

The Home Mission Journal

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Cruising for the Cross.

By Rev. C. A. S. Dwight.

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CHAPTER XVII.

When, some days afterward the chief engineer was overhauling the engines, seeking to learn more particularly the cause of the accident off the lee shore that awful night, which might have proved so disastrous, a twisted hand-spike, bent by contact with the machinery, suddenly tumbled out from within a mass of twisted rods.

Some evil-minded member of the crew had tampered with the machinery, inserting that bar of iron just where he knew it would do the most harm, although he could not have known that just at the moment when the break-down occurred the yacht would be most in need of its engines, off a dangerous lee-shore.

"There are only three men aboard this ship that would have stuck that hand-spike into the engines," muttered Saunders, the boatswain's mate to himself, when he heard of the occurrence. "One of them's the Lascar, another the Portuguese, and the other man Bailey. And I believe it was the Lascar!"

While the deed could not be proved to have been the work of any particular man, the mysterious break-down in the engine-room set the officers of the *Glad Tidings* hard at work thinking.

There was no time just then for speculation, as the stormy weather continued, and the *Glad Tidings* with the smallest amount of canvas set which allowed of making headway at all, labored heavily in the huge seas. At times it was obliged to lie under close-reefed main topsail, single-reefed main try-sail, and fore storm-sail. These were anxious times for all on board, and Grace Henton in her cabin spent much time in prayer. The account of the voyage of the dauntless apostle Paul in the Book of Acts greatly comforted her, as she recalled his encouraging words to his terror-stricken shipmates, "Be of good cheer!" Then she would hum softly to herself the verse of the hymn:

"Tossed upon life's raging billow,
Sweet it is, O Lord to know,
Thou didst press a sailor's pillow,
And canst feel a sailor's woe!"

The third night after the *Glad Tidings* club-hauled off the lee-shore on the outermost rim of the Paracels the storm was not quite so severe, and the ship was making fair progress in her course, though still the sea ran high. In the later evening Grace sought to read a little in a corner of the main cabin by the light of a detachable lantern which swayed from a hook overhead—for it was a rule aboard the *Glad Tidings* to put out the brilliant electric cabin lights early on dark nights, lest their brilliance obscure the glow of the red and green side-lights, on whose clear recognition by approaching vessels the safety of more than one craft might depend. Grace had hardly leaned back on the pillows of the sofa to enjoy her book when a sharp cry, one of the most startling ever heard at sea, floated out on the air from somewhere overhead: "Man overboard!"

Instantly there was a tramping of feet on deck, and a number of hoarse orders were shouted. Springing up Grace instantly and instinctively did a curious thing. Catching the lantern from its hook she held it close to the cabin port hole. Afterward she found that that simple act of hers had saved the life of the unfortunate man who had fallen overboard. For though a rope had been immediately thrown to him from on deck he could never have seen the line in the darkness,

had not a ray from the lantern held up by Grace lit up the water at the precise spot where the end of the rope was trailing. Snatching the rope and clinging to it with desperation, the man was hauled on deck. Grace had saved a life, by doing as the right moment of supreme need—the only thing in her power—the holding up of a light to shine forth upon the dark heaving waters.

"You did well, sister dear!" exclaimed John later, when he knew the circumstances. And then he added reflectively, "It would be better for this poor old storm-driven world, if every Christian believer would so hold up the light of his Christian testimony that some poor sinking seaman. In the hour of his dire extremity, might have light thrown upon some promise of Scripture otherwise dark to him which, so illuminated by helpful comment, and seized as Paul's shipmates seized the broken pieces of the corn-ship, may prove the means of drawing him out of the deep waters of sin into the safety and blessedness of an eternal redemption.

When the *Glad Tidings* was hove-to that dark night in the China Sea and the man who had fallen overboard was hauled on deck dripping and limp, but not lifeless, the unfortunate seaman proved to be Bill Saunders. No one could be found who had seen him actually falling overboard, and Bill could give no clear account of how he happened to plunge into the dark sea. The first officer had noticed a dark figure in the water. His quick cry, with the instant response of an after-guard who heaved overboard a life-line, and the illumination of the waters by the rays of the lantern which Grace Henton held up, had been instrumental in effecting the man's rescue. It seemed strange, however, that so experienced a seaman should have taken a tumble into the sea and the more he thought about it, the less Saunders was able to account for his fall. His mind seemed to be a blank upon the subject of the occurrences just previous to the moment when he found himself struggling in the water. Gradually, however, his brain cleared away enough to give him a vague impression that he had been standing near the starboard cat-head or perhaps leaning over the rail when—he might have been dreaming this—a shadowy figure had stolen up and struck him. Sure enough there was a suspicious bump, which still was much swollen, and soon began to ache not a little. A startling thought flashed across Saunderson's mind.

"I wonder if that sly Lascar gave me a clip that knocked me senseless and then heaved me into the water? Just like him! If so, it must have been the cold water that revived me enough to give me wit to gripe the rope!"

But Bill Saunders said nothing of his suspicion, least of all to the Lascar himself, and tried his best to treat with a forgiving spirit the man who seemed to be his implacable enemy, all because it had been the duty of the boatswain's mate on several occasions to report the Lascar for various offences.

It was not long after this misadventure before the *Glad Tidings* drove into its "mud-hook" in the roadstead of the Hong-Kong where hurricanes are not infrequent. As a precaution against sudden disaster the top gallant-masts were sent down, the yards were secured and hoisted clear of the caps, spare yards and spars on deck were firmly lashed, and the hatches were kept ready for battening down. By this fore thought a number of severe hurricanes, that burst in quick succession over the roadstead caused the *Glad Tidings* no appreciable injury.

Grace Henton looked with wonder at the huge ugly junks which swept past the *Glad Tidings* on the strong tideway, and her brother could not help congratulating himself that he encountered those wicked-looking craft not on the high seas but under the protection of the guns of Hong-Kong.

At Hong-Kong many opportunities were afforded of holding meetings with British and American seamen. In that port too the Hentons found great pleasure in making the acquaintance of numbers of missionaries, both British and American. Some of the former were stalwart young athletes who had come from the classic shades of Oxford or the greenwards of Cambridge to share with the heroic Hudson Taylor the hardships, dangers and toils of China Inland Mission; and were about to proceed to the interior as

far as the borders of Thibet with its towering mountain ranges. Some of those devoted missionaries from England and America were destined, though the Hentons did not know it then, to lose their lives for Christ in the Boxer uprisings in a way which thrilled all Christendom.

From Hong-Kong the American yacht slowly beat its way against head winds to Shanghai, where some of the experiences at Hong-Kong were repeated, and numbers of converted Chinese were met, much to the mutual pleasure of the Hentons and the Chinese converts.

On the way to Shanghai some signs of insubordination were manifested among a few members of the crew, which annoyed Henton greatly, as he had always made it a point to deal justly and kindly with his men. But he had not a doubt but that the trouble was directly fomented by the Lascar and the designing Portuguese Antonio—who according to some rumors that had developed since he had shipped as an able seaman—had once been a captain of a small schooner which had borne a questionable reputation. Henton made up his mind that he must shortly get rid of the two men; and also came to the conclusion that Bailey had better go too, as he well knew that it is almost impossible to have a good and contented crew when a "sea-lawyer" such as Bailey or a designing rogue like the Lascar is on board; filling the minds of the lighter minded members of the ship's company with all sorts of foolish yarns and imaginary grievances. As for the Portuguese, who had been in his earlier days a whaler (and probably a good many other things besides) he knew too much, and his absence would be better than his company. There was no doubt but that the fellow was as smart a seaman as ever trod a ship's deck, but his smartness was not backed up by solid character, and John Henton wanted no man aboard his ship on whom he could not depend. But as the event proved, the captain was presently relieved from the necessity of discharging any of the three men.

After a stay of some days at Shanghai, Captain Henton decided that he would take a run up the Yang-tse-Kiang River, the "son of the ocean" as the Chinese call it. The engines had been thrashed roughly over-hauled at Hong-Kong, and a run up the great water-way of China would afford many interesting glimpses of life in the interior of China. The *Glad Tidings* anchored over night at the mouth of the river. Just at dusk a small junk came alongside, laden with fruits and nuts for sale. It was remembered afterward that the three men, Antonio, Bailey and the Lascar seemed particularly anxious to trade with the crew of the junk. Antonio, who seemed to have been in every port on the globe, knew a little Chinese, and interpreted for his companions. The junk hung around until a little after sunset, when the first officer ordered it off. After the junk had disappeared up stream, it was discovered that the three "conspirators," as the men were ever afterward known, were missing. Captain Henton seemed surprised, but not disturbed, while Bill Saunders went about with a more than ordinarily gleeful smile on his face. "Good riddance to bad rubbish!" he exclaimed in the hearing of the amiable old boatswain, who answered with a nod of approval.

The next day a native pilot was engaged and the voyage up the river was begun. Odd and interesting sights were revealed at every turn, and Grace was heartily amused at the pigeon-English of the pilot, as he commented on the many strange objects afloat and ashore which were passed on the way, as they steamed on between the broad rice fields that lined the banks on either side. The barkentine picked her way carefully among the junks, flatboats and rafts that came floating down, or which were being laboriously poled or drawn up-stream. When it became necessary to stop for the night the yacht did not tie up to the bank, but was anchored out in the stream.

So several days passed by, when the Hentons determined to return to the open sea. The helm was put over, and the run down was made in quicker time than the voyage up. Nevertheless it was not possible quite to make the sea at the end of the second day of the return journey, and Captain Henton accordingly was obliged, rather unwillingly, to anchor in a junk-infested part of the river not far from its mouth. A double