

Long queues lined up every afternoon at a window through which the liquor was dispensed, then each individual hurried off with his bottles, to make an evening of it with convivial companions. Often the really bad cases could be soon still drunk, or sleeping it off, in the stern of the ship quite late next morning.

A little police force of able-bodied men was organized among our passengers. These plain-clothes officers patrolled the ship day and night. At times there were fights with the drunks long after all respectable folk were abed. The ship's brig was rarely empty. Petty thefts occurred at intervals, and a "Dead End" gang, sequestered somewhere down in the holds, stole bed-clothing, travelling rugs and shoes as opportunities came. But fortunately, nothing really serious happened of a criminal kind.

TANGLED THEOLOGY.

In adolescent days religious controversy had been a favorite pastime. At maturity this gave place to more practical interests. But still the 'still small voice' was not entirely stilled. Then, at some chance moment, the cloud lifted, the vista cleared, a portal came in view. It was found in a book, and read, "All paths lead to Heaven". This comforting dictum remained heart-treasure for many years, until Dame Fortune led my ever-wandering steps onto the decks of the "Taia Maru".

One of our passengers was a lady whom, in China, I had known since her youth. Of devout Catholic parentage, both she and her husband piously sustained the family tradition; so much so, in fact, that they had raised and reared no less than fifteen children up to date. Now this lady, whom I will call Mrs. B., was on her way to the States, accompanied by nine of her offspring, whilst the father and other members of their family remained in Shanghai as unwilling and ill-fed guests of the Japs.

After breakfast one day I sat out on deck with Mrs. B. enjoying a friendly chat. We talked of mutual acquaintances, domestic matters, the past and future, which led us almost naturally, on to religion, - for, as I have said, Mrs. B. was a very devout woman. Then she remembered that mine had been a Protestant-Catholic marriage and that none of my family attended Mass. For which reason she set about doftly decrying this form of union. To this I responded with quick Irish warmth that where love is nothing else matters; that marriage is the right of every young couple who truly love one another, regardless of priest, parson, bell, candle or book. And so we argued, pro and con. It was pretty lively going whilst it lasted; then we shook hands. But who got the last word? Mrs. B. did, of course. As we parted her final shot was this: - "Well, at any rate there won't be any Protestants in Heaven!" I am glad to be able to add that this little war of words left no rancour on either side; in fact some days later Mrs. B.