their men upon going to shore to these various boarding houses along the water front. There the men found drink and women. They were thoroughly fleeced, they were thoroughly filled with liquor, and then they were put out as worthless "bums" to eke out the rest of their time ashore penniless, usually coatless, hungry and lacking in any self-respect.

The money which they had been robbed of by these "boarding houses" was divided between the boarding house owners and the masters of the ships. Here was Dr. Mansfield's greatest difficulty. The masters of the various ships would not give men jobs who went to the Seamen's Church Institute. They would not take them back on their ships.

But Dr. Mansfield went to various shipping companies which agreed to co-operate and so the terrible combine was at last broken up. Everything and everyone along the water front fought a hard and angry battle against Dr. Mansfield. Barber-shops, boot-black establishments, lunch rooms, all were ready to work in with the "boarding houses" and the masters of the ships. There was where the money was. Why bother about a man's body when there was money to think about?

Fearlessly, courageously Dr. Mansfield worked against the cruel and soulless greed of the water-

front. Is it any wonder that thousands and thousands of seamen the world over look upon the Seamen's Church Institute as their home?

There is everything at the institute—barber shops, tailor shops, lunch rooms, outfits for sale—everything that there might be along the water front's exterior with none of its demon-like interior.

Here is a place like an enormous hotel with comforts such as even hotels cannot afford, and yet at prices such as are charged by lodging houses, so that there is not the feeling of charity. There are great reading rooms, lounging rooms, there is nothing stiff here, there are entertainments, dances, movies, magazines, books, smokes, there is companionship, there are beds with cool, fresh linen, shower baths, places where a man may wash and dry his clothes. Over eight-hundred men sleep there every night, though several hundred have to be nightly turned away until the new building next door is erected.

There is a chaplain always on duty, talking to the men, helping them, bringing families and men together again—through the institute's wonderful "missing men department." This chaplain has also studied law sufficiently so that he may help the men in various legal difficulties that arise—and he is a chaplain with a very keen sense of humor. It keeps everyone "smoothed out." "And he gives everything he owns away," the house mother told me.

Mrs. Janet Roper, the house mother, is a quiet person whose skill and enormous success at her work is realized as one goes about with her. She is very far from being aggressively executive. She doesn't talk about "systems" or "theories" or "executive ability." She talks about the men.

She showed me about. There is not a wash bowl in the building that is not a memorial. Every room has a memorial plate upon its door. A favorite form of memorial has been to donate a room. And in the new building which is to be started in the spring already many of the rooms have been donated. Sometimes I came across a Chinese name—a Chinaman who wanted to show his affiliation with, and his affection for, the building with the green light which had meant home for him in a foreign city.

But typical of a seaman, according to Mrs. Roper, and typical of what a seaman should be is illustrated in the memorial plate on a room donated in memory of the captain of the Titanic. "In memory of Captain Edward J. Smith, R. N. R., who lost his life while in command of S. S. Titanic, April 15, 1912. He sailed the sea for forty years, faithful in duty, friendly in spirit, firm in command, fearless in disaster; he saved the women and children and went down with his ship."

The link which thousands feel with the institute is its greatest stronghold against the sordidness of the water front. Men arriving in Brooklyn telephone to see if there is room for them. Men from all over the world come here and go forth to tell of the green light in the tower which stands in the building where there is everything to help them. There is the bank, the post office, the place where their baggage can be safe.

In a park nearby there are open air moving picture shows in the summer and various entertainments.

The Seamen's Church Institute is under the Protestant Episcopal church. Its chaplains are Episcopalians, though its employees are of all faiths. It serves all—the chaplain who visits the men in the hospitals brings rabbits to the Jews, priests to the Roman Catholics, and ministers in whatever faiths these men have been brought up.

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Awful Plight of a Tramp.

Tramp (at the back door)—Kind lady, I ain't one er them what's seen better days. I ain't 'ud no better days. I've bin neglected right from the start—been' born in a little attic in Lunnun wuhle me parents was down at South End enjoyin' theirselves.—London Punch.

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