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The Conversion of Mariners Will Enlarge the Praises of Zion

Stephen Chapin

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The conversion of Mariners will enlarge the praises of Zion.

A

SERMON

ADDRESSED TO MARINERS,

NORTH-YARMOUTH,

STATE OF MAINE.

March 4th, 1821.

BY STEPHEN CHAPIN,

PASTOR OF THE BAPTIST CHURCH IN SAID TOWN.

PORTLAND :
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1821.

DEAR SIR,

BELIEVING the Discourse, with which we were this evening entertained would be useful to our shipmates, who are in a great measure deprived of the means of religious instruction, we solicit a copy for the press; on conditions, that after disposing of a sufficient number to refund the expense of publishing it, the remainder of them shall be distributed *gratis* among those, who "go down to the sea in ships, that do business in the great waters."

ANDREW BLANCHARD, } Committee chosen
LAZARUS BATES, } by Mariners in
JOSHUA GRAY, } N. Yarmouth.

Rev. S. CHAPIN.

GENTLEMEN,

BELIEVING that your motives were benevolent in the above request, I submit the copy to your disposal, hoping that it will add something to those means, which are now employed to promote the spiritual interests of your brethren in dangers and privations.

I am, Gentlemen, your's in sentiments of affection and esteem,

STEPHEN CHAPIN.

Capt. A. BLANCHARD,
L. BATES,
J. GRAY.

A SERMON.

RESPECTED HEARERS,

EACH revolving age brings with it some peculiar trials and obligations. The duties of the present day must be distinctly seen, lest we should engage in labors, which would better suit a past or future period. It was the special honor of David, that he served his *own* generation by the will of God, and then fell on sleep. If we desire that our services should be appropriate, and best subserve the interests of Zion, we must ascertain, with as much correctness as may be, where we stand in the history of the church. In finding our relative place, we may gain assistance by a knowledge of the grand ecclesiastical divisions of time. The most important periods in the christian church are, her days of prophesying in sackcloth, and her time of reigning with Christ. When persecuted by the great dragon, she was furnished with wings, and from the face of the serpent she took her flight into the wilderness, where she was to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, or 1260 years. During this period of her concealment the papal power is to continue his superstitious and oppressive reign. At the expiration of this season the church will come up out of the wilderness, lay off her tokens of mourning, and soon enter her promised rest. God in wisdom and mercy has hidden from our knowledge the exact commencement and expiration of these 1260 years. He has also concealed the precise beginning of that happy season, in which the righteous are to enjoy a thousand years of light and peace. Such exactness in dates would have been altogether incompatible with the principle design of the prophetic writings. They were never intended to make a full disclosure of the future conduct and judg-

ments of the wicked, nor of the conflicts and triumphs of the righteous. But still such circumstances are associated with the progress of each of the above periods, that we may approximate in our calculations with sufficient nearness to the time, when the first will close, and the second begin. The light of prophecy is bright enough to afford courage, guidance and consolation to Zion in every stage of her warfare. While on earth, however, she must walk by faith and not by sight.

It is evident both from the word of prophecy and from the signs of the times, that the man of sin has long been on his throne, that he has received his deadly wound, and that his season of domination is fast coming to a close. And it is equally manifest, that, in relation to *time*, the warfare of Jerusalem is nearly accomplished. This we must grant, even if we contend, that she has *yet* to endure some of her severest struggles. Before the millennium can be fully enjoyed, the gospel of the kingdom must be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations ; the catholic and mahometan powers must be destroyed, and the outcasts of Israel must be converted, and settled in the land of their fathers. To accomplish all these great objects, God is now exciting his people to employ a series of appropriate and powerful means. They are circulating the scriptures in numerous living languages ; sending out the missionaries of the cross ; and gratuitously aiding others in their preparations to enter the field of arduous labor.

The benevolent spirit of the present day is active and vigilant. It is so nobly disinterested, that in its operations it disdains all petty distinctions, and pours its streams of charity on all the needy and miserable, without regarding the boundaries of religion or government, cast or color. Among other objects, the christian public, have, very recently, turned their attention, particularly, toward those, who are called to spend many of their days, far off on the great and wide sea. Such men are deprived, very much, of those religious privileges, which are enjoyed by those, whose professions confine them on shore. Of this privation the professors of christianity have long been criminally

unmindful. Whilst they have been feeding, even to satiety, on the dainties, brought from foreign ports, they have forgotten to say : " is not this the blood of the men, that went in jeopardy of their lives ?" and have ungratefully neglected the immortal interest of those, who navigate the ocean. But we hope they are now in a good degree sensible of their fault, and that they will, by their future attention to this portion of mankind, make some atonement for past neglect. They are now laboring to furnish them with tracts, sermons, bibles, and the preaching of the gospel. For them in some harbors floating chapels, and in various cities, permanent churches have been built. Among them prayer meetings have been established. These exertions for their good, have already, in many instances, been attended with very grateful and encouraging success.

While the prayers and labors of the church are directed with such union and interest toward the highest welfare of sailors, it becomes an important duty to inquire, what scripture proof do we possess, that these labors of love will certainly succeed, and that ship masters and mariners are to be converted to God, and take a distinguished part in spreading the triumphs of the cross, and in opening the way for the universal reign of the Messiah. Such proof, when distinctly exhibited, may quicken the zeal and encourage the hopes of all the friends of humanity. Let us then, my hearers, employ a few moments in searching for this evidence in the oracles of truth. To direct us in our enquiries I have selected,

ISAIAH, LXth Chapt. and 5th verse.

Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee.

This chapter contains a prediction of the future glories and blessedness of Zion. The writer of it with strong prophetic vision looked through all the centuries, which were to intervene between him and the millennial state. His faith gave to distant good, present reality. He therefore addressed the church in language the most animating and sublime. What was to be

enjoyed in a far future period, he described in the present tense, as if it were already in possession. "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see, all they gather themselves together, they come to thee : thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." Here Zion is exhorted to arise, either from her sinful slumbers, or from her deep despondency, and to let her light shine on the darkness of the surrounding world. Assurance is given her that her light shall be seen afar off, and be instrumental of calling many from the ways of death, and of gathering them into the kingdom of God. "The Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee, and the gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Then shalt thou see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee." When the citizens of Zion shall behold the vast company of converts, coming from all directions to throng and enter her gates, they will flow together, or assemble to express their mutual gratulations of joy, over those numerous trophies of divine grace. Their hearts will be enlarged with admiration, gratitude and praise, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto them. This conversion is assigned as the distinct reason, why their hearts will be enlarged. Some suppose that by the abundance of the sea is meant the vast riches, which are accumulated by commerce ; and consequently that this enlargement of heart is produced by beholding the wealth of trade consecrated to the service of God. Others maintain that by this phrase is meant the conversion of those gentile nations, who inhabit the regions, which border on the great sea, and which lie west of Palestine. But I am inclined to believe that the conversion of the abundance of the sea, means the spiritual renovation of a great number of mariners. I am led to adopt this interpretation, because of the additional clause, which immediately follows : "The forces of the gentiles shall come unto thee." If these two phrases are intended to designate one and the same class of subjects, then

by the addition of the latter there is no advance, it is, in this case, only exegetical, or explanatory of the former. But there is a great advance upon the supposition, that the abundance of the sea means their *maritime* power, and the forces of the gentiles, their *military* strength. Seamen and soldiers, who are exposed to the perils and vices of cities and of camps, are viewed in a less hopeful condition, than those, who are not beset with such powerful temptations, and who are richly furnished with the means of knowledge and grace. How illustrious then will be the displays of divine mercy, when both the army and the navy shall be converted unto God, and their men, instead of wielding the instruments of death, become active and successful in advancing the kingdom of peace? I am aware that this argument will not be viewed, as fully conclusive, because it may be urged, that these two phrases form one of those numerous parallelisms which abound in the sacred writings. I shall therefore rely on the context and on other passages to strengthen the above exposition.

That the text, selected on this occasion, has immediate reference to the time of the conversion and restoration of the Jews, is the opinion of the most distinguished commentators. Says Mr. Lowth, "We may suppose the ground work of the prophecies, contained in this and the two following chapters to be the Jews' restoration from captivity." Faber says, "The prophecies contained in Isa. lx. 8, 9, relate *solely* to the restoration of the converted Jews, because they are declared to be brought unto the name of the Lord; and we are taught that the ships of Tarshish shall be among the first to undertake this great enterprize."—Gill, in his commentary observes, "In this (chapter) a very ample account is given of latter-day light and glory." In expounding our text, he remarks, by the abundance of the sea is meant "an abundance of seafaring men, who shall be converted at this time, in which the grace of God will the more appear, as they are generally a very wicked and profligate set of men." By the next clause, the *forces* of the Gentiles, he understands, "their *armies*—the soldiery will be converted, as well as the seafaring

men, who are for the most part also exceeding wicked; not only kings will become real Christians but their armies will be so too, their generals, officers, and common soldiers."

Then thou shalt see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee. This conversion, which, as we have supposed, will take place about the commencement of Christ's promised reign, is assigned as the grand reason why the heart of saints will be dilated with holy fear and joy. Our text then suggests this doctrine,

The conversion of seamen will enlarge the praises of Zion.—
We will

I. Inquire for evidence that mariners will be converted unto God. And

II. Assign some of the reasons why their conversion will give enlargement of heart to the people of God.

That those who sail in ships will be called into the kingdom of Christ we argue,

I. From the evidence we possess, that the Holy Spirit will yet be poured out upon all professions of men. "And it shall come to pass in the last days (saith God) I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy; and your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams. And upon my servants and on hand-maidens, I will pour out in those days of my spirit." Christ is to have dominion from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. And they of the city shall flourish like the grass before him, and all nations shall call him blessed. Surely in this general effusion of the spirit and extension of the blessings of the gospel of peace, sailors, or those who are far off on the sea will be embraced, and share equally with others in the grace of God.

II. Christians are now offering up fervent prayers for the salvation of seamen, and are making charitable exertions to promote their future and spiritual welfare. We may be certain that God will never excite his people to petition for a particular favor, and move them to perform benevolent services for a good

object, unless he means to hear their prayers, and smile on their labors. Why was Paul so confident, that God would finish the good work in the hearts of his Philippian brethren? He hath given us one reason: "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, *because I have you in my heart.*" He knew that God moved him to pray for their perseverance. "As soon as Zion travailed she brought forth her children. Shall I bring to the birth, and not cause to bring forth? saith the Lord." Whenever, therefore, we see the church of God praying and laboring for the everlasting good of mariners, we possess strong evidence that God will soon convert the abundance of the sea.

III. That God will pour out his spirit on seamen and convert them for the good of his people is evident from scripture. The first passage that shall be adduced is taken from the context.—"Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them."

"In the language of the old testament, the ships of Tyre are ordinarily called ships of Tarshish, apparently from the great commercial intercourse between Tyre and Tarshish much perhaps in the same manner as our principal trading vessels are termed east or west indiamen. Tyre however has long since ceased to be a nation: The ships of Tarshish therefore, at the *era* of the yet future return of the Jews, cannot certainly be literally Tyrian vessels. Hence we must necessarily, I think, conclude them to be the ships of some power of the isles of the Gentiles, that is some European power."*

That the seamen, who will then navigate these ships, will be the faithful worshippers of the true God, is manifest from the character given them by the prophetic pen. They are said to be among the first to wait for the command of Christ to bring in their swift sailing ships his people from far unto the name of the Lord, the holy one of Israel. "When the present offered unto the Lord consists of *persons*, the offered, as well as the *offerers* must be worshippers."† Mr. Scott, in his note on this verse says, "it will become the first use of the ships of Tarshish,

*Taber.

†Horsley's Let. on Isaiah xviii.

which trade to the most remote regions to bring her children, and all their wealth with them to Zion, that they may worship the name of Zion's God, who thus glorified her : or they would be among the first that did so. This prediction will be accomplished, when Christians shall unanimously agree to make commerce and navigation subservient to the preaching of the gospel in every country, with which they trade."

As Solomon's navy made a voyage once in three years to the ancient Tarshish, and brought thence gold and silver, and ivory to adorn the visible temple ; so the time will come when ships and seamen will be employed in conveying the heralds of truth to distant and benighted lands, and in bringing home the emancipated Jews to the new Jerusalem, who will beautify and enrich it, far more than all the gold and costly merchandize of Ophir.

The next text, brought in our support, is Isaiah xviii. 1, 2, and 7 verses. " Woe to the land shadowing with wings, which is beyond the rivers of Ethiopia : That sendeth ambassadors by the sea, even in vessels of bulrushes upon the waters, saying, go, ye swift messengers to a nation scattered and peeled, to a people, terrible from their beginning hitherto, a nation meted out, and trodden down, whose land the rivers have spoiled. In that time shall the present be brought unto the Lord of hosts of a people scattered and peeled, and from a people terrible from their beginning hitherto, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion."

The prophet at the close of the 17th chapter, gives us the most sublime description of the countless numbers of the antichristian confederacy, and how they would press on to attack the armies of the living God, with the vast strength and rushing noise of mighty waters. But by the breath of the Almighty this exulting enemy is to be rebuked, all his strength chased away, as the chaff of the mountains before the winds, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind. "This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob us."

Having given this account of the utter destruction of this threatening combination, he opens this 18th chapter, with a description of the agents, of the manner, and of the time of the final

restoration of the Jews. Here Isaiah beholds a people, distinguished for their protecting power, accustomed to do business in great waters, moving from far distant regions towards Palestine in swift sailing ships, and bringing with them the present of a wonderful people unto the Lord of hosts, to the place of the name of the Lord of hosts, the mount Zion. This people thus employed will be a collection of christian mariners, faithful worshippers of the true God, and who will possess the empire of the sea at the time when the 1260 years shall expire, and when the Jews shall begin to be restored. To this body of men the prophet in the name of Jehovah issues his commands : Go, ye swift messengers, to a nation scattered and peeled to a people terrible from their beginning. Bishop Horsley in commenting on these words says, " Go swift messengers : you who by your skill in navigation and your extensive commerce and alliances are so qualified to be carriers of a message to people in the remotest countries, go with God's message unto a nation dragged away, the dispersed Jews ; a nation dragged away from its proper seat, and plucked of its wealth and power ; a people wonderful from the beginning to this very time for the special providence which has ever attended them and directed their fortune ; a nation still lingering in expectation of the Messiah, who so long since came and was rejected by them, and now is coming again in glory ; a nation universally trampled under foot, whose land, rivers, armies of foreign invaders, the Assyrians, Babylonians, Syro-Macedonians, Romans, Saracens, and Turks, have overrun and depopulated." " The swift messengers will certainly have a considerable share as instruments in the hand of God, in the restoration of the chosen people. Otherwise to what purpose are they called upon to receive their commission from the prophet ? The principal part they will have to act will be that of the carriers of God's message to his people."

The seventy second psalm, almost throughout is a prediction of the peculiar blessedness of the Church, when she shall possess the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven. It is said, " the kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents,"

By the kings of Tarshish we may understand the most distinguished merchants, or navigators, who will exist at the time of the Jewish restoration. By the kings of the Isles may be understood the kings of those numerous nations, who inhabit the islands of the sea.

Ezekiel's vision of the holy waters, issuing from under the threshold of the temple, are considered as an impressive symbol of the universal spread of the gospel. These waters go down first into the *desert*, and then into the *sea*, and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come into the sea. Fishermen are to stand on the banks of these waters, to cast their nets, and "their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many." May not all this be highly emblematical of the wonderful conquests of grace, both by land and sea? It is certain that several of the first preachers of the gospel were fishermen by their occupation. When they cast their net according to the direction of Christ, they were astonished at their miraculous success. But he quieted their minds by hinting to them, that their numerous draught of fishes, was an encouraging type of their success in winning souls to Christ. Fear not, said he, from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

Enough has been said in support of our first proposition. It is time to consider the second,

II. And assign some of the reasons, why the conversion of mariners will awaken the joy and praises of the righteous.

1. Such conversions will enlarge their hearts with love to God for such displays of grace; love to the truth of scripture, which long since predicted the gathering of mariners into the kingdom of heaven. Grace expands the soul. And those who are favored with the richest degree, possess the most ardent desires, that others may share with them in the mercy of God. The experience of every true believer will testify, that his love is called into the most lively exercise, when he beholds the greatest number of sinners, turned from the paths of the destroyer, and flying to the only Saviour. Their joy and charity are the most active when those are brought

to repentance, who, by their age and boldness in transgression, seemed to be placed almost beyond the reach of mercy. Such characters, when reclaimed, form the brightest trophies of mercy, and the hearts of saints are enlarged to embrace them in christian love, as members in the family of Christ.

2. Their hearts will be enlarged to praise the wisdom of God in selecting the best instruments to be employed in his service. The highest wisdom consists in using the best means to obtain the best end. The grand object in creation and providence is to make known to principalities and powers in heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God. In obtaining this purpose he needed not the assistance of any of his creatures. If any were necessary, he might have called to his aid only the angels of light. But in much condescension he admits his people on earth to the privilege of becoming co-workers with Jehovah. In spreading the gospel God means to employ the wealth of pious farmers, the ingenuity and labor of the mechanic, the learning of the scholar, and the gold of the merchant. The men of these professions, however, are not prepared to navigate ships to pagan nations, to carry out God's messengers, and all the means, requisite to plant new missionary stations to diffuse the light of revelation. But for this service, sailors are pre-eminently qualified, as soon as they become the subjects of grace. Inured to fatigue and to the vicissitudes of climate, they are ready to brave all dangers, to endure all hardships and privations, to employ all their nautical skill, and characteristic generosity in spreading among all nations the good news of eternal life. How brightly then, will the wisdom of God shine in preparing this portion of our race to perform such a noble part in the cause of Christ? Between christian and pagan nations spread wide and dangerous oceans. The Jews are scattered to the four winds of heaven. They, according to prophecy, are to be converted, and reassembled in Palestine. It is manifest the gospel can never be conveyed to all the nations of the earth and islands of the sea, and the out casts of Israel can never be returned only through the medium of ships

and mariners. If God do not convert seamen, then the heralds of truth must be carried out, and the ransomed Jews brought home in profane vessels, manned by unbelievers; or else the pious on shore must leave their occupations to learn the mariner's art, and become skilful navigators. How much wiser to enrich those with grace, who by spending their days on the water, are, at once, ready to perform these essential services for the people of God.

3. Their hearts will be enlarged to admire the power of divine mercy. Though the depravity of the human heart is the same in kind among all nations, and in every period, yet there are seasons, when it is more fully disclosed, than at other times. There are places of abounding wickedness, and of comparative purity. There are individuals and bodies of men who are exposed to more powerful temptations, than others, and from whom restraints are more removed. Among persons, thus unfavorably situated, we may find the boldest transgressors, and giants in wickedness, in comparison with their cautious and favored neighbors. Grace in the conversion of such men is much more illustriously discovered, than in the change of those, who are less distinguished for advances in sin. The power of mercy shone brighter in subduing the angry and the blood thirsty Saul, than in renewing the timid and inquiring Nicodemus.—Sailors are men of like passions with ourselves, possessing by nature no superior proneness to immoral habits. Their excess in sin must be attributed to local causes, and to the peculiar character of their profession. They are in a great measure deprived of the soft and refining endearments of a paternal home; destitute of those means of moral and religious instruction, which are possessed by those who dress the soil; spending much of their time, amid the perils and noise of the seas; or in distant lands, far removed from the inspection of parents, guardians and friends; exposed to the peculiar vices and fascinating charms of populous cities, rendered doubly tempting by previous confinement and privation, during long voyages. While in foreign ports their reputation is unknown, and in the eye of strangers they have no character to preserve, or lose. Among

men, thus circumstanced, we need not be surprised, if we find very painful specimens of that guilt and wretchedness, into which the power of sin may sink the human character. Especially, when we reflect how long sailors have been neglected, and how little has been done in years past for their religious improvement. But, notwithstanding all these disadvantages, there are among them an honorable number, who are eminent for piety, and who are governed, not by the eye of the world, but by the fear of the Lord. The ocean has long groaned under a burden of wickedness, and its waters have been crimsoned by piratical murders, or conflicting navies. How joyful will be the victories of mercy, when every sailor shall become a saint, and every ship, a floating chapel, enclosing a little church, who live in the continued interchange of all the endearing offices of christian kindness, and daily invoke the name and sing the praises of Jehovah !

IMPROVEMENT.

1. In the light of this subject we discover, that when God bestows converting grace on individuals, or classes of men, his object is to prepare them for public usefulness. After Christ had richly imparted spiritual knowledge to his disciples, he remarked to them "No man, when he hath lighted a candle, covereth it with a vessel, or putteth it under a bed ; but setteth it on a candlestick, that they which enter in may see the light." Thus he taught them, that he had illuminated their minds, not simply for their private interest, but that they should employ their talents for the benefit of mankind. John was commissioned to bear witness of the true light, that all men through him might believe. Peter was brought to repentance, and recovered from his sin of denying Christ, that he might be prepared to caution the self-sufficient, and to strengthen their dependence on the preserving power of God, to prevent their fall in the day of temptation. When God bestows special grace and comfort on his ambassadors, he does it, that they may be able to enlighten and comfort his people in all their darkness and trials. So when the time shall arrive to redeem the captive Jews, God will convert

seamen, that they may cheerfully obey his commands to go with their ships to collect the seed of Abraham, and transport them over various seas to the land of promise.

2. Will God convert seamen that they may perform essential services for the church, then navigation is an important art. It has been studied either to complete a classical education, or for the practical purpose of traversing the sea, either to indulge curiosity in making new discoveries, or to accumulate wealth for the gratification of avarice, luxury, or pride. But the time will soon arrive, when this branch of knowledge will be gained for the noble design to enable the possessor of it to conduct ships to foreign lands, for the purpose of conveying to them the glad news of salvation through the Saviour's blood. The knowledge of navigation is not only of great use in the commercial world, but it is indispensably requisite in completing the scheme of redemption. The Jews can never be carried home to Palestine, the gospel can never be proclaimed in all the islands of the sea without the skill of mariners. With joy we anticipate the day when the pious ship-master will study the naval science with the same motives, and with the same conviction of its necessity, that the minister of Christ pursues his studies in theology. It will be learnt because without it the objects of mercy can never be obtained. "Happy will it be for themselves, and for multitudes, when merchants shall consider the conveyance of the light of divine truth to the most distant lands and newly discovered countries, as a primary object of their attention. Then their ships may sail more richly freighted, than if they were laden with the gold of Ophir; they may safely be committed to his care, to whose glory they are devoted; and he will surely honor those who thus honor him."*

3. Will God convert the abundance of the sea for the purposes we have mentioned, then we have good ground to believe, that some among them will become more distinguished for grace, than those christians who will remain on the land. The ships of Tarshish, or the persons who man them, are to be among the first and most zealous to obey the mandate of Heaven to bring

*Scott on Isaiah, lx. 9. Prac. Ob.

home the chosen people of God. "Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, (or among the first) to bring thy sons from far." Though God bestows his grace on whom he will, yet it is a general fact, that those saints are the most eminent, who are favored with the highest privileges. Those converted seamen who shall hereafter be employed in accomplishing some of the most important designs of heaven, will in many respects enjoy religious advantages, superior to those who shall be confined on the soil. In their previous profession they will have visited many different nations and will have seen a vast variety of faith and modes in religion ; they will have found the Jews in different ports, despised by the rest of mankind, and enraged only at the sound of Jesus' name. But when they shall see these Jews embracing that very gospel, which their predecessors had for so many centuries rejected with such malignant obstinacy ; when they shall behold them mourning in much bitterness of soul, that they so long pierced their only Saviour ; when they shall be employed in conveying in their ships these converted Israelites to their ancient Canaan ; when they shall see the moral darkness, which so long brooded over the world, driven away by the splendors of the gospel sun ; when they shall see Mahometans and Idolaters, Jews and Christians, Catholics and Protestants, Churchmen and Dissenters all harmonizing in their opinions and practices, how deep must be their conviction, that this amazing change must have been produced by the immediate power of Jehovah ! and how strong must be their faith in the word of God, which ages ago foretold this same renovation of the world ! The christian, who tills the soil and who hardly ever moves beyond the limits of his own neighbourhood, may learn all this by report, or through the medium of books, but how faint will be his impressions in comparison with those of the Sailor, who has been an eye witness to this mighty change ! Ship-masters and mariners while employed in transporting converted Jews or missionaries of the cross to distant lands, while they see the wonders of God in the deep, and behold the christian flag flying on every ship, and in

every harbor, possess the most striking proof of the divinity of the christian religion. Hence we may justly expect to find among that important class of men, some of the most enlightened, generous, devout and active friends of Zion. They are particularly exhorted to be loud in the praises of Jehovah. "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise from the end of the earth, *ye that go down to the sea and all that is therein.*" They will have much love and zeal, because to them much will be forgiven.

4. Will the abundance of the sea be converted just before the millenium, then when we see much done to bring them to the knowledge of the truth, we have good reasons to hope that happy period will soon arrive. Christ says "learn a parable of the fig tree : when his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh." So when we see great and successful efforts made to accomplish those very things, which are to take place immediately preceding the thousand years of rest, we may "know that it is near even at the doors."

Very much is now doing to enlighten and save this important portion of the human family. The British and foreign bible society, and various other associations are making noble efforts to furnish the numerous mariners of the British empire and of other nations, with rich means of salvation. These exertions in various instances have been crowned with more than anticipated success. Very recently God has in a signal manner poured out his spirit on several crews, and brought numbers of them to the knowledge of the truth. The first took place on board of the Independence, Capt. Bangs, while conveying the missionaries, Wheelock and Coleman, to Rangoon in Burmah ; the second on board the ship that carried out missionaries to Ceylon ; and the third on board a vessel from Salem, which was occasioned principally by the perusal of the Rev. Mr. Abbot's Sermons, addressed to seamen. All these labors and all this success furnish animating proof that the happy day will soon dawn, when Zion shall become a praise in all the earth.*

*Note A.

5. In the revision of this subject we may discover special and powerful motives to pray for the prosperity and salvation of mariners. Millions of our fellow beings are continually afloat on the great high way of nations. Their lives and property are in great and constant hazard. In their preservation and success, the wealth of nations, and the dearest interests of domestic happiness, of companions, children, and parents are all deeply concerned. Their privations, their hardships, their perils, their temptations and the importance of their commercial enterprise, entitle them to the prayers, the sympathies, the charities and labors of the church and ministers of Christ. That sailors are often forgotten in the worship of the sanctuary, is a truth much to be lamented. No sabbath should pass away without remembering them in our public prayers at the throne of mercy.

Such generally is their character, and such their profession, as to render their conversion highly desirable. The church already stands in much need of their appropriate services. We have missionaries, and in some instances missionary families to carry out, and all things requisite to commence new establishments on an extended scale. The isles of the sea are now waiting for God's law, and must receive it through the medium of navigation. The Jews will soon be ready to return, and sailors are to be the honored instruments of carrying them home, with their silver and their gold with them. How weighty are the reasons why we should pray, that they may be prepared by divine grace to perform these essential services?

Besides, the present character of our seamen serves to strengthen very much the prejudices of the gentiles, and thus it throws up a strong barrier against the spread of the gospel. It is no breach of charity to say, that many of those, who navigate our ships, while they wear the name, are strangers to the spirit of christianity. How are christian crews distinguished in Pagan, or Mahometan ports? Are they known by their superior wisdom, integrity of character, and purity of morals? How is the christian sabbath marked from other days of the week? Is it known by a pause in

their business and pleasures, and by the devout worship of christian mariners? Or is not their flag, displayed at mast head, every Lord's day morning, in too many instances, the best proof of the return of that joyful day? Heathens, who are hardly capable of making nice discriminations, and have never seen the bestproofs of the power of gospel, will very naturally take such conduct as a fair *specimen* of the excellency of the christian religion; and they will be likely to condemn the whole, as a system of hypocrisy and fraud. But if all our shipmasters and their men were richly imbued with the grace of God; if they displayed in all their intercourse with Jews, Turks and Pagans, the true spirit of Christ; if every christian ship should become a Bethel, where the name and the worship of Jehovah should be devoutly observed, how soon would they take knowledge of them, that they came from a region of superior light, purity and benevolence. My brethren, you cannot single out a class of professional men, whose conversion would give so much strength to the church, and so much aid in spreading the gospel, as that of seamen. How powerful, how peculiar the reasons to excite us to pray, that God would pour out his holy spirit upon them, that the ocean may become vocal in his praise?

Seamen have great encouragement to pray for themselves. In several illustrious instances God has heard and answered their prayers. The ship, that conveyed the disobedient and fugitive Jonah was arrested in her course. The Lord sent out a great wind into the sea, and there was a great tempest in the sea, so that the ship was like to be broken. The mariners were greatly frightened, and, having some sense of a superior power, first cried every man unto his God. But when they learned that the God of heaven ruled the raging of the sea and stilled the noise of their waves, "they cried unto the Lord, and said, we beseech thee, O Lord, we beseech thee, let us not perish for this man's life, and lay not upon us innocent blood: for thou, O Lord, hast done as it pleased thee. So they took up Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea, and the sea ceased from her raging." It appears that some of these mariners were brought to repentance "by means

of these extraordinary transactions." For their prayers were heard, and they "feared the Lord exceedingly, and offered a sacrifice unto the Lord and made vows."

When Christ and his disciples were crossing the sea of Tiberias, "behold there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves ; but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying ; Lord, save us : we perish.—Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm."

David in the 107th psalm teaches us that God is ever ready to hear and answer the humble and devout prayers of distressed seamen.

How encouraging these examples ! Let mariners then praise the Lord for all his goodness and daily bow before him in fervent prayer and they will find him a present help in every time of trouble.*

Before I close, I beg leave to address a few words to that portion of my auditory, for whom this discourse was more particularly intended. I would first address myself to ship-masters.

You have doubtless perceived, gentlemen, that the profession, which you have chosen, is essentially connected with the interests of commerce, and the kingdom of heaven. You have special reasons for gratitude, that your vocation is sanctioned by heaven, and is destined in the providence of God, to become a distinguished medium of conveying the rich blessings of the gospel to the numerous nations of the earth. In the allotments of Canaan the portion of Zebulun was to spread from the Mediterranean to the sea of Tiberias. As God designed them for a commercial people, so he gave them great advantages for navigation. "Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea and he shall be for an haven of ships." "And of Zebulun, he said, rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out :—" that is, in their outward bound voyages at sea. "They shall call the people into the mountains," that is, unto mount Zion, the church of the living God. They would not only invite the Jews, their

*Note B.

brethren, but all the heathen nations with whom they should trade, to the house of God. "There they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness:" That is, in the church of Christ, these mariners, and those whom they shall bring to the mountain of the Lord, shall offer spiritual sacrifices of prayer and praise, and their offerings are to be righteous, proceeding from the heart, in distinction from hypocritical devotion. "For they shall suck the abundance of the seas:" get vast riches by their naval trade, and therefore lie under great obligations to be thankful for their prosperity, and to devote themselves and their wealth to the service of Christ: "and of treasures hid in the sand:" "gold, silver, pearls, coral, and the like, extracted from" the sand of the sea. The passage on which I have commented you may find in Deut. xxxiii, 18th and 19th verses. It teaches us, that your profession is agreeable to the will of God, and that it was originally intended to become an important instrument in accomplishing the designs of mercy.* It is through your skill, that the surplus

*"It appears not to be the will of God that men should enjoy the products of only their own climate. By the means of intervening seas and oceans, of changing winds, and of the mysterious needle, he invites the whole human family upon earth to a friendly intercourse and interchange, that the blessings of various climates may be mutually transferred and enjoyed in all, the superfluity of all be saved, and the wants of all relieved.

That it is the will of God their should be commerce between the inhabitants of different countries is manifest not only by the natural advantages but also the moral influence resulting from it. It brings nations acquainted with each other; imparts their useful inventions; abates their natural prejudices; disposes to friendly sentiments; softens the asperities of the savage gradually into civilization; and prepares the Pagan to embrace the gospel. This statement is fully justified by facts.* The most commercial nations are the most civilized, humane, and moral. There are no nations upon the globe so much occupied in the pursuits of commerce, as the Christian. And it deserves remark that those nations, which were once animated by the spirit of commerce and have lost it, have soon reverted to the state of poverty, barbarism and wretchedness.

The moral influence of commerce is best seen by looking to the Eastern world. That spot, on account of the crowded millions of souls which inhabit it, is interesting beyond expression. While we behold them emerging

*"The commerce and colonization of Christian States have civilized America, and they will, in process of time, civilize and christianize the whole earth." Bp. Watson's let. to Dr. Buchanan.

of the soil is conveyed to foreign markets, and that we receive in return the necessities and luxuries of other climes. Were your labors to cease, all our dearest earthly pursuits on shore would be deeply affected. Agriculture and manufactures, the arts and sciences, would soon decline, and nothing would revive them, but a return of the maritime trade. Your occupation, like that of all others, has its evils and advantages. It gives you more acquaintance with men and things, and enlarged views of the works and ways of God. It serves to liberalize the mind, and to wear off those local prejudices, which sometimes disgrace the characters of those, whose travels and knowledge are confined within narrow bounds.

But while you count your high privileges, you must not forget the numerous dangers that may attend your course.

While engaged in foreign trade, you may pass through all the varieties of climate, and be exposed to all the changes of weather. Exposures, fatigues, watchings, and fastings, may engender fatal diseases, and carry you to an early grave; or they may bring on the premature decrepitude of old age. When in port you may be surrounded with the pestilence, that walketh in darkness, or by the destruction that wasteth at noon-day. Not only is your health in danger, but your faith may be shaken and your morals corrupted. By witnessing the divisions and corruptions of Christianity, and the varieties of her dress in different countries; by beholding a still greater diversity in the idols, and in the senseless and polluting worship of Pagans, you may become as indifferent as Gallio, or even be tempted to explode revelation and every form of religion, as the offspring of delusion. How vastly important, that your hearts should be

from their moral darkness, the *Sun of righteousness* beginning to *rise upon them with healing in his wings*, we ascribe the glorious prospect to the interposition of a merciful God, and to commerce as the instrumental cause. It was commerce that explored those populous regions, discovered their cruel superstitions, by its report excited Christian commiseration, and, at immense expense, furnished the means of supporting missionaries in that region, and of translating the Christian scriptures into the principal languages of Asia.

established with grace, and that your opinions be settled in the truth, and sustained by familiar and irrefragable arguments. The luxuries, the popular vices, and the ease of secret indulgence, in great commercial cities, all combined, form a temptation by which many have been cast down, yea, by which many strong men have been slain. "Set your feet on shore therefore with the most deliberate and devout resolution to shun the spot of sin and of temptation ; to flee from the very appearance of evil, to deny yourselves and take up your cross ; in a word, to curb those lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition, and to keep yourselves unspotted from the world."*

Few men fill places of so much trust as yourselves. Are you the owner of both ship and cargo, then through the want of skill or judgment, or in consequence of a little inattention, all may be lost, and your family reduced to poverty and sorrow ! Are you employed in the service of others, their property to vast amount is entrusted to your fidelity. How responsible this commitment ! The ship owner, the merchant, the consignee, the reputation of yourself and connexions, and the morals and lives of your men, are all involved in your integrity !

The ease with which property may be embezzled, or clearances destroyed, and forged, makes it of the highest moment that ship commanders possess that unbending honesty, which the richest temptations can never bribe. This truth, I trust, has been strongly felt. As a body of professional men you have never been reproached with a proneness to betray the confidence of your employers.

You, my respected hearers, have long been viewed as a valuable portion of the civil community. Your calling holds a distinguished rank in the pursuits of time. Respect then yourselves as citizens and as seamen, and stand aloof from every thing, that may stain your character. But, sirs, do you realize, that men of your profession are yet to be elevated to far higher and nobler stations, and are to perform services, which will enrich the kingdom of heaven to the latest moment of time, and in every

* Abbot's Sermons.

point of eternity? They are to become the carriers of God's word and people, and to be helpers in diffusing the light of revelation through all the kingdoms of men.

Permit me then to press the question upon your own consciences, are you now prepared by the mercy of Christ to enter on this glorious work? For your highest welfare and usefulness, the church of God take a lively interest, and for your salvation they continue their daily prayers. You have seen the weighty reasons to desire your conversion independent of your own personal happiness. But wave, for the present all these considerations, and confine your thoughts to your own independent good. You, like all other men, are involved in the guilt and misery of the fall. Have you ever been convinced by the spirit of God, that you are poor sinners? Have you learned the motives, by which you have been governed, and have you been slain by the sword of the law, as was the great apostle of the Gentiles? Can you look back to some season of distressing conviction of sin, and to the period of your joyful deliverance and espousals to Christ? Can you adopt the following lines, as descriptive of your own experience?

“Once on the raging seas I rode,
The storm was loud, the night was dark,
The ocean yawn'd, and rudely blow'd
The wind, that toss'd my foundering bark.

Deep horror then my vitals froze,
Death struck, I ceas'd the tide to stem :
When suddenly a star arose,
It was the star of Bethlehem.

It was my guide, my light, my all,
It bade my dark forebodings cease ;
And thro' the storm and danger's thrall,
It led me to the port of peace.”

You, more than most men, need the supports and consolations of religion. Your vocation requires you to spend much of your time on the bosom of the deep, far removed from domestic endearments, and from the privileges and assemblies of the house of God. Here, without grace, you are in constant peril

of being lost forever. Waters in the bilge, admitted through a worm hole gnawed in the forest centuries ago, may breed a pestilence, that may sweep you and all your comrades to a watery grave. A starting plank, or a hidden rock, or shoal, or some sudden flaw, or tempest, may sink you to the bottom. If you are in a state of impenitency your immortal interest is in continual jeopardy. Your souls are embarked, which, if lost, no price can redeem. Of what infinite moment, that they should be prepared by the grace of God, to meet death, however suddenly, and in whatever terrific forms it may come.

While far off on the sea, you may learn much of Jehovah. There you behold the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. There you behold the wonders of his goodness in making the ocean a mean both of separation and union among all the nations of the earth, and in turning it into a great store house of provision for the support of man. There you behold the wonders of his power in keeping it within its ancient boundaries. Sometimes the proud waves will come in with their high and foaming tops, as if resolved to break away the mounds, which have so long confined them. But they dash against the shore, spend all their fury, and then hasten back, as if ashamed of their defeat. There you behold the wonders of his wisdom. This mighty collection of water is deeply impregnated with salt, and for nearly six thousand years without one moment's pause, it has been ebbing and flowing, rocking about, and laving its immovable banks, and all this to keep it sweet and pure. There you behold the wonders of his greatness, and the tokens of his wrath. Sometimes the blue surface around seamen is smooth, presenting one vast sheet of unruffled waters, spread out like a molten looking glass, to reflect the face of heaven. All is stillness and awful majesty. But soon the scene is changed. The clouds begin to gather—look black and furious, full of tumult, as if preparing to discharge their angry contents—winds begin to howl—blow a gale, and soon a tempest, piling the ocean into rolling mountains—the heavens blaze, thunders roar, as if the whole artillery of the storm were opened, to play upon their

trembling bark—now “they mount up to the heavens, and go down again to the depths; their souls are melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit’s end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad, because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.” O how hard must be the heart, how stiff the iron sinew of the neck, to refuse to bow down before such displays of the power and the mercy of God! He holds the winds in his fist, and smites through the proud waves of the sea. Heaven is his throne, earth is his footstool; clouds are his chariots; lightnings are but the “shining of his glittering spear,” and the voice of thunder “is the noise of his tabernacle.”

Masters and seamen, as you are about to leave us for the season, I trust we shall follow you in our thoughts and prayers. May winds and waves, and every circumstance, conspire to render your respective voyages pleasant and prosperous. Like Zebulun, may you rejoice in your going out; and suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand. You will leave behind you anxious companions, parents and connexions, who, when tempests blow, will heave many a sigh to heaven for fear that you are sunk. Who of you will be permitted to return, is known only to that Being, who holds in his hands the destinies of all flesh.

“Many go out and ne’er return,
But leave their families to mourn
The sad irreparable blow,
Hasty, and vast, and awful too.”

No year rolls round without consigning many of your companions in danger to the world unknown. Some fall victims to disease—some are washed overboard—some fall from aloft, and are dashed in pieces—some are wrecked on desolate shores, and are lost at once, or perish under an assemblage of inexpressible miseries. Ah! how many parents, widows, and fatherless children in this vicinity, and elsewhere, are now filled with sorrow

of heart at the remembrance, that in such ways and sufferings they have lost a son, a husband, a father? How solemnly have you felt while attending sea funerals, when you have sewed up a winding sheet around some cold corpse of clay, and with silence and tears slid him down the sides of the ship, to sink out of your sight, to rise no more, till the last trump of God shall summons the sea to give up its dead! O my fellow mortals, are you prepared to die? Do you realize the miseries of an unconverted state, and the amazement of the graceless sinner, who dies in the anguish of despair? If he look back while on his dying bed, he sees, that he has wasted his day of grace—slighted the calls of mercy—profaned the holy sabbath—neglected the word and house of God—disregarded the counsels of wisdom, and outbraved the judgments and threatnings of heaven. Within he is tortured with the stings and remorse of an upbraiding conscience. He looks forward to the judgment seat, and expects soon to be called into the presence of that holy God, whom he has disobeyed, and from whose presence he must be driven away to lie down in endless sorrow. How often do such thoughts overwhelm and distract the sinner, when summoned away by the king of terrors?

That such may not be the melancholy close of your life, be entreated to think on your ways, and to flee to Christ, the only refuge. What is your present character and condition? Have you been launched from the stocks of nature into the ocean of grace? Have you on board all things requisite for your passage to eternity? Where is your pilot? Has the image of Christ been formed in your heart, the hope of glory? Does he rule in your life? When your ship is tossed with the waves, does Jesus come to you in the watches of the night, walking upon the sea, and saying to you, "be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid?" Are you furnished with chart and compass? Is the Bible your support and guide? Is it by this book "you ascertain your position, your course and your bearings?" Are you supplied with ship stores to last the voyage? Are the rich promises of God hid in your hearts, and by an act of faith are they changed into the food and strength of your souls? Do you often try the

pump? or prayerfully perform the duty of self-examination, to learn the soundness of your hope. When you make a harbor, and enjoy temporary rest and peace from the storms of life, do you preserve an anchor watch, lest you be assaulted and robbed by enemies, or drift from your ground, and be carried away by the current of sin to be wrecked on rocks or quicksands? Do you often try the lead, and heave the log to know your bottom, and the rate you run? If so, happy men, happy mariners, heave up, spread all your sails, and the winds of mercy will soon waft you into the port of eternal rest.

The following Psalm and Hymns were sung with much expression and effect during the services of the evening. Psalm 107, C. M. and the 32nd and 156th Hymns, Winchell's Selection.

THE MARINER'S PSALM.

- 1 Thy works of glory, mighty Lord,
Thy wonders in the deeps,
The sons of courage shall record,
Who trade in floating ships.
- 2 At thy command the winds arise,
And swell the towering waves;
The men, astonish'd, mount the skies,
And sink in gaping graves.
- 3 [Again they climb the watery hills,
And plunge in deeps again:
Each like a tottering drunkard reels,
And finds his courage vain.
- 4 Frighted to hear the tempest roar,
They pant with fluttering breath;
And, hopeless of a distant shore,
Expect immediate death.]
- 5 Then to the Lord they raise their cries;
He hears their loud request,
And orders silence through the skies,
And lays the floods to rest.
- 6 Sailors rejoice to lose their fears,
And see the storm allay'd:
Now to their eyes the port appears;
There let their vows be paid.
- 7 'Tis God that brings them safe to land;
Let stupid mortals know
That waves are under his command,
And all the winds that blow.
- 8 O that the sons of men would praise
The goodness of the Lord!
And those that see thy wondrous ways,
Thy wondrous love record.

THANKSGIVING FOR DELIVERANCE IN A STORM.

- 1 Our little bark, on boist'rous seas,
By cruel tempest tost,
Without one cheerful beam of hope,
Expecting to be lost;
- 2 We to the Lord in humble prayer

Breath'd out our sad distress;
Though feeble, yet with contrite hearts,
We begg'd return of peace.

- 3 The stormy winds did cease to blow,
The waves no more did roll;
And soon again a placid sea
Spoke comfort to each soul.

4 O! may our grateful, trembling hearts
Sweet hallelujahs sing
To him who hath our lives preserv'd,
Our Saviour and our King.

- 5 Let us proclaim to all the world,
With heart and voice, again,
And tell the wonders he hath done
For us, the sons of men.

THE STAR OF BETHLEHEM.

- 1 When marshall'd on the nightly plain,
The glittering host bestud the sky;
One star alone, of all the train,
Can fix the sinner's wandering eye.

2 Hark! hark! to God the chorus breaks,
From every host, from every gem;
But one alone the Saviour speaks,
It is the star of Bethlehem.

- 3 Once on the raging seas I rode,
The storm was loud, the night was dark.
The ocean yawn'd, and rudely blow'd
The wind that toss'd my foundering bark.

4 Deep horror then my vitals froze,
Death-struck, I ceas'd the tide to stem:
When suddenly a star arose,
It was the star of Bethlehem.

- 5 It was my guide, my light, my all,
It bade my dark forebodings cease,
And through the storm and danger's thrall,
It led me to the port of peace.

6 Now safely moor'd—my perils o'er,
I'll sing, first in night's diadem;
Forever and forevermore,
The star—the star of Bethlehem.

NOTES.

A.

Extract of a letter from Mr. Wheelock, to Dr. B. of Boston.

On board of the Independence, at sea, March 26, 1818.

We trust, dear sir, that the prayers which have been offered for the ship's company, have been, in some good degree, answered. We dare not be confident, but, in the judgment of charity, we hope that five or more of the sailors are brought to a knowledge of "the truth, as it is in Jesus." Indeed, their daily life evinces that this is the case. To them the Saviour is truly precious. They speak, as if taught of God. The work has been gradual. "The still small voice" apparently called them. Their distress, though sometimes great, has been allayed by the gentle whispers of mercy. Their simplicity and honesty afford us much pleasure. We find them very ingenuous, too much so to be hypocrites. The other sailors appear to be serious. Indeed, we did hope that some of them had also experienced a gracious change, but of them "we stand in doubt." O may they also be brought to a knowledge of the truth. We desire to adore the rich grace which has been thus remarkably manifested.

Extract of a letter to the Editor of the Boston Recorder, from Capt. William Lander.

During my voyage,* five of my ship's company have, as I trust, been brought out of nature's darkness into the light and liberty of the gospel; a period of eight months has elapsed since, and their walk and conversation has been uniformly such as to adorn the gospel of Christ; and I hope it will give encouragement to the children of God to pray more earnestly for the conversion of sailors.

Salem, Nov. 30, 1819.

*From Salem to Batavia.

Extract of a letter from Mr. T. Phillips, one of the Secretaries of the Bethel Seamen's Union, to the Rev. Ward Stafford, dated London, July 12, 1820.

Dear Sir—You will observe that the account of your attention being called to the best interests of seamen, was communicated by my very worthy and esteemed friend, the Rev. George Charles Smith, of Penzance, once an officer in his Majesty's navy, who had gone to the greatest lengths in sin, but now a most zealous minister of the gospel, who, knowing the heart of a sailor, has felt particularly interested for their salvation.

It may perhaps, be agreeable, to be informed of a great work going on in England among sailors. I will endeavor to give you a short statement of it.

Early in the year 1817, having some business to transact at the London Dock, a pious friend who held a situation there, said he heard that prayer meetings were held by sailors on board the colliers. I was surprised at the information, for if there was one set of men worse than another, the seamen in the colliers were thought to be that set. My business lying much upon the Thames, I determined to ascertain if the account was true, and one evening found them out.—The result of my visit you will find recorded in the

tracts called "Bethel," of which you will find a few in the parcel. I attended several of their meetings with great pleasure, and encouraged them to go forward. Soon afterwards Mr. Smith came to London, when I immediately informed him of the good news, and he determined to visit them without delay—his account of his first to these interesting meetings you will find in the Tract called "the British Ark," which he wrote and widely circulated, with a view of calling the attention of the public to get a Floating Chapel on the Thames for seamen, where they might have the gospel preached to them on their own element—this has given rise to the "Port of London Society for promoting Religion among Seamen," whose noble chapel, a ship of 380 tons, lying near the London Docks, I am happy to say, is well attended by Seamen every Sabbath, and much good is done there. After the establishment of this society, it was thought proper to form a society for the friends of seamen, to encourage more extensively the itinerant prayer meetings from ship to ship, and endeavor to establish them in the other ports of this kingdom, and to extend them to sailors in foreign ports. In consequence of this, "The Bethel Seamen's Union Society, British and Foreign," has been formed under the most promising appearances.

Since the formation of the Bethel Seamen's Union, prayer meetings have been introduced on board ships at Greenwich, Leith, Gainsborough, Cardiff, Plymouth Dock, Sheerness, Portsmouth, Penryn, and other ports round the British coast, and it is astonishing the interest that is now felt by the people on shore for the welfare of seamen.

The prayer meetings are held now every night on the Thames, and some nights in several ships at the same time. In the Lower Pool it is not unusual to see from 100 to 150 sailors in one ship, and to hear from 10 to 12 engage in prayer.

You will find inclosed, a tract in six part parts, entitled "The Boatswain's Mate," written by my friend, G. C. Smith. In the character of *James*, he gives some account of himself while a poor thoughtless sailor, wandering far from God—also an account of his conversion. He will be happy to hear from you of the progress of the work of God among the seamen of America; and the Committee of the Bethel Seamen's Union will also rejoice in your correspondence upon the same subject.—We have one object in view—the glory of God, and the conversion of seamen. May the flame that has been kindled spread to every port in the world, and the praises of the Redeemer resound from every ship, till "the abundance of the seas are converted to Him."

May the Lord bless you, my dear sir, in this noble work, and when that period shall arrive, when "the sea shall give up the dead which are in it," may we witness millions of seamen entering into the joy of their Lord. I request you will present my Christian respects to the gentlemen of the Seamen's Society in New York, and remain, my dear sir, your's very sincerely.

T. PHILLIPS.

Extract of a letter from Capt. Charles Allen, R. N. to the Rev. Ward Stafsford. London, July 10th, 1820.

The prayer meetings are become very general on the Thames, they are held every night on board some ship or other, and it is no uncommon thing to see on some occasions, 8 or 10 signals for prayer flying in various parts of the river at the same time. The flag which is designed for the signal of prayer, is blue, with the word "Bethel" inscribed upon it, (the invention of the sailors themselves), and is seen flying most of the day at the mast head of the vessel appointed for divine service. On Tuesdays and Fridays, a short but impressive exhortation is given by a minister appointed for that purpose,

whose qualifications as a preacher to seamen, are augmented by the circumstance of his having served in the royal navy. I do not attempt to convey to you an adequate idea of the impression made upon those who attend these profitable services; the earnestness of their devotions, and genuine language of their hearts, never fail to excite in them a strong desire to attend more frequently. Many persons attend from the shore, both male and female, who seem, by their regular appearance, sensible of the profit they derive.

B.

Dr. C. Mather in his *Magnalia* relates: that, Aug. 25, 1676, Mr. Ephraim Howe with his two sons sailed from New Haven for Boston in a small vessel of about seventeen tons. On his return to New Haven, the weather became so tempestuous that they were driven off to sea. Here in about eleven days his elder son died, and in a few days more his younger. Soon after another of the company died. Half of the company was now gone. To add to their afflictions the rudder was lost. For six weeks together, Mr. Howe though labouring under much infirmity, was hardly ever dry. When the seventh week dawned upon them, the vessel was driven near a ledge of rocks, where the sea dashed with no little violence; looking out they espied a rocky island to the leeward, upon which, if the providence of God had not by the breakers given them timely notice, they had been dashed to pieces. This extremity was heaven's opportunity. They let go the anchor and got out the boat, and God made that storm a calm so that the waves were still. When they came on shore they found themselves on a desolate island, near Cape Sables, on which was neither man or beast. The prospect of being starved stared them in the face. But a storm arose which destroyed the vessel and drove on shore a cask of powder, a barrel of wine and a half barrel of molasses, together with several other things which assisted them in making a sort of tent, to preserve them from the terrible cold. So few fowl were seen on the island that they were often much straitened for food. When they had been 12 weeks in this lonesome condition Mr. Augur died, and a lad died in April following.

The good man, thus left alone, kept many days in prayer and fasting. At last it came into his mind that he ought very solemnly to give thanks to God for the marvellous preservations which he had hitherto experienced. Accordingly he set apart a day for solemn thanksgiving to God his gracious preserver for the divine favors which had been intermixed with all his troubles. Immediately after this, a vessel belonging to Salem did pass by that island, and took him in. So he arrived in Salem, July 18, 1677, and returned unto his family in New Haven.—295th page N. Haven Ed.