

# The Home Mission Journal

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## Cruising for the Cross.

By Rev. C. A. S. Dwight.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

Those were happy days on Lake Ismailia, the manners of the company on board the *Vixen* altering perceptibly in that short space of time, for great is the influence for good of a thoroughly converted man of social position and means. The two new friends parted with regret, for the *Vixen* was bound out for a short Mediterranean cruise. Bixby promised to stop at Port Said to see how the Armenian was getting on with his work, and to give him a word of Christian cheer.

The *Glad Tidings* was soon running slowly through the remainder of the canal to Suez, passing many a big transport or steamer on the way. As they approached Suez the Hentons were interested in studying the appearance of the surrounding country, being morally certain that somewhere there the crossing of the children of Israel under Moses must have occurred.

Through the Red Sea the *Glad Tidings* worked its way, and then sailed out into the Indian Ocean. The experiences of the ship's company on the Indian Ocean could hardly be described as pleasurable. The rays of the hot sun blistered the decks and seemed to draw the tar from the seams. Henton was anxious to get the crew into healthier atmospheres. He did all he could to make the work of the men light and to cheer their spirits. Yet some of the crew began to sicken. One or two began to weaken perceptibly day by day. Henton spent much time by their side as they lay on their cots in the sick bay and read and prayed with them, as Grace also was glad to do. The sick men—they were hardly more than boys—talked long and wistfully of home scenes in the far-away New England. In their delirium they seemed to be once again among the farms of Vermont. Henton took down what they said in their hours of consciousness, to send by letter to their relatives when port was next reached.

Finally it appeared that the end was near. Henton came close to the sufferers to catch their last words.

"Tell mother I died a Christian!" murmured the older of the two men, and soon he was asleep in Jesus. It was not long before his shipmate followed him to the far-away land. His last words were, "Save my shipmates! Tell them to give their hearts to Christ!"

A day or two after there occurred that solemn and impressive rite—a burial at sea. Henton read the service for the dead—and then the bodies were committed to the deep, there to await the summons of the resurrection angel.

The next Sabbath afternoon solemn services were held on board. The sea was calm though it seemed almost to boil with heat. The engines were stopped, and the ship's company all gathered on the spar-deck. The yacht was surrounded by a number of becalmed merchantmen, while here and there a black trail of smoke showed where a steamship was plowing its way to India or the Cape of Good Hope.

After the singing of a hymn and a prayer, Henton read a passage from the Psalms, and then made a simple but earnest address to the men in the words: "There go the ships."

"What thoughts can we gather," said Henton, "from the saying of the Psalmist, which perhaps records his impressions when once from some hilltop of Palestine he looked off over the blue Mediterranean and noted where the late-ripped craft of his day, in quest of the god of Ophir or bound back with peacock sea-hers from Tarshish, ran before the breezes? These words seem to remind us, for one thing, that as ships, like ships, have been launched have been launched

upon a great sea of existence. As ships are the handwork of skilful human builders, so souls are the work of an all-wise Creator. What a fine sight it is when a vessel is launched—it may be a monster merchantman or a grim man-of-war, which floats off to find its native element, and perhaps for years afterward to bear hundreds of travelers safely on their way, or to fight from time to time the battles of the oppressed! More impressive by far is the launching of a little child-life from out of the tender protection of the home upon the strange and often rough experiences of this mortal life. How much that soul-craft is to encounter! How many storms may beat upon it! There go the little ships. Send your prayers after them as they speed along over the waters!"

"We too, men, are like ships at sea, borne upon a vast ocean which we call 'life,' many leagues from any shore, beaten upon by storm after storm, and exposed to the treacherous pull of insidious currents which run like rivers in the midst of the sea. Yet all the while we are expected to make progress toward a heavenly goal. 'There go the ships!' They are almost continually in motion and service. Every mariner has his 'desired haven' where he would like to be safely anchored. Every ship that is not a piratical craft, outlawed by the law of nations, has its clearance papers which certify that she hails from one port and seeks another. The soul of man in like manner is expected to have in view some definite goal. It must seek the port of an eternal harbor. We must shape our course for the heavenly headlands, on which the welcoming beacons are even now burning for us, and we must meanwhile keep a bright lookout, lest in the fogs of doubt or the darkness of sin we somehow lose our way upon life's rolling deep.

"Shipmates! Two of our number have, as we trust, just made, through divine grace, the port of Paradise, and are now at peace on the bright shores of the celestial home-land. Let us make sure that we too are laying our course day by day for the quiet waters of the crystal sea, where, sometime, through the infinite mercy of a redeeming Saviour, we hope to be happy with Christ for evermore.

"And now, men," added John Henton, "let us sing the hymn we learned in childhood days:

"Out on an ocean all boundless we sail,  
We're homeward bound, homeward bound!"

As the men dispersed after the meeting some went below to prepare for mess, while others lingered awhile on deck to enjoy the lurid glory of a sunset in the Indian Ocean.

John and Grace paced the quarter-deck talking quietly of childhood days, and of the divine mercy that had followed them in all their experiences since. By Henton's orders the yacht's fires had been banked, to spare the firemen as much as possible, and, as a slight breeze had sprung up, the starboard watch was sent aloft to make all plain sail. The *Glad Tidings* was then in about the latitude of the Maldives, somewhat north of the equator, and in longitude 60° East from Greenwich. The course was laid south-south-by-west. What wind there was came from the east, and the yacht therefore had it over her port quarter. As the canvas fell from the yards and the yards were braced in, the yacht began to glide through the rippling sea with an easy, rocking movement which was delightful.

Pausing in their walk on the quarter-deck to watch the red sun sink beneath the waters to the westward, John and Grace remarked on the unusual brilliancy of the scene. A noble, full-rigged ship, with its sails one mass of flaming color, had seemed almost to sail into the sun's disc as the great orb of day sank beneath the water. The sun not only appeared to glow with an intenser radiance than usual, but the sky where it had just seemed to hang like a burning celestial lamp continued to gleam as by a circular reflection some moments after the actual time of sunset.

"That is an odd phenomenon!" exclaimed Henton. "Do they have double suns in this queer region?"

"That is a curious blur of red, or blaze of lingering color," replied Grace, "and it strangely seems to light up the surrounding shadows which everywhere else are deepening about us."

At that instant the sailing-master joined the two on the quarter-deck. Henton and Nickerson brought their binoculars to bear on the apparently secondary sun. Instantly both men, as their glasses brought out more distinctly the outlines of the phenomenon, divined its cause.

"It's a ship on fire!" cried Nickerson. "It's that full-rigged ship that seemed to sail into the sun!" cried Henton.

Henton lost no time in taking his stand on the bridge. A few quick, sharp orders were given. The shrill piping of the boatswain was heard calling all hands on deck. The engine-room watch was sent below. Henderson, the Scotch engineer, was ordered at once to get up full steam. Meanwhile the yards were swung around, the helm was put over to port, the ship described a graceful circle as it came around before the wind, and while the topmen, urged on by the exclamations of Nickerson, clambered nimbly up aloft to shake out the royals and topgallant-sails, the stokers below decks were working like Trojans to force the fires and supply the utmost possible head of steam.

Then Nickerson joined Henton on the bridge, while Grace went below to see that the steward was properly getting the sick-bay into order, and to lay out ready at hand the "First Aid" kits and other surgical appliances that might be needed if she succeeded in rescuing some of the crew of the burning ship.

Henton and Nickerson waited impatiently on the bridge until they received word from the engine-room that steam could be turned on. "Full speed ahead!" signalled Henton to the engine-room, while Nickerson ran down the ladder to the deck, to make sure that every stitch of canvas was drawing aflow and aloft, and to superintend the laying out in proper shape of the hose, if it happened that the fire on the unfortunate ship ahead could be at all subdued.

Finally the near vicinity of the ship was reached. It needed but a glance through the binoculars now to tell the navigators of the *Glad Tidings* that any use of the fire hose of the yacht would be perfectly useless. All the top-hammer of the ship had pretty much burned away, and the decks with their tarry seams were now ablaze throughout almost their whole length from the wheel aloft to the capstan forward. It would have been dangerous for the yacht to come too near, with all its own sails set, as flaming firebrands were falling in all directions from the charred masts, which at any moment were likely to go by the board. The only thing to be done, and the thing that was done without a moment's delay, was to round the yacht to wind, lowering the boats, to proceed to the rescue of the surviving members of the ship's crew. Henton himself manned one boat, Nickerson a second, and the chief engineer, a third. Grace, thrilled with apprehension and full of sympathy, watched breathlessly as her brother and his companions pulled lustily under the bows of the burning ship, caring nothing for the sparks and bits of flaming tacking that everywhere about them fell spluttering into the sea. All the ship's boats but one had been burned, and that one had been capsized. Out on the bowsprit of the ship the survivors of the crew to the number of sixteen were huddled, clinging tenaciously to the spar as to a last remnant of hope, yet almost scorched already by the flames steadily creeping upon them. It was an awful scene, yet Grace Henton, from the deck of the *Glad Tidings*, could hardly turn away her eyes from beholding it, so grim was its fascination. The crew of the *Glad Tidings* who remained on board the yacht cheered lustily as one by one the scorched and maimed survivors of the crew of the doomed vessel dropped from their uncomfortable perches on the tip-end of the flying-jib boom, to which the increasing heat had forced them, into the boats which were waiting just beneath.

It did not take long to row back over the still lurid sea to the larboard ladder of the yacht, up which the almost exhausted seamen, some of them very badly burned, were lifted by strong arms, and carried below to receive every attention and comfort that a Christian sympathy and an intelligent medical knowledge could extend to them. That was a busy hour for Grace, as she sought to put to the best use her experience as a nurse, while John Henton in his less deft and handy way supplemented her efforts as best he could. Before long some of the sturdy seamen, among whom was the captain of the merchantman, an Englishman by the name of Horace Hardy, were on deck making light of their injuries, while all, without exception, rough men as they were, joined in loud protestations of gratitude to their rescuers. One of the loudest in making these protestations was a Lascar, whom his shipmates called "Hoggy," from his aversion to ham or "salt-horse," and who, Captain Hardy said, he had taken on at Bombay in place of a missing member of his crew, "Hoggy," from his aversion to ham or "salt-horse," and