

The Home Mission Journal

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Cruising for the Cross.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

The next port which the *Glad Tidings* entered was Tientsin, whence the Hentons took a flying trip to Pekin. On their return the yacht was headed for Port Arthur and after that touched at Newchwang. A passing look was taken at Korea, and then a run over to Japan was made. In the Japan Sea the yacht was tossed to and fro like a chip in a mill-race, and Grace Henton was not sorry when the anchor was let go after some days in the harbor of Nagasaki, and it became possible, in quietness and comfort, to gaze from the deck at the beautiful shore of the Island Empire. "Dai Nippon," and to pick out with the binoculars many a picturesque bit of architecture nestling beneath or seeming to cling to the very sides of the hills. The little Japs were a source of never-failing interest and of frequent amusement. At once muscular in build and mild in manner, alert and inquisitive, and yet missing in many instances the true meaning of American Christianity which is the source of American civilization, the men of Japan became to the Hentons objects both of admiration and pity. Yet it was encouraging to observe how the Gospel was beginning to affect Japanese life, to note how eager the better classes of the Japanese were for everything new that seemed to promise to work for national greatness, and to talk with the optimistic, hard-working missionaries, who were persuaded better things of the Japanese—the things that "accompany salvation."

It was very interesting to observe too how the officials of the Japanese government were introducing reform after reform and instructive to trace more than one of these improvements in social life, education, or hygiene, to the direct or indirect influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Yet a vast deal of superstition remains in Japan, and John Henton sighed as he thought of the darkness yet shrouding great masses of its people, of the fields white unto the harvest, and of the fewness of the laborers who were entering in to reap for the Lord.

Running back in part on its course, the *Glad Tidings* after a little began scudding southward from Tokio, whither it had gone from Nagasaki, in the direction of the Philippines, which John Henton felt he could not pass by without a brief visit.

At Manila many opportunities to work among the soldiers, sailors and marines were found and improved. Many delightful acquaintances were formed with Army and Navy officers, and in some cases with their wives, who had ventured to leave the homeland and join their husbands on their distant stations.

Several weeks were spent in the Philippines, and John Henton spent many hours in prayer, in the cabin of his yacht, that the God who is the Creator and Judge of all men would bless all the good seed sown, and guide and control America in all its relations with the Philippines, so that the political connection established by the battle of Manila Bay might issue to the glory of the divine Name and result in the higher moral development of the various races in the Philippine Archipelago.

John and Grace Henton were not loath, when the time came for them to proceed on their cruise, to exchange the muddy waters of Manila Bay for the deep green waves of the broad Pacific. Taking aboard all the coal, stores and provisions that the barkentine could carry, with spare spars lashed in convenient places about the decks, and

extra canvas, cables and all sorts of ships' supplies stowed below, the *Glad Tidings* steamed gracefully out of the harbor, dipping its colors to the noble men-of-war as it swept past.

The weather was calm for several days, and when Sunday came it proved an ideal day for the holding of a service on the quarter-deck. The melodeon was accordingly brought up from below, and church was "rigged" in due form, and as there were several becalmed merchantmen in sight, the beautiful church pennant was run up to the masthead, while an invitation to "Come on board for church" was extended by the international signal code. Soon a number of crews were to be seen rowing in the direction of the *Glad Tidings*. A joyful and memorable service that was, held on the broad Pacific, then tranquil as a lake, with the blue dome of heaven for the ceiling of the sanctuary, and the soft zephyrs playing gently with the leeches of the sails as the barkentine rose and fell on the swell which never ceases on any sea.

The service over, the men who had come aboard from the neighboring merchantmen, after many rough but hearty expressions of their thankfulness for the chance thus once more to go to church out on the Pacific so far from their home land, tumbled into their boats, which had been swinging from the yacht's booms, and toweled leisurely back to their respective vessels.

The rest of the Sabbath passed by peacefully. Its hours filled with happy, quiet talk about the great mysteries of life and the hereafter, themes over which thoughtful souls in all centuries on land or sea have wonderingly brooded. The sea it self, seemingly the symbol of eternity, stretched out on every side far as the eye could reach, smooth as a mill pond, with only now and then a fleck of cloud appearing overhead in the sky. Occasionally a slight breath of air roughened for an instant, as with a fitting frown, the surface of the water.

As John and Grace Henton reclined under the awnings aft, they tried to read, but soon laid down their books, preferring to decipher, if they might, the larger handwriting of the Creator which he has written large across continents and seas.

"How vast are these stretches of ocean!" was the thought that came again and again to the brother and sister. They seemed to be becalmed on a shoreless sea, and their boat to be but a speck in a limitless existence. How strange it all appeared! How the still vastness of those amplitudes of sea and sky seemed to mock their tiny human strength!

"What is man that Thou art mindful of him?" murmured Henton, following the Psalmist's thought.

"And yet," rejoined Grace, "man, though a mere atom in comparison with this great globe, is in the sight of God worth more than this whole ponderous planet, for man has an immortal soul!"

"Yes, and the souls of some men at least we are trying to save, sister dear!" added John, his handsome face lighting with a smile which spoke of an inward peace, such as the world with all its gold and glitter, and pomp and pleasure, can never give.

By sunrise of the next day a fair breeze sprang up, and all sail was made on the *Glad Tidings*, even the stun-sails being clapped on, whereupon the yacht began to surge through the gently rolling billows in fine style. Grace was early on deck, and from her steamer chair aft gazed long and admiringly at the belying canvas, every square foot of which seemed to be drawing aloft and aloft. As the breeze freshened still more, the dancing spray began to drive over the cat-heads or even sometimes to sprinkle the quarter-deck. All this Grace Henton, dauntless American girl that she was, enjoyed immensely. The yacht seemed to her to be a living creature—like a great frigate-bird joyously spreading its wings to the powerful blasts that swept over the Pacific.

By noon the wind freshened so that stun-sails were taken in, and by two bells in the afternoon watch, the order, "Lay aloft to take in sail!" was given, whereupon the nimble topmen ran up the ratlines like monkeys scampering up the rounds of a ladder. Henton was not a reckless skipper, and did not believe in "clapping on" too much, especially when time was no particular object, and hence gave the order to take in the royals and top-gallant-sails. Still the breeze

freshened so much more, even after sail had been shortened, that the barkentine all the rest of that afternoon and the following night tore through the darkening waters like a war-horse through a field of grain.

The wind held strong for many days thereafter, enabling the *Glad Tidings* to make a run under sail alone, which delighted the heart of John Henton. It was time now to study the chart still more closely, for there was more than one atoll ahead, past which the barkentine must sail cautiously. After spending a half hour poring over the charts of Micronesia, spread out on the table in the chart room, Captain Henton climbed to the bridge. He ordered the fore-topman in the cross-trees to keep an extra bright lookout. It was now about four bells in the morning watch, when suddenly the cry floated down from the fore-cross-trees, "Sail ho!"

"Where away?" hailed Captain Henton from the bridge.

"Two points off the starboard bow, sir!" came the response.

A sail in that part of the broad Pacific is none too common a spectacle, and all hands were interested to take a look at the stranger, when after a little the sail ahead could be made out from the fore-castle of the barkentine.

It soon became evident that the *Glad Tidings* was rapidly overhauling the stranger—and another fact that became apparent was that, as Captain Henton had supposed from his reckoning, both vessels were in the neighborhood of a lonely atoll. Taking his binoculars, Captain Henton laid aloft to the fore-cross-trees, in order to get his bearings a little more distinctly. The outlines of the island could then be made out with clearness. It was evident that the ship ahead—a small brig—was intending to pass the island a mile or so nearer than the course which the *Glad Tidings* was holding would carry the barkentine.

"That brig looks like a Yankee-built boat!" exclaimed Henton, as he returned to the bridge. "Yes," said the First Officer, "and her skipper is taking a good many chances running as near he land as that!"

A few moments more something appeared to be wrong with the brig. Its helm was put hard up, the brig sheered around, and it was evident that its captain was trying to come up into the wind, and to beat off across the bows of the *Glad Tidings*.

Running up into the cross-trees again, Captain Henton soon discerned the cause of this sudden change of course. A line of white a half mile beyond the brig revealed the presence of a sunken reef. It was the sudden sight of "breakers ahead," that awful menace at sea, that had compelled the skipper to change his course in the greatest of haste. But, as Captain Henton from his perch aloft could easily see, the maneuver came too late. The brig missed stays, rolled uneasily about, sagged steadily to leeward, while her people were running excitedly about her decks—all but a little group of cowering women in the stern—and then, with a few frightful yowls, grounded violently against the sides of the sunken coral reef, where it continued to pound with an intermittent heave and roll that betokened no good to its now thoroughly frightened passengers. The spray of the breaking waves began to dash over the unfortunate brig from stern to stern, and but a few hasty glances were enough to tell the officers of the *Glad Tidings* that the situation of the stranger craft was most desperate.

Regaining the bridge at once, Captain Henton ordered steam to be gotten up immediately, in case the engines should be needed, and laid his course to windward of the stranded brig, meanwhile studying the situation, and answering the distress signals of the grounded ship with a set of fluttering flags which, according to the international code, spelled out the cheery signal, "Will stand by to assist!"—soon following this signal with another message, "Will send boats alongside to take off ship's company!"

It was one thing to bend these significant flags on the signal halyards and a more difficult matter to fulfil, in the high seas then prevailing, the promise of rescue thus made. When steam had been gotten up, Captain Henton tried the dangerous experiment of standing in as near as he could to the brig, which was now so far on the reef as to make the task of hauling it off quite