

THE heavy cruiser knifed relentlessly through the waters of the Southern Pacific, armed to the teeth and ready for trouble. Her big guns were nosing the air, sticky from the salty spindrift but alert and prepared for action. Her gun crews and lookouts, veterans of every battle in the Pacific to date, were on the watch for aught that might attempt to interfere with her mission. Where there had been only the sound of the lonesome ocean clutching at the sides of the ship and falling back in a glow of phosphorescence, there came a new sound, a haunting, alien sound. From underneath No. 1 turret there drifted the strains of:

*And He walks with me and He talks with me
And He tells me I am His own;
For the joy we share as we tarry there
None other has ever known.*

Our evening Bible study class had ended and those of us who were not going on watch immediately were topside singing to the accompaniment of a guitar played by a marine:

*O come to the church in the wildwood,
O come to the church in the dale;
No spot is so dear to my childhood,
As the little brown church in the vale.*

Each of us sees as he sings, the church he holds dear and the loved ones who are associated with it—home. There is a silence after that one, then the lad with the guitar strikes a chord or two and begins singing:

*Now the day is over, night is drawing nigh,
Shadows of the evening steal across the sky.*

And the Captain on the bridge smiles and lends an attentive ear; he knows and loves this one, too. Next day he will tell the chaplain he enjoyed the singing.

*Grant to little children visions bright of Thee;
Guard the sailors, tossing on the deep, blue sea.*

I returned to my room that night rather late after a chess game in the ward room and was surprised to find several lads awaiting me. It was Saturday night and a few of the boys had come in to have prayer with me. We prayed for God's blessing on the service the next day and on our Bible class through which we were reaching many. As we concluded our prayer one of the men arose and said, "Well, I better get some shuteye while I can." That was Vic McAnney, leader of the Christian group, who had met me when I came aboard with the statement that he and his friends had been praying for God to send them the man they needed. After coming to know Vic I wanted intensely to be "that man."

"Why, Vic, do you have the watch in the morning?"

"Well, sort of, 'watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,' you know."

I found after he left that Vic made a practice of getting up an hour earlier than necessary each morning, going up on the boat deck and praying for his shipmates. He had

a prayer list and following his mother and father and fiancée came his chaplain.

I fell asleep soon after with the sermon for the next day on my mind. At 0400 I awakened. Vic was "on watch." Unable to go back to sleep, I arose, sat at my desk and idly picked up my pen. I began to write, little knowing what I was to write. Having finished I went back to sleep until general quarters sounded.

When time for divine services came and the bugler played church call, I went to the messing compartment where we held church. There was the largest crowd that had ever turned out. The curtains with which we enclosed a small portion of the large compartment had to be taken down for the compartment was filled; men were crowding to get in, even sitting in the hatches. Vic was grinning at me as if to say, "This is more like it." The preliminaries over, the time came for me to deliver the sermon, but the one which I had prepared seemed wholly inadequate. I thought of the one I had written that morning, tore up the notes of my prepared sermon before the astonished eyes of my shipmates, and began to talk to them from my heart, from God's heart, from His Word. It was the sermon He had given me early that morning and which, having put on paper, I found in my heart.

We were going in to take Guadalcanal, to make the initial landings and every man had thought of the chances we would take. Each had had a heart-to-heart talk with himself and had decided in his own heart whether or not he was ready to face all eventualities. I spoke to them of life, of the One who is The Life and pointed out to them the way of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ who through that death made it possible for us to obtain eternal life here and now. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word and believeth on Him that sent Me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life." I told them not to be ashamed, ever, of the turning to God that they had experienced and would yet experience when in danger, because it was only then, when faced with the two Realities, *life* and *death*, only then, that they could think clearly. For the first time in my ministry I had a congregation of men before me from whom all sham and pretense had been stripped. They were not thinking of rates, or pay increases, or liberty, or girls; they were facing eternal verities. For the first time in their lives they were thinking "straight" and clearly and I was there to point them to Christ. I thanked God then that I had a Saviour to offer them. I dismissed them to think over what I had said.

Vic followed me to my compartment and said, "Chaplain, let's pray and thank God for the men who will find Christ because of that message." We got down on our knees and while we were praying the curtains in the doorway to the compartment were pulled aside. When we looked up from our prayers there stood a rather embarrassed but earnest sailor with tears in his eyes. He was the first of many who were to come and settle in their own hearts the question of what to do with Christ. The other Christian men on the ship were equally blessed. I told the congregation that morning that they knew their Christian shipmates and I was sure they could approach

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