

my discharge, I came to Portland, Oregon, to try to settle down and quit drinking, but I was helpless and finally went back to the old top-mast schooners.

Years later, after coming from the Hawaiian Islands on a big American sailing ship, I stood on the streets of Portland, Oregon, a miserable, discouraged, homeless, and friendless man. Some people from the Apostolic Faith Church came out to hold a street meeting. They told of what God had done for them, and I could not help but believe what they said. I thought it was the most wonderful thing that God could take sin out of a man's life and keep him as a Christian every day.

A transformed life!

At the close of the meeting, they looked into the crowd where I stood, and one man said, "If anyone desires the prayers of God's people, raise your hand." Those people wanted to pray for a man like me! I raised my hand; I could not afford not to. We went to their regular meeting place to pray. I prayed, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner." As I called on God, He opened Heaven and put peace in my soul. He sobered me up that night, and transformed my life. I knew I was born again, and everyone else knew it too.

I went back and told my shipmates what the Lord had done for me. They often tried to

tempt me to drink with them, but I had no desire for liquor. I spent almost one year back on the Atlantic Coast while in the United States Army during the war. Though I was granted a permanent pass to leave my post when off duty, I was never tempted to go into the saloons and taverns again. I had joy and peace in my heart and could live a Christian life before the world.

I always believed that before a man died he should have a clean slate. I had restitutions to make all over the world, and some were not small. I wrote letters to several companies and officers under whom I had worked. I wrote to the Danish government and made restitution to the United States government.

From the moment God saved me, I have had no desire to go back to the cigarettes and whiskey. I desire only to tell the Gospel story. I have enjoyed being a Christian through the years, and it is my heart's delight to see other seafaring men find the old-time religion. I know that it satisfies and can keep from all sin in every circumstance. I have proved it. — Max Hanson

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IN THE DAYS OF WOODEN SHIPS AND IRON MEN

My hometown, a Danish seaport, was known throughout Denmark for its fine ships and good skippers. I loved the ocean and the ships. As I saw the sailors coming in to port, I wanted to be like them and become a sailor. Those were the days of “wooden ships and iron men,” and I determined to be an iron man.

My time to go to sea came sooner than I expected. When I was fourteen, my parents and grandparents passed away within three months of each other. I became a homeless boy nobody cared about, so I went to sea.

I started my career as a cabin boy and then spent eight years before the mast in the square-rigged ships. I thought that in order to be a good skipper, one should stay with his ship when it went down and be able to drink a lot of whisky. Before long, I became a drunken sailor. As the years went by, I sailed among the hardest men on the ships in the North Atlantic. It was a hard life—not at all what I had expected. Many times, as I stood at the wheel amidst the blowing wind and mountainous waves, I wondered if God was real.

Addictions ruled my life

It was not very long until I wanted to quit drinking and smoking, but I could not. I often sold my clothes to buy alcohol. Many times out

EVEN THOUGH WE WERE SINNERS, GOD WAS MERCIFUL.

on the Atlantic, with the blowing wind and snow, I had no blanket to lay on the bare boards in my bunk, no coat, and no sea boots. We sailed up in the Arctic Circle where the icebergs were as big as a city block. I used to plead with the captain, “If you will only trust me with a pound, I will go uptown and buy clothes and do only what I should as a good sailor.” As soon as I got to town, though, my shipmates and I would find a saloon and have one drink after another. Before I knew it, I had forgotten about all the promises I had made to the captain. I would go out to sea again with few clothes and no boots. It was always the same round of defeat. Many nights I crawled into a canvas bag to keep warm.

I used to think of the days back in Denmark, when I would take my grandmother’s hand and go to church with her. I knew Scriptures from memory and could sing the old hymns such as “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” and “Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus.” As I thought of those things, I would promise God that if I ever made port again I would not drink up my money but

go home and go to school. I never kept that promise.

Several times in my career, by God’s mercy, I narrowly escaped death. Early in the spring of 1909, when trying to make our first port of call in a heavy sea on the North Atlantic coast, we struck the bar. Our propeller went. When we struck the second time, our rudder went, and we were helpless. As the ship began to break up, we could see a little white church on a hillside. How I wished I had been a better boy! The church bell was ringing, gathering people together to pray for us. Even though we were sinners, God was merciful and answered those prayers. Our ship was saved.

Needing a change

I was tired of being a drunken sailor, so I finally asked one of my shipmates, George, to go to a Gospel mission meeting with me. We put on clean clothes and went to the little mission. Outside the door, we hesitated and wondered whether or not we should go in. George turned abruptly and said, “I’m going to sail one more trip,” and I left with him. George never went back to a meeting. He fell overboard and drowned while under the influence of liquor. How God talked to me through that!

I later joined the United States revenue cutters and became a petty officer. When I got