

# THE LIFE OF AN ETERNAL SAILOR ON SEA AND LAND

BY LARS LEO JOHANSON

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## SECTION I: AUTOBIOGRAPHY

### Foreword

Lars Leo Johanson, member of the First Lutheran Church, has, at my request, allowed some of his experiences on land and sea to be written here. His life bears witness to the truth that a child of God-loving parents is greatly blessed. Lars Johanson may have traveled far from home, but he never left the embrace of his mother's prayers. It is said, that in love, no mother's child is ever lost to her.

Johanson's life bears witness also to the blessing of having a understanding and above all, God-loving wife. Solomon said "She is worth far more than pearls. She has done him no harm, but only good for all the days of his life."

Although a seaman is tried by all manner of natural dangers and misguided human beings at sea, his trials are no less great when he comes ashore. The following story shows how important it is for the Seaman's Mission to offer sailors spiritual refuge on land.

We may note that it was especially through laymen that Lars Johanson was led to God. It is natural, therefore, that spiritual activities undertaken by any laymen were dear to him. He himself traveled and ministered as a layman. His life experience shows that when priest and layman can mutually support one another, the fruit of their effort is so much

greater than the fruits of many separate efforts. The work of both laymen and clergymen have worth in God's sight.

I hope that "The Life of an Eternal Sailor on Sea and Land" may be read by many people who can be helped by it, as I have been.

Reverend M. H. Hegge  
Pastor, First Lutheran Church  
Stoughton, Wisconsin  
March 1927

[2015 Editor's Note: At the time Rev. M. H. Hegge translated these pages from the Norwegian, he was Pastor at First Lutheran Church, Stoughton, Wisconsin. He also served Cooksville with services in Norwegian on Sunday afternoons. He was accompanied by Miss Vinnie Anderson who served as our organist as she was also doing at First Lutheran. Pastor Hegge had been a widower for a number of years. During these rides a romance developed and he and Vinnie were married in 1925. They adopted 2 children, Paul and Adelaide. From "History of Cooksville Lutheran Church."]

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## THE LIFE OF AN ETERNAL SAILOR ON SEA AND LAND

The so-called "eternal sailor", Lars Johanson, was born on January 7, 1852, in Dalsland, Sweden, and baptized with the name Lars Leo Johanson. He will here try to write a little about the course of his life, as his children have encouraged him to do. It is not his purpose to present himself as a pure and exemplary youth. He will simply tell about his life at sea and on land, the good and the bad, about his mistakes and about his discovery of Christ.

If this simple story about sin and grace can help some eternal sailor, in confusion, to set his course homeward to his Heavenly Father, then I will have fulfilled my purpose, and, along with all who have received the Spirit into their lives, I will praise the Lord forever.

I begin my life story in my dear childhood home, where I first learned about God, and where I first came close to Him at my confirmation. When I later entered the turmoil and trouble of the world, the memory of my mother and the memory of my youthful meeting with God often came to me. These memories will live in me all my days.

I was also taught to respect work and was able to help my parents through the hardships of poverty. I was as happy in my parents' home, as any rich man's son could be in his, with all his riches and worldly pleasures.

The time came, however, when I, in accord with my parent's feelings, should leave home, as my older brothers and sisters had done, to find work and make my own way in life.

In early spring of 1870, at 18 years of age, I left my birthplace in Sweden and traveled to Frederikstad, Norway. But I can never forget when my mother packed my clothes in my ruck sack. With tears in her eyes she said: "If I never see you again on earth I will pray for you that we may meet again in Heaven with our God.

I put your Bible in your sack; don't forget to read it; you will find mercy and salvation for your soul. Farewell!"

As long as my heart can beat in me  
And love can live within  
And childhood joys can touch my life  
And warm and light my soul  
As long as my thoughts can live in me  
My mother lives here too.

For when I had to leave my home  
Her prayer came with me then  
And like the sunrise lived in me  
And still lives in me now,  
Father, sisters, brothers I cherish  
But Mother I love the most.

After several days of walking, I arrived, along with some fellow travelers in the vicinity of Frederikstad, where by brother, Anders, worked at a sawmill. It lifted my spirits to meet my brother; for he knew the area well, and got me a job on a farm, where I stayed until the fall.

One day we got a letter from my father saying that my mother had died, and that we should come home. The burial was set for the day after we received the letter. There was no way for us to walk home in time, and there was no train. This was a hard time for me, when mother had died and was buried. I felt like a stranger now, with no home on earth.

That winter was very trying. There was almost no work to be found, and I became depressed and disheartened. I had poor clothes and little money and no home to call my own. But when the need is greatest, help is closest at hand. One day some seamen came to me, knowing my hard situation, and took me into their business; overseeing the loading of lumber onto the many sailing ships harbored in the Klommen River, before these headed to sea in the spring.

Here also, I found some merry and spirited sailors, who told me of their adventures aboard trading ships, sailing to foreign lands. This awakened in me a strong desire to become a sailor myself, though it was no easy matter for an inexperienced farmboy to be hired onto a ship.

But also in the company of these young, lively sailors, like the Prodigal Son, my desire was aroused to seek the pleasures of the world, and to taste life's sins in faraway lands. But the Father's merciful eyes followed his Prodigal Son.

Meanwhile, I was fortunate enough to be hired as a cook on a sloop, and with her I made two trips to Denmark with cargos of lumber. After this, I had no more desire to sail on this small vessel, which had only one mast. Aboard her I could never become a full-fledged sailor. For the rest of the summer and fall, I sailed on larger ships which traveled to France and London with loads of lumber.

I was happy now to have experienced the sea life. But this was only a fair-weather taste of what I was later to experience on the stormy seas, and among thieves and other disreputable men.

The winter brought me to my brother, Anders, who lived at Kreaker, where there was much drinking and carousing. Here I fell away from the Godly upbringing of my youth, and forgot my mother's admonitions, and strayed far from our Heavenly Father.

Early in the spring of 1873, I signed on to the ship "Orpheus", under Captain Hansen, which was scheduled to carry lumber to Liverpool, and then on to Quebec for another load of lumber back to Liverpool.

Arriving at the great seaport, several of us sailors went ashore to buy clothes and to enjoy ourselves a bit. When we got to the dockside street which was crowded with all sorts of light and dark-skinned seafolk, we were all hailed by a high-smiling runner, who invited us to a "fine and respectable house of pleasure"; we were taken in by his spiel and followed him along.

But we soon saw that this house of pleasure, which consisted in a dance hall, boarding house and brothel, was the most frightfully blatant temptation to sin we had ever faced. The whole place was set up to trick and fleece poor seamen. They didn't trick us, but we had to pay for the price of the beer. Pity the poor person who doesn't know how deeply he may fall into sin.

After two trips to Quebec, "Orpheus" arrived at Liverpool in the fall to unload its cargo. This proceeded with spirit and vigor, as the ship was scheduled to return from here to Frederikstad. The men were encouraged by the prospect of getting home for Christmas; that was our plan. But then the captain received a telegram from the shipping company ordering the ship to Jamaica to pick up a cargo of lumber. Disappointed and bitter, the crew nonetheless had to obey orders and follow the ship.

When the ship had taken on ballast and was ready to sail, steamboats towed it out of port. With a brisk, fair wind, we set full sail, and "Orpheus" headed downwind across the Atlantic at eight to ten knots.

About Christmas time we entered the northeast tradewinds. This was my first Christmas at sea. But how was I to celebrate this joyful feast with a captain and crew who cared so little about Christ? There was no-one on board who seemed to feel close to God, or who could rejoice in our Saviour's birth.

But godless as Captain Hansen was, even he wished to be a little religious on this holy day, and called us to his cabin for Christmas dinner and read us a sermon from a book of collected sermons. The sermon was good but it didn't come from his heart, and could barely reach our hearts; WE walked back to our quarters and continued with our worldly ways, heedless of God. One played a fiddle, another the accordion [sic], and others danced.

For the remaining part of the trip, Captain Hansen was easy on us, and told us that we young sailors were the finest crew for handling a ship in a storm he had ever seen.

We arrived at our destination with fair weather and steady winds, and anchored in Jamaica's port. Here we stayed for awhile, as the Negroes to bring the cargo out to us in their small boats. But, by the beginning of February the ship was loaded; we weighed anchor and headed to sea, bound for Falmouth, England to receive further orders. The journey began well, with a brisk wind, and the ship made ten knots. But in the middle of the Atlantic, the wind built into a full storm, and all hands were called on deck to man the bilge and furl the sails, and lower the topmast. The waves were already so huge, it was too late to head the ship into the wind, for it would have tipped over. Through the evening and night the storm grew so intense and the sea was rough, that waves broke over the top deck and cracked the hull. We feared sinking at any moment, as the hold was already flooded, and no-one could stand on the deck to man the bilges. The captain and his helmsmen stood lashed to the steering wheel by a rope all night long, while the rest of the crew stayed up in the rigging.

The bitter cold drove me down from the rigging and into the bunk room in search of my wool sweater and hat, which I had misplaced during the night. But when I got in to the bunk room to open my chest, a violent wave broke on top, carrying away the two lifeboats which were fastened on the roof, and filling the bunk room and crew's quarters with water. Shaken and afraid, I made my way up the deck, just as another wave crashed over it. I would have been swept into the sea if I had not grabbed onto a rope as I fell. I somehow crawled up this rope onto the deck again and up into the rigging with my comrades, where we all expected to meet death at the hands of the wild ocean.

But the most terrible thing was that none of these eternal sailors had come to terms with their God, and were unprepared to die and to join Him. Pity the seaman who doesn't know the Lord, his God; He wants nothing but to free you from your sin and your eternal death!

But the daybreak came, and the storm began to subside, and we climbed from the rigging to the deck and set the bilge pumps to work. The cook brought coffee and bread, and with renewed strength and a fair-weather wind, we managed to make Falmouth-port without

further mishap. Here the hull of the ship was repaired and she was outfitted with new lifeboats. We then received orders to sail for Amsterdam and unload our cargo.

After arriving in Amsterdam, we received the unhappy news that "Orpheus" was not yet to go home to Norway, but was scheduled to make two trips to North America.

We became disgruntled and wanted no more part in this weather-beaten old hulk, and three sailors promptly jumped ship. Once they had escaped I grew even more dissatisfied with my lot on board and I decided to escape too. But it was not easy, at this point, to go ashore unless one of the ship's officers was along. Nonetheless, when my escape plans were laid, I asked for permission one evening to accompany an officer ashore to buy some clothes. Once ashore, after my errand, the officer and I went to a tavern to drink with some other seamen. Amidst the conversation, I sneaked away and got onto a steamboat, which, I knew was due to leave Amsterdam at ten or eleven o'clock, bound for Hull, England, after a cargo of coal. I was glad when the boat finally set out from the dock, for now I was a free man.

At eight o'clock the next morning we made port at Hull, and I went ashore and into a restaurant for breakfast. As I sat there, a kindly man came up and asked me where I had come from, and where I was headed. I recounted for him, in broken English, the sad truth that I had escapee in Amsterdam from a Norwegian ship, leaving behind all my clothes and five month's pay that was due me. Here in Hull, I doubted there was any work to be found, I told him. So I planned to travel to Liverpool and try to find a job there. (\$13.00 was all I had in my pocket at the time.)

This man looked on me with Christian sympathy, and said, "Dear young man, you are a prodigal son." And indeed I was a prodigal son, far away from my God in a strange land. This Christian man showed me to the train station, where he gave me, in my discouraged state, a heartfelt admonition: that I should leave behind my sinful ways and receive the Lord into my life. This man I will never forget. He truly cared about the eternal welfare of my soul.

When I arrived in Liverpool, I immediately walked to the employment office, where there was a crowd of seamen looking for work.

A boarding-house keeper approached me hospitably and encouraged me to go with him to his place. He supposed I had just been paid from a long tour at sea and had plenty of money, but in fact I had almost none. I followed him to his boarding-house nonetheless.

But when he discovered that I had escaped from a ship, with no clothes and no money, and could therefore pay nothing to his boarding-house/ brothel business, he let me stay only two days, then took me to the employment office and got me a job on a large full-rigger ship, the "Duncan", which was about to leave for Calcutta, India, with a salt cargo.

My clever boarding-house keeper had taken from the "Duncan's" captain one month of my pay in advance--three pounds and five shillings--to buy me some clothes and to cover

my stay at his place. But this heartless man, it turned out, had been to a pawnshop and for a pittance, bought a sack of all sorts of useless and old clothing. Then, in his fine horse coach, he drove me and my clothes sack down to the dock where the huge ship "Duncan" lay, and said "Good-bye"!

I took my sack and went aboard. What a fierce commotion! I can't begin to describe the sinfulness there: drunkenness and swearing, fighting over who should have the best bunks in the crew's quarters. Such a hellish spectacle I had never seen on the Norwegian ships I traveled with before.

This crew, with officers, totaled twenty seven men, and included ten different nationalities.

The first mate called all men to the deck, as a steamboat towed the ship down the River Thames to sea. Getting the ship under full sail was a slow matter with this ragged crew. Some stayed in the cabin and got drunk, others grumbled and cursed, others were old and slow. But when the sails were set, the ship headed out across the Atlantic with good speed, and soon met the tradewinds of the equator. We had the finest weather a seaman could wish for.

As it happened, during this journey, there was a funeral on board. A sailor, named Jack, had lived an immoral life of sin and lust, and contracted an awful disease. He writhed in pain, and, as he was dying shouted: "I can see down, but not up." This poor man had lived in sin and with his sin he entered eternity. The Chandler wrapped him in a piece of sailcloth, to which he fastened an iron weight so the body could sink quickly to the ocean floor.

The ship's bell rang and the captain carried out the burial ceremony according to the prescribed English sea ritual, and the body was lowered into the ocean.

After this sobering burial, life on board became even more unpleasant and sad. I felt an uneasiness in me; my thoughts went back to my homeland; I remembered my mother's prayer and the New Testament which she had laid in my rucksack, and which I had long since lost, and often grieved over.

The ship now made good speed, under full sail, around the Cape of Good Hope, and through the southeast passage. Three months out from Liverpool we anchored in Calcutta harbor. Here we lay for two and one half months unloading our salt, and then loading cotton. Bengali coolies carried the cargo off and on.

Here in port there were many ships and crowds of sailors. The English boarding-house runners lured many into their brothels and didn't let them out again until they had plundered from them most of their hard-earned money.

One day a missionary came onboard the "Duncan". He handed out some pamphlets and wanted to sell the crewmen some books about Christ. But no, such religious books held

no interest for them; novels, and romances were what they wanted. I asked him if he had any Christian books in Norwegian. "Not today," he said, "but tomorrow I'll bring you one." The next day, he returned with a used Norwegian bible for me, and he encouraged me to read it for the sake of my soul. I thanked him, payed [sic] him what I could, and was joyful to put this New Testament into my rucksack, as my mother had once done.

Finally the ship was ready for the return to Liverpool, and a steamboat pulled us out the Bay of Bengal to the open sea. Under full sail, at steady speed, the ship headed for its destination without incident.

In the tradewinds and below the equator we had the finest weather a sailor could want. In my free time I read the Bible, which I had gotten in the heathen land, and God in his mercy tried to show me that I was a prodigal son, far away in a strange land in the throes of these godless seafolk. We now began, during our watch-duties, to scrub and paint the ship, inside and out, so the ship could look good when we arrived in Liverpool. One day, there was a lively discussion among the sailors in the bunkroom about which brothel to go to when we arrived and about which ones offered the greatest pleasures.

A Portuguese sailor and I, however, had decided to go to the Christian Sailor's Home, even though the others scoffed at us because there were no prostitutes there, only "hypocritical, holier-than-thou" seamen.

Finally, after eight and one half -months under sail, the "Duncan" docked in Liverpool. The crewmen were paid well for the long trip and were very happy about that.

To the gangplank and onboard came a swarm of boardinghouse runners who offered the sailors liquor and coaxed them to come along to their establishments, which, for the most part, were connected with brothels and all types of vice. But the Portuguese and I went to the Sailor's Home. This we found to be a peaceful and Christian place; and here we were spared from Satan's wolves and their dens.

We ought to thank God and his goodhearted followers for running such Christian homes in the large seaports for seamen to come to. So many poor seamen have been snared by the countless immoral establishments on shore.

The Sailor's Home in London has rescued many seamen from sin and misery. It has reading rooms, Christian books and magazines in the Scandinavian languages, devotional services each afternoon, sermons each Sunday and on Wednesday afternoons, prayer meetings.

My stay at the Sailor's Home left in me an overall feeling of well-being and inspiration, for here I met many kind and Christian seamen who spoke to me of my soul and my salvation.

After my wonderful stay at the Home, I had the strong desire to travel home to Norway, and I searched for some sailing ship or steamboat which might be heading there. I found



none, however, and, discouraged, hired myself onto the cargo ship "Avon", under Captain Dennis, which was scheduled to go to Karachi, East Indies. This was winter, 1875. We set sail across the Atlantic, into the tradewind belt, without any noteworthy incident, other than the chaotic living of seamen and officers who, as on past ships, are immersed in lust and sin, heedless of God.

The Captain, who drank a great deal, took with him from Liverpool, a considerable supply of beer and whiskey, which he drank as long as it lasted. But when the liquor was gone, he became delirious, and had to be kept under constant watch. Meanwhile, the first mate navigated the ship until we dropped anchor in Karachi-port, where we loaded a cargo of cotton bound for London.

During the loading in Karachi, the captain came out of his delirium and returned to normal behavior; but a few days before our departure he went ashore for provisions, bringing back, among other things, some whiskey. He assured us, "When this whiskey is finished, I'll never drink liquor again." And so it happened.

After the captain, sober and in clear command of our ship, made ready and maneuvered us out to sea, he began to drink, and when all the whiskey onboard was drunk, he began to hallucinate. The deliriums gripped him so fiercely, that he shouted to three ghosts whom he imagined were coming aboard the ship to take him away: "I will not keep my oath."

One night during my watch, at about midnight, he again saw these three ghosts approach him through the air. "Do you see these three ghosts?" he said to the helmsman and the sailor who were with him on the half deck. "Now they are coming to take me away." He begged the sailor to fall on his knees next to him and pray to God, that He might save them from these ghosts. Suddenly he stood up and said: "Now they are here to take me." He rose up in the air, then backwards, tumbled off the half-deck onto the main deck, and broke his skull. An hour later he died.

The body was wrapped in sailcloth weighted with iron. The first mate conducted the funeral ceremony, and the body sank into the sea. Here it shall rest until the sea gives up its dead, and all shall be called to God's judgement [sic] seat to be judged for what they have done in their life, be it good or evil.

This event left an unhappy atmosphere onboard. The first mate now had to take the captain's place and to navigate the ship, with the second mate's help, to London. With strong winds and fair weather we soon crossed the Arabian Sea, where Captain Dennis was buried. We then passed nearby Madagascar; the natives came out to meet us in their canoes and welcomed us to their land. This brought to mind the work of the Norwegian missionaries I had heard of, who had come to Madagascar to bring the gospel of Christ to these heathen people for the salvation of their souls.

In my free time, I read the Bible which I got from the missionary in Calcutta. I felt more and more like an eternal sailor upon this troubled sea of the world, and I decided to go

home to Norway when the ship reached London. But the trip was long because the tradewinds were slack, and the captain set our course toward St. Helena Island for provisions and to send a telegram on to the shipping company, telling them of Captain Dennis' death.

From St. Helena onward, the journey went quickly. The crew's mood picked up as we entered the English Channel. They had already made plans for the most disreputable boardinghouses and for the brothels that could offer the most sinful delights. I was the only one among the crew who was planning to go to the Sailor's Home, and they called me a "big fool."

Meanwhile, a steamboat towed the ship upriver and we tied up at the London docks. The next day, the crew was paid eight months' wages, as all the thieving boardinghouse runners around knew well. They came aboard and offered liquor to everyone. All the sailors but me followed these runners to their establishments. When one runner saw that I was heading off to the Sailor's Home, he became furious and wanted to drag me to his place, to no avail.

My stay at this Christian home lasted only three days. I was determined now to get to Norway. When I learned that steamboat passage between England and Norway was blocked by ice in the North Sea, I boarded a steamboat bound for Hamburg, Germany instead. From here I went by train through Denmark to Frederikshavn, and crossed over to Goteborg on a steamer. Now I had come to my Sweden, the land of my birth, but I had no home here any longer. My parents were both dead, and all my brothers and sisters now lived in Norway. So I took the train to Kreaker, Norway where my brother, Anders, lived. After three years of wandering on the stormy sea under all the hardships of the seaman's life, what a joy I felt to be with my brother Anders again. He opened his home to me while I was in Frederikstad.

While I was there, in Kreaker, a spiritual revival broke forth led by lay preachers who held meetings in their houses, and many people were led to seek the life of God. But this spiritual movement was not well thought of by the staunch church-going folk. They warned me that these lay preachers were nothing but fanatical evangelists and that I should stay away from them, lest I turn into a fanatic, too. So I turned instead to more worldly company, dancing and carousing with the sailors and the young people of the town.

But during the winter, I became acquainted with a ship captain who ran a private school for navigation. He urged me to enter the school and be trained as a navigator/first mate. This I did, beginning for one month that winter, and continuing the next fall after returning from a trip on the ship, "Esmeralda", with a cargo of lumber.

The following spring, I hired myself onto the ship, "Carl Totti", of Frederikstad, as second mate, and made two trips: one to Cotka, Finland and one to France with lumber cargoes. Four days before Christmas, we set out from Callais, carrying ballast, for our return to Norway after the second trip. A brisk wind was blowing, and under full sail, we

had high hopes of reaching Frederikstad by Christmas. But then the northwest wind picked up so much that we had to trim the sails and start running the bilge pumps. In spite of the rough sea, though, our ship held its course for Norway until the day before Christmas, when the storm finally grew so fierce that we had to furl the sails, and the wind began to drive us southward toward the Danish coast.

On the afternoon of Christmas Eve, the sea grew so violent that the ship sprang a leak, and the pumps became useless as the water poured into the hull. Sometime during that night, in the snow and darkness, we realized the ship had run aground on a reef; the sea broke so hard that we were nearly washed off the shipwrecked hull.

It was a life-or-death matter. The captain ordered us to let down the lifeboat as best we could, but it was shattered by a wave as we tried to lower it on the block and tackle. We now tried to set out in a tiny pram, but this, too, was smashed against the side of the ship.

Hopeless, we faced into the darkness and death. No heart's cry, no prayer to God could be heard, for there was none among the officers or crew who was seeking God's salvation for his soul. Dawn came, Christmas morning. The snow had stopped and we saw people on the beach. They had no lifelines or boat, as we were fifty kilometers from a rescue station here. But in times of need, when death is near, good thinking is of the utmost importance. Fortunately, we had several thin, long ropes aboard which we tied together, fastening the end to a plank. This plank we tossed overboard, and the breakers carried it to shore. The people there signaled us that they had gotten our line, and we shouted for them to pull us to shore. In this way, our whole crew of eleven men was dragged through the wild surf to land, and saved. Some of us were in poor shape. I broke a leg, but with the care of a good doctor, I was soon well again.

Here on "Thorminde Reef" on this stormy night, five ships were wrecked, and "Carl Totti" was one of them.

After two weeks' stay, when an investigation into the shipwreck had been made, we all traveled back to Norway in high spirits. I made for Kreaker and the house of my brother Anders, where I told him of my terrifying experiences in the shipwreck, and of God's amazing rescue of us on Christmas morning.

It happened that while I was away, my brother had been awakened to the Lord, and was praying for me, and the salvation of my soul. This made a deep impression on me. He looked at me and said: "God has saved your life, and now you must turn to Him so that He may save your soul." Other Christians, too, whom I met here, spoke to me of this one and only need in life: to seek God.

With these prayers and admonitions, the Lord began to knock at the door of my heart. I began to feel that I had been a prodigal son long enough away from God, drowning in the worldly life. Therefore, I made a resolution, to leave behind my sins and become a Christian.

But I also continued my studies at navigation school in Frederikstad, to make it possible to take the examination for first mate that winter, which I did. I began in late January, and by the end of April, I was one of five students chosen to take three days of final examinations. Two failed, and I was one of the three who passed. I received a first mate's diploma, with honors.

In good spirits now, I went to Breaker and told my brother and my fiancée, Josephine Thereon, that I had finished school with a firstmate's certificate. But a remarkable religious awakening was taking place here. People were being won over by God's word and spirit, and were giving their lives to Him. These people encouraged me to come with them to their prayer meetings at various private houses, and to hear these Haugian (a religious lay movement founded in Scandinavia by Hans Nielsen Hauge around 1800) lay preachers speak the word of God. At these meetings I, too, was filled with the power of the Lord, and His spirit revealed to me my sinful state, but He also brought me salvation through the mercy of Christ, our saviour, who sacrificed his life for us. I will never forget my time among these true believers. Through them, the Lord rescued my soul.

My fiancée and I were now planning to be married in the coming fall of 1878. I prayed that God might bless this joyful event, and that, until then, He might protect me at sea and on land from Satan's temptations. I wanted only to live my life with my Saviour at my side.

In the late spring, I took a job as second mate on the barque "Sophie", with Captain Bjölstad of Frederikstad, and I sailed to Liverpool with lumber. From here, we made two trips to Quebec, returning again with lumber, then back, with ballast, to Frederikstad in the late fall. During these trips nothing unusual happened, only the usual talk and life of misguided seamen who don't know their Heavenly Father. When we arrived in Frederikstad, all of us were payed and happily we made for our homes. I headed for Kreaker, where I found my best friends on earth. Here, too, my bride Josephine Thoreson, was waiting for me, and we were married on December 31, 1878. Now I had a true home, a faithful wife, and, in due course, a Christian mother for our children.

That winter I had the joy of being with my Christian friends, and going to their prayer meetings, which were held around the town.

When spring came, Captain Bjölstad hired me again, this time as first mate of the "Sophie". After taking lumber to London, we were scheduled to make two trips to Sweden for more lumber to London.

Captain Bjölstad was a kind man by nature. From the last year's voyage, I had come to know him. He knew of my determination to be a Christian, and to "love the Lord with all my heart". When we came to London, we both took the opportunity to go to the Seaman's church to hear the Word of God; Bjölstad, too, was seeking a life in the Lord.

I will not say much, therefore, about the hardships of sea life on this trip, but rather tell something of my spirits' journey to eternity. On the passage from London to Kefle,

Sweden, we had fair weather, and as we lay in port loading cargo, we heard about a gifted lay preacher in the city whom other seamen had gone ashore to hear. This had been a truly religious experience for them, as he spoke God's word about sin and grace and the salvation of men's souls. It was wonderful to hear this preacher and to be together again with so many Swedish and Norwegian believers, children of God. I asked the captain, then, if we couldn't have this preacher aboard our ship for a prayer meeting. And, indeed, both the captain and the preacher were willing. I sent an invitation to the seamen in all the ships in the harbor to come at three o'clock on Sunday afternoon for a service aboard the "Sophie". Many from the city came that day: the deck was full of people, clear to the gunwhales on both sides. There were many believers among them, who had learned to sing the new song, and they joined in to sing songs of Jesus and the Gospel with joyful voices that set the perfect mood for the lay preacher's sermon on Matthew nine, verse nine, where Jesus called, and Matthew stood up and chose to follow him. This choice was laid before us too, as the preacher's words went right to our hearts. He moved many of the people deeply.

This prayer meeting gave me the courage and strength to continue on my pilgrimage to eternity. I will never forget it. Captain Bjölstad said that he had heard many learned priests preach, but this uneducated layman had spoken more truth about God and his mercy than anyone he had ever heard.

Not everyone on board, though, felt this way. There was, in the crew, an old Swedish sailor named Anders; he was head-man in the crew's quarters, and told the others how he opposed such lay preachers and their meetings, because they led people away from the old, true religion to a new religion based on fanatic emotions. But this upholding of the dead weight of tradition, ever since the days of the Pharisees, we know only too well, those of us who love the living God.

By now, the ship was loaded, and we set sail from Kefle carrying with us the precious memory of our Christian togetherness there. When a person has become a Christian, it is natural that he wants to share God's word with others, that they, too, might be moved by the Lord to become Christians.

Captain Bjölstad was pleased to let me hold a prayer meeting for the men each Sunday on board the ship. The crewmen came and listened seriously to the sermons which I read out of Ludwig Hosacker's book of collected sermons. Along with these, we said prayers and sang psalms like "Thanks and Praise and Glory Forever". Some men were uplifted by these services, but others were annoyed, and went about in the bunk room talking about religious fanaticism.

Meanwhile, a huge autumn storm came up as we were sailing for home, and all the crew was called on deck to trim the sails and man the bilge pump; the old ship had sprung a leak in the rough seas.

But Anders, the old sailor, didn't like being interrupted for this during his free time. When he came out on deck he said, "You youngsters can pump. You are young, but I'm

an old man and don't care whether this ship floats or sinks, but if the first mate will sing us a psalm, then I'll help work the pumps to save the ship." No song was sung as it turned out, but the ship was saved all the same, and the men and storm calmed down, so we could again set sail homeward. At last we anchored in Frederikstad harbor and the ship was dry-docked for the winter to make repairs.

Now my tour of duty aboard the "Sophie" was done, and I headed to Kreaker, happy to see my dear wife again and to find her well. How good it is to be loved, and to grow in love with another human being here on earth. How good, too, to be with my true friends again in Kreaker, and to share in the spirit of their prayer meetings throughout the winter.

During this time I received a letter from Captain Bjölstad saying that the shipping company had sold the "Sophie", and he was left without a ship to sail. But he had recommended me as first mate on the "Lagerta" under Captain Stangeby. This news set me back, as Stangeby was known as a haughty, difficult man to work for and he had fired three first mates in just one summer. I was reluctant, then, to sign on with him.

But soon after I got word from both Captain Stangeby and his shipping company that they wanted me as first mate on the "Lagerta", and to be in charge of navigating the ship, much to my surprise. So, despite my hesitations, I signed on as first mate. The "Lagerta" was one of the finest and best outfitted cargo ships in all of Frederikstad harbor.

Early in the spring, I went aboard the ship with some sailors to inspect her and get her seaworthy. Then I went back home to say farewell to my wife. No-one can understand the deep feeling of parting with another person unless there is true love between them. I also said farewell to my brother, Anders, who was planning to emigrate to America later that spring.

Finally, the "Alberta" set sail. I will not give any detailed descriptions here of the sailings to Sweden and then on to Holland with lumber. But I will note some of my experiences as first mate under Captain Stangeby. I soon learned that he was an uncompromising, tradition-bound aristocrat.

When we got to Hermosand, Sweden, we docked and loaded our lumber. On Sunday some of us went ashore to hear a powerful, gripping sermon in a Swedish Lutheran church, where the priest spoke the Word of God right to the people: "Wake up, turn to the Lord!" When we returned to the ship, I recounted what the priest had said, of our need to turn to God, or else be lost in our sin. To this, Stangeby replied that it is the thieves, the scoundrels, and the hypocrites that need to turn to God, but that those who have never done any wrong needn't worry about "repenting". But I answered with a quote from the Bible: "There is not one among you who is without sin, not even one; all have sinned against God." "The Lord wants no-one to be lost, but wants all to repent and return to Him." Then Stangeby said: "I don't believe in your religious fanaticism; when a person does no harm to another, but does the best he can, then he needn't repent". With this, our conversation came to an end.

While we were unloading in Amsterdam, Stangeby's wife came aboard. On our return to Norway, he found out that I read the scriptures during my free time, and prayed to God, asking Him to protect me and to convert the crew and captain to Christianity.

It happened one day that we were in the officer's quarters to eat dinner, and I said a table grace, as was my custom. But Stangeby then rose up in a rage and called me a sinful hypocrite. He wanted nothing to do with such false things, and he wanted to fire me and put me off the ship at the next port. His wife, however, intervened and shouted, "Stangeby, Stangeby, you should be ashamed! This man has done no harm, only what is right and good". His wife's support of me changed his mood entirely. After this incident, he no longer felt like firing me, but became more relaxed and friendly with me, as long as his wife was on board. On our way home, we stopped in Lnad's Fjord for a load of coal to take to Kristiania (Oslo). When the coal was unloaded there, the "Lagerta" was towed by steamboats down to Frederikstad and layed up for the winter. I was glad the trip with Captain Stangeby was over. After these trying experiences with this proud, unreasonable captain, I lost my appetite for the lumber/shipping business. The ships in Frederikstad were mostly old, outmoded, and inclined to leak. I saw little reason to keep working as first mate on those ships. Indeed, even if I had been promoted to captain, I couldn't see staying on. I discussed this matter with my wife, and we agreed that I should write my brother, Anders, who was now in America, and ask him to send me a ticket to go there.

During the winter, I received a ticket from him and a letter encouraging me to come, as there were plenty of jobs available there, both on land, and on Lake Michigan for seamen.

Now it was time to leave Kreaker. Here I had lived some of the best hours of my life. Here I first turned my life to God. Here I had spent my winters in Christian fellowship and prayer meetings with my friends. And here, too, thank God, I found a faithful wife for all my days. But now I had to say farewell to my dear friends. Farewell, also to my wife and our two small sons, but in the hope of meeting them again in the new land--America.

In the spring of 1882 I left for Spring Lake, Michigan where Anders worked at a sawmill. As it turned out, I met an old Swedish skipper there named Nordberg. He sailed a schooner, the "Hunter Savage", between Spring Lake and Chicago, carrying lumber.

This skipper was also a humble Christian believer, member of the Lutheran church; in fact, we had come to know each other at prayer-meeting in the Lutheran congregation of Spring Lake. He talked me into a good paying job on his ship. But the sailing was strenuous; two trips a week, loading and unloading lumber. I was strong and healthy enough, though, that I held the job for two seasons as a sailor, and three more seasons as first mate under my countryman, Captain Nordberg.

Spiritually, too, we worked and traveled well together. In Chicago, when we had the chance, we went to hear Pastor Brohaugh and other preachers. And when we got home to

Spring Lake, we often took part in the prayer meetings there, so our spiritual life was rich and satisfying.

But, along with this, the seaman's life brought many things that were hard to endure. On the ship there were many sailors whose lives had been destroyed by falling into sin's many temptations whenever they came ashore. Furthermore, the ferocious autumn storms had, more than once, brought my fellow crewmen and me near death. If I were to write down here all the amazing experiences, good and bad, I had during my fourteen years at sea, it would make a large book.

But now I will turn to the next chapter in my life. My desire for the sea life had come to an end. I had prayed to God for several years, asking Him to show me the way beyond this unsettling seaman's existence, to become a farmer.

In the fall of 1885, I visited Stoughton, Wisconsin, where there was a horsecoach factory, two Lutheran churches, and a good deal of well-cultivated farmland, all of which appealed to me.

When I returned to Spring Lake, I told my wife (who by now had come with my children to join me in America), and my brother, Anders, all about it, and we soon agreed to move with our two families to Stoughton. Shortly after our move, two other Christian believers also came to live in Stoughton. Together we began to assemble in my house for prayer meetings and church services. Later on, Pastor T. R. Dahl came to take part in these with us, and when we came to know him, for the soul-searching, God-loving priest that he was, we joined his congregation. From that day to now, this congregation has been my church-home.

But the next question was, how was a seaman like myself to become a farmer, or earn enough money to buy a farm? Neither my wife nor I knew the answer.

But "God was beside us", as the farmer once said on his way to Eidsvold [a reference to the movement in Norway to free its farmers from serfdom and give them their own land, which culminated in the signing of the Norwegian Declaration of Independence in Eidsvold, 1814]. After working for a year as a painter at the coach factory, my job came to an end, and I was forced to find work on Lake Michigan again. Fortunately, I got a job with my old friend Captain Nordberg again. When I returned to Stoughton in the fall, I had saved up \$300 in all. I then began to work for another farmer for two years. By now, the sailor had learned to be a farmer, and I took on another farm as a sharecropper for eight years. This all went well, for which my wife and I gave praise and thanks to God. Our wish was now fulfilled. I no longer had to face those stormy nights at sea, fighting the cold, hauling down the sails, pumping out the water. It was a joy now to be with my family on the farm.

After sharecropping for eight years, I bought a good farm. We worked this farm successfully for twenty years. Most of our ten children were home during this time, and they willingly worked and helped their mother and father on the farm.



So it was, that we had a good life with our children, both materially and spiritually. With the encouragement of Pastor Hegge, and also because I myself saw the need for it, I began to hold Sunday school in our farmhouse. There were many children in the community, and I taught them as long as I was on the farm. Later the Sunday school was carried on by Salve Pedersen. In this way, God's Word and teaching was planted in the hearts of the children, and God has blessed this little mission.

We won't forget the many prayer meeting sharing God's Word with lay friends and believers who visited us from the town while we lived on the farm.

In 1907 I finished farming, and moved to Stoughton, Wisconsin where, along with my family, I have been a member of the First Lutheran Church for forty one years, and have served for many years as a deacon and a singer in the choir. Pastors Dahl and Hegge have guided me on my spiritual path all this time.

After I stopped farming I traveled around and joined in the home-mission work, helping souls in need. I served for several years as chairman of the Home-Mission of Southern Wisconsin.

In spite of all my unworthiness to take part in my Saviour's merciful work of helping human souls, my life has been fulfilled in this service to Him. Praise the Lord. I live now in the glorious hope that Christ above shall take me over the valley of the shadow of death to my eternal home, where my dear wife is now.

She died on July 10, 1926, faithful to her Saviour. Throughout her life, and even on her deathbed, she watched lovingly over her nine living children, and prayed that they might receive the Lord into their lives, and be saved, and meet her in Heaven.

I am now seventy-five years old. My life will soon be over, and I rejoice in the thought of joining her, in my Sabbath's rest, along with all who have been saved, all who have been released from suffering in the world, and have girded their loins, and have washed themselves white in the blood of the Lamb.

A lifetime is never so long but what the sunset must come; our song is hushed, our path comes to an end. This we must seriously consider.

Yes, and now this "sailor to eternity" has written down the essentials of his life; what he has experienced, what he has, with God's grace, tried to accomplish; how he has tried to bear witness to the mercy and salvation of God for all those pilgrims who have lost their way in the world.

Finally, let me offer a song, which I sing from my heart, about my spiritual journey with Jesus, in his lifeboat, which carries me over the storming sea of the world and into Heaven's harbor.

The time has come,  
The dawn of Grace,  
when this sinner makes peace with his God.  
All sin washed free  
As death itself dies,  
And Jesus has made me His bride.  
To the Highest I journey on mercy's great wings,  
I sing of the Lamb, pure joy.  
I make this song  
In the new dawn,  
All for the sake of my Lord.

Long did I sail,  
Struggled through storms,  
But never could empty my heart,  
of selfish desire  
which stood in my path,  
A barrier in front of the door.  
A cloak of self-righteousness round me I wore,  
A hypocrite steering the ship.  
Off the true path,  
I sailed far and long  
And haven I never could find.

When deepest in need,  
Fearing my death,  
I cried: "God save me, I'm lost".  
His cross held high  
Red as the blood,  
He called to me: "Come, I forgive".  
What joy then, my burdens to cast overboard  
As my Saviour took over the helm,  
Christ on my ship,  
Brought me from tears,  
Into his harbor of Love.