


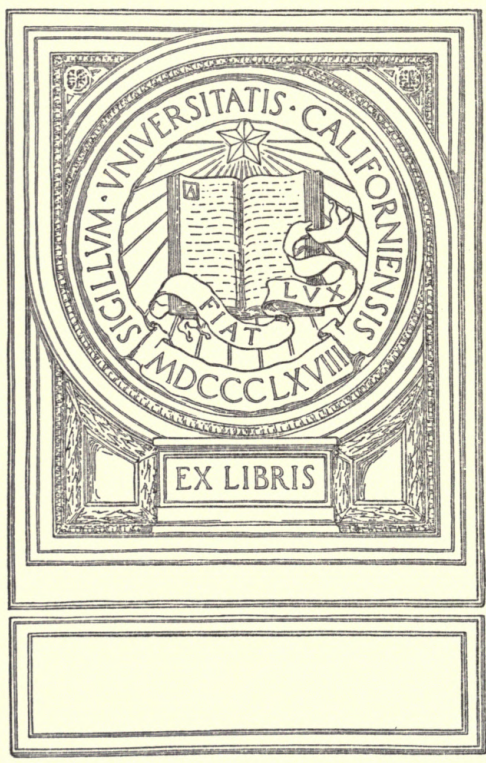
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A dark, atmospheric illustration of a large ship, possibly a fishing vessel or a small battleship, navigating through a stormy sea. The ship is shown from a three-quarter view, with its hull and superstructure visible. The sea is dark with white-capped waves, and the sky is a deep, dark blue. The overall mood is somber and dramatic.

North Sea
& Fishers
Fighters by
Walter W

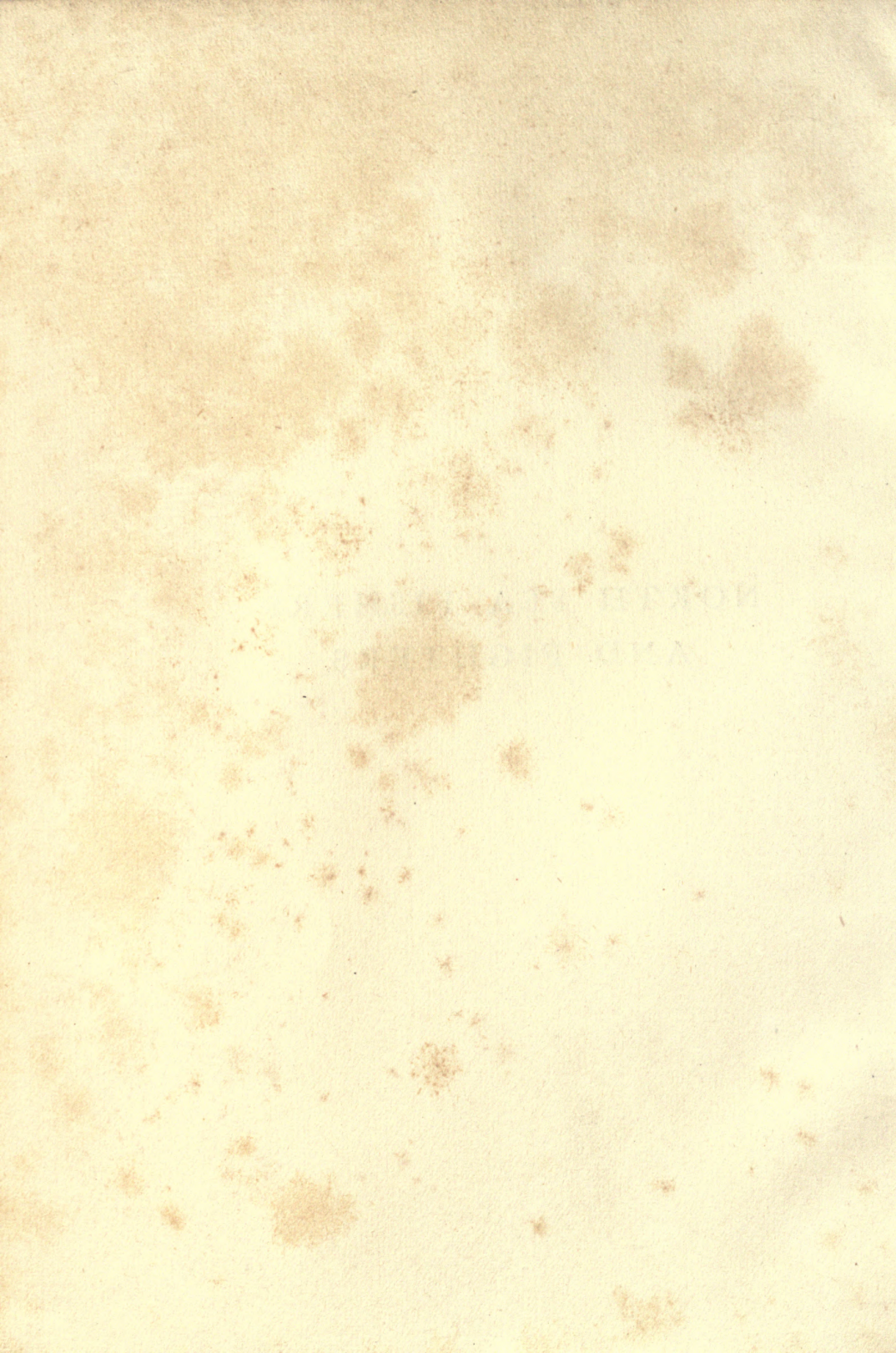


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NORTH SEA FISHERS
AND FIGHTERS



NORTH SEA FISHERS AND FIGHTERS

BY

WALTER WOOD

AUTHOR OF

"MEN OF THE NORTH SEA" "SURVIVORS' TALES OF GREAT EVENTS"
ETC. ETC.



WITH COLOUR AND PENCIL ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRANK H. MASON
AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY THE AUTHOR

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NORTH SEA FISHERY
AND THE TIDE

WALTER WOOD

LEVEL OF
CALIFORNIA

WALTER WOOD
AND THE TIDE

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INTRODUCTION

IN this book I have tried to give an understanding of the deep-sea fishers of the North Sea and some of the other fighters who have been, or are, connected with that famous ocean. I have dealt almost exclusively with the trawlers for two reasons—because I know them best and because they are the most important section of our splendid army of toilers of the deep.

There has not been in the history of the modern industrial development of Great Britain any revolution so amazing and romantic as that which has taken place within the last twenty years on the North Sea fishing-grounds; nor is there any stretch of water which for other reasons has come into so much prominence.

Two and a half centuries ago trade rivalry between Great Britain and Holland brought about the bloodiest of all our modern naval fights, most of which took place on the North Sea, and if in the near future the same cause brings us into conflict with a powerful and jealous neighbour, it is certain that this ocean will be again the area of appalling battles, with consequent paralysis of trade and crippling of our food supplies—a devastating calamity.

A long study of the deep-sea fishers of the east coast, on which I was a resident for some years, and visits to past and present fleets, with many other expeditions afloat, have enabled me to accumulate much original information with regard to these fine fellows' lives and work, and this I have freely used.

It is not easy to get first-hand knowledge from the deep-sea fisherman, who is neither vain nor loquacious. All I could glean from one man who witnessed the outrage by Russian warships in the Gamecock Fleet was—"It were fair chronic." On the Dogger, after a haul, I asked a skipper for details of his bag. "Why," he answered slowly, "they're what you might call smallish big." Beyond that he could not go. But from time to time I have had many willing and able helpers afloat and ashore, amongst the latter being Mr. George Appleyard, who was for many years harbour-master at Scarborough, one of the oldest of east coast fishing ports. When writing of other matters I have sought details only from the best sources, most of which are mentioned in their proper places.

Although I have not dealt with the many quaint and fascinating inshore fishers of the east coast, nor done more than make a selection from events with which naval men and more peaceful warriors have been associated, still the work will, I hope, give a broad idea of what the North Sea has been and is, and what its boundless harvests mean to us as a people.

I do not propound general schemes of reform or improvement in the interests of deep-sea fishermen, though I have my own ideas on the subject; but as a final chapter I venture to make suggestions which if adopted would, I think, greatly benefit the country.

“’Tis the hard, grey weather
Breeds hard Englishmen.”

There is no harder, greyer weather than that of the North Sea; there are no harder Englishmen than deep North Sea men.

A SONG OF THE NORTH SEA

From the Arctic zone to Dover,
Surging sullen, north and south ;
Past the Shetlands and the Orkneys
And the yellow Humber's mouth ;

Meeting many sluggish currents
And the tidal sweep of Thames,
Past the net of eastern islands
That in summer gleam like gems ;

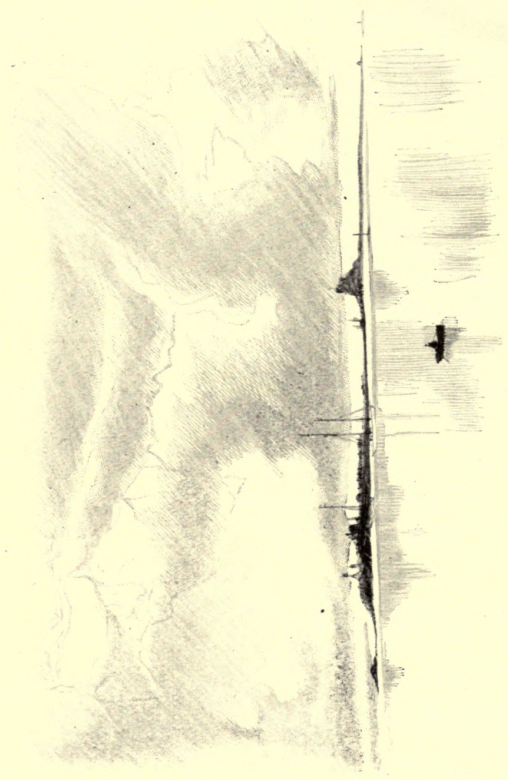
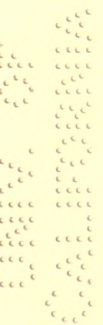
Flooding Dogger Bank and Goodwins,
Skirting France's fertile shores ;
Belgium, Holland, Prussia, Denmark,
Up to Norway's rugged doors—

Runs the grey North Sea eternal :
And upon its savage surge
Sons of men are ever fighting,
To the melancholy dirge.

For these sons of men are toilers
Of the solemn northern deep,
And on ruthless stretch of ocean
Rigid battle-station keep.

Theirs to work in sorrowed patience,
And to struggle on in strife ;
Theirs to sow—but seldom harvest,
In the pitch and toss of life.

May the laws that govern fairness—
May the God in whom we trust—
Judge the reaper of the Dogger,
When his gallant bones are dust.



Lindisfarne
North of Scotland

LINDISFARNE.

NORTH SEA FISHERS AND FIGHTERS

CHAPTER I

PIRATES AND PILLAGERS

81
“THEY are sea-wolves that live on the pillage of the world,” declared a Roman poet of the first of Englishmen who crossed the wild North Sea and conquered Britain. Fighters led by ruthless war-lords sailed from Jutland in 449 and landed in the Isle of Thanet, hard by the pitiless Goodwins. They were pirates and barbarians, fit sons of the savage seas on whose borders they were born and bred, and the toilers of which to-day are the bravest of the brave.

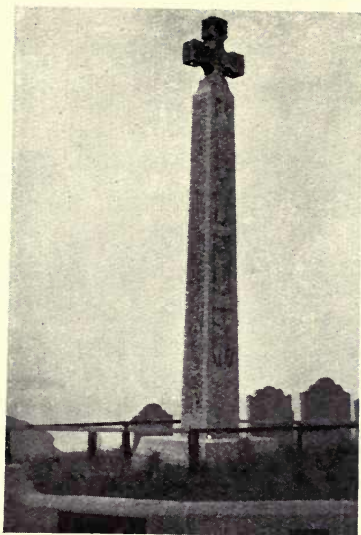
Those fierce invaders knew nothing of God or Christ. They were heathens who worshipped many deities, first of whom was Woden, the god of war; and amongst whose brothers were the god of storms, the god of thunder, and the god of death. They fell relentlessly upon the Britons, and by the end of the century they and their successors were masters of the east and south coast from Norfolk to Hampshire. Ship after ship came to the eastern shores of England from the other side of the

North Sea, bringing pirates and pillagers by whom the Britons were destroyed wherever they were found.

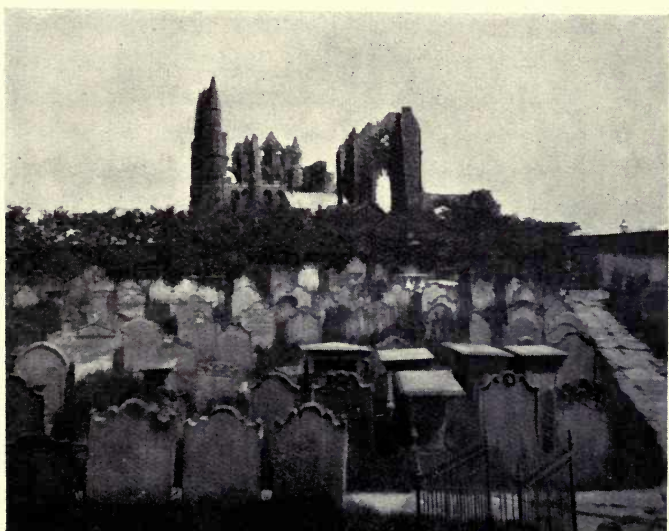
By way of rivers—Thames, Ouse, Humber, Tees, and Tweed—these invaders sailed as far as they could go, burning, pillaging, outraging, and killing. Barbarians they came, barbarians they remained, and a century after their landing even the Britons spoke with fierce contempt of them as dogs and wolves. Yet when they were established as conquerors they settled down as tillers of the soil and administrators of the captured country. Northumbria was formed, and Edwin, its sovereign, became the greatest of the kings who reigned in England.

On the very spot in Thanet where the Jutland warriors had set foot there landed Augustine, the bringer of Christianity and gentler laws to the land which, for four centuries, had been under the dominion of Rome and the Roman legions.

Along the North Sea borders of the country there arose many of those famous institutions whose ruins may be seen to-day by any voyager who skirts the coast. On the island of Iona Columba and his twelve disciples founded a monastery and church, and that lonely spot in the Hebrides was the battleground in after years of many noble priests and North Sea fighters. Iona to-day gives numerous links with the sea-wolves of nearly fifteen centuries ago. Lindisfarne, now called Holy Island, came into being, and at Whitby, on the high, stern cliffs of Yorkshire, Hilda founded the splendid abbey whose ruins are amongst the most majestic on the coast. Cædmon, the father of English song, belonged to the band of which royal Hilda was the head, and amongst them, too, were illustrious followers like John of Beverley and



CÆDMON'S CROSS AT WHITBY.



WHITBY ABBEY.



scholars and divines who sought to bring about with holy methods blessings to succeed the havoc of the sword.

Green, who tells us how these things came to pass in early North Sea days, adds that by the close of the fifth century the whole coast of Britain, from the Wash to Southampton Water, was in the hands of the invaders. But little more than the coast had been touched by the invaders; "great masses of woodland or fen still prisoned the Engle, the Saxon, and the Jute alike within narrow limits," the Engle having appeared in the estuaries of the Forth and the Humber.

The Humber to-day maintains a proud association with the North Sea—a connection that has been unbroken ever since those stormy times when England was beginning as a nation. All along the north-east coast, from Spurn to Berwick and beyond, the traveller by land or sea may yet behold romantic evidences of warlike and religious doings by the peoples of the past. From the water he may gaze towards the ruins of the abbeys and the castles on the coast and little islands, and from the comfort of a dining-car may see, journeying from Ouse to Tweed, remains of noble buildings which have made their mark in history.

The North Sea washes the long coast-line of Great Britain's most extensive county—Yorkshire; and on Yorkshire's greatest river, the Humber, stands the Empire's third largest port. That county contains the oldest railway in the world, the Stockton and Darlington, long ago absorbed by the North-Eastern Railway Company, whose system covers not only some of the most romantic of all the North Sea borders, but also

includes England's two greatest and bloodiest battlefields—Towton Field and Marston Moor.

The Jutland wolves who came to England were followed by marauding Danes, and again England was conquered, though only for the time, by sons of the North Sea. The Danes swept over England, and the tide of battle ebbed and flowed, until they were massacred and their power was crushed. These Danes were the Vikings or Norsemen of song and story. They were plunderers and pirates, of the same stock as the English, by whom at last, under Alfred, they were beaten and driven out of the country, but not before they had made a lasting impression on the race. They launched their fine long open boats on the North Sea, and with oars or a squaresail, or both, swept across it towards our own coasts. We know exactly from remains which have been found what those craft were like, and can realise what the Norsemen were, for on the North Sea shores of England there survive many of the Vikings' words, and there are amongst the fishers of the coast not a few fair-haired men and maids whose ancestors came over to us more than a thousand years ago. Some of the craft, too, are almost unaltered since the Norsemen's days, and in the famous cobbles of the Yorkshire coast we may see something closely resembling their smaller vessels, whilst from the fishers of the north-east coast we may hear expressions or words that have come unaltered down the centuries. There is still at Flamborough Head, on the Yorkshire coast, the ravine named Dane's Dyke, a region which is even yet sometimes called "Little Denmark."

So far the North Sea had played a leading part in

the early history of England. That stormy stretch of water was to give to England the first of her momentous naval victories. Alfred and Richard had defeated fleets at sea ; but it was for Edward the Third to be called the King of the Sea, by all his people. In 1327 the Scots made ready to invade England with a large army, and accordingly the northern ports were ordered to provide ships of sixty tons or more. These vessels were to meet at Yarmouth ; and ships with large supplies of wine were sent to accompany them. That was but the beginning of preparations which culminated in the great battle of Sluys. Sluys was, in those early times, the most flourishing port on the Flemish coast. It was originally named after an English engineer who made the sluices there, although long years afterwards the place became so much choked with sand that not even the smallest craft could enter.

Hull, Newcastle, and other north-east ports loom largely in the annals of those early times. The king had ordered a galley on the Humber and several ships from other northern ports, all of which were to be fitted out to convoy victuallers and oppose the Scots.

At that time French marauders, who were unhesitatingly called pirates, had swooped on our shores and killed and pillaged after the fashion of the Jutlanders and the Danes ; but they had been put to flight. In the autumn of 1339 the ships of France were in the Sluys, and the crews swore to the Flemings that they would not return to their own ports until they had captured five hundred English towns and a hundred English ships.

It was a bold and noble boast, and, full of their

enthusiastic valour, the Frenchmen put to sea. In October then, as now, the North Sea was better to behold from the shore than from the water, especially when crude, unseaworthy craft were concerned, and the result was that, of the braggart ships which put forth, most foundered and the rest were lucky to return to Flanders.

Naval history contains no year more memorable than that which followed—1340. At the very beginning Edward III. took the name and arms of King of France, and determined to enforce his rights and title. Early in June, at Ipswich, he had forty ships to take him and his followers to Flanders. He knew that at Sluys the King of France had gathered an enormous army to prevent him from landing.

Early on an afternoon in June he sailed for Flanders with two hundred vessels. He was joined by fifty more ships under Sir Robert Morley. This great fleet arrived off Blankenberg, ten miles from the mouth of the Sluys, to the west, and found a French fleet of 190 ships, galleys, and great barges lying at anchor, fastened to each other with iron chains and cables. Small boats were suspended from the masts, the boats being filled with stones which were to be hurled upon the assailants. Amongst the French fleet were several ships which had been taken from the English, notable of these being the *Christopher*, renowned as the greatest vessel of her time.

Thirty-five thousand Normans, Picards, and Genoese manned the French ships, the English force being considerably less. Nobles, knights, and gentlemen abounded on both sides, and there were present with Edward many

high-born dames who were going out to Ghent to join the Queen. Presumably these matrons and maidens were in transports, and were protected by three hundred men-at-arms.

That battle on the North Sea shores remains on record as one of the most savage and momentous combats. There was little in the way of strategy or tactics; it was a case of immense bodies of valiant armed men getting close together and settling their fight with arrows, swords, axes, and any other weapon that could be hurled or handled, to the martial strains of trumpets.

So closely packed together were the French ships that their masts looked like a forest. Edward led his soldiers on, covering his advance with showers of arrows. Both sides fought with furious courage, the fiercest of the battle being reached when the English men-at-arms and the enemy were mingled in a struggling crowd.

The battle grew into a butchery. The two fleets became a tangled medley, and there was a hideous commotion of strife. In one French ship alone 400 men were killed, and the survivors escaped only by leaping into the sea, where most of them were drowned. The *Christopher* was triumphantly recaptured. The English flag was again hoisted in her and she was manned with English archers and sent to attack the Genoese galleys.

The stones proved deadly missiles, for the crew of a galley belonging to Hull were crushed to death by them. The few captures made by the French included the vessel which contained the King's wardrobe, and with the exception of a woman and two men all on board were slain. Amongst the killed on Edward's side were a

dozen ladies, and there were womenfolk of lesser rank included in the dead.

The loss of the French was 25,000; that of the English was only 4000; so that about thirty thousand dead was the cost of that early sea-fight which made Edward III. the sea-lord of the world. Six years later, at Crecy, with his son the Black Prince, he gained another far-reaching victory at small cost to himself, and a loss to the French of 11 princes, 1200 knights, and 30,000 of lesser ranks—more than Edward's entire army on the field.

“Thus God our Lord has shewn abundant grace,” wrote Edward piously, in his letter to his son describing the affair—the earliest dispatch in existence containing an account of an English naval victory. To the North Sea, therefore, belongs the double distinction of bearing on its waters the first of the English race and giving to the nation the earliest, and one of the greatest, of her naval triumphs.

There is scarcely any part of the east and north-east coast which has not some stirring and historic association with the distant past. South of the Humber there is interest of a kind which is singularly different from the attraction of the country north of that great river. Each locality has its special charm and fascination; each is for all time closely connected with the North Sea fishing industry as it is carried on to-day. To the east coast belongs the honour of beginning the deep-sea revolution, and to the north-east coast, with its enterprising, far-seeing business men, the credit of raising the operations to their present gigantic dimensions. From Yarmouth and other east coast ports went forth the



SCARBOROUGH CASTLE.



first herringers ; and from Scarborough sailed some of the earliest of trawlers.

Scarborough and its castle have loomed large in connection with North Sea fishers and fighters for nearly a thousand years. In the eleventh century Harald Hardrada, King of Norway, came and plundered the north-east coast. His men, says Green, were farmers and ploughmen ; his ships were the fishing-vessels of the coast. The Norse king swooped down on the Yorkshire coast. He fought the burgher-men of Scarborough, and vanquished them with fire and sword before he sailed in triumph up the Humber, to be slain in the fierce fight at Stamford Bridge. From that time onward Scarborough Castle, which came into being, was the scene of many conflicts and strange happenings. Arising from one of them was the old saying, "A word and a blow—like a Scarborough warning." In 1553, during Wyatt's Rebellion, Lord Stafford's second son seized the castle by a trick. On a market-day he disguised a band of his troopers as countrymen, and craftily entered the castle grounds. The sentries, assuming that the visitors had come in the ordinary way of business, were unsuspecting and unready, and it was not till they had been captured and disarmed that they knew how badly they had been fooled. While they were held prisoners the rest of Stafford's force was admitted. For three days they were in possession of the fortress ; then it was retaken, and Stafford was beheaded in London for high treason.

To-day the ruins of the castle crown the hill, which has been altered almost out of recognition, even in recent years, by the construction of the Marine Drive. While that doubtful improvement was being made, there were

passing finally away, as if departing with the spirit of the grim old hill itself, those valiant sailing fishing-craft which had formed an unbroken link with the days when the early pirates and pillagers crossed the North Sea in craft dependent on the wind, and came and founded England.

CHAPTER II

MERCHANT ADVENTURERS

THE hardy Norsemen were the pioneers of unnumbered hosts of adventurers, fighters, and explorers who have sailed the troubled waters of the grey North Sea. Long after crude piratical swoops on our eastern seaboard had ended, and many a fair Saxon maid and tawny-bearded Viking had become the progenitors of a new and warlike race, there arose a breed of men in whom the spirit of enterprise was dominant and who could not be satisfied with anything less than going forth upon the waters. Two overmastering motives prompted them to leave their homes and people—the lust of battle and the greed of gain.

Musty records bear silent witness to their daring, and in east coast towns and inland cities there are ancient buildings which are linked with their romantic deeds. Merchant adventurers in the old days sailed away, many of them from the yellow Humber, to the Near East, to fight and overcome the infidel, if God favoured the enterprise, and to perish miserably in captivity if Heaven frowned on the undertaking—which was a way that Heaven frequently had.

One of the most illustrious pioneers of adventurous seamen was William Cummins, of Hull, who flourished

four and a half centuries ago. Although a youth of robust constitution, yet his mother designed him for the gentle craft of clerking. Perhaps she was fortified in this determination by the standing of his uncle, who was a monk. The cleric was a late seafaring man who had entered the Church in accordance, it was supposed, with a vow he had made to the Virgin when he was in peril off the north-west coast of Africa. William was apprenticed by the monk to Thomas Kingsley, a master mariner sailing from Hull, and owning the *Speedy*, a craft described as a "schooner-brig." The *Speedy* was employed in the coasting trade, and Cummins was acting mate of her when she foundered off Heligoland in a heavy gale. All hands were drowned except Cummins and an old sailor named Shepherd. By clinging to a floating spar these two kept themselves afloat until they were picked up by the *Tyger*, a well-found ship commanded by Captain Jinks, a rover of evil reputation. For many years Jinks had scoured the seas and captured any vessel he could overpower.

Cummins and Shepherd had been rescued, but their case was not very hopeful, for the *Swallow* and the *Garland*, a couple of fast sailers, as swiftness went in those days, were dispatched by the King for the express purpose of ridding the seas of Jinks. The *Tyger* was overtaken off Land's End, and she made a fight with His Majesty's ships that was worthy of her name. The combat was brought to a dramatic close by the pirate, who, soon after nightfall, blew up his ship, after her crew had abandoned her. This they did on finding that escape from the warships was hopeless, but they did not go until they had burst open the spirit-room and got

mad drunk. In that unserviceable state they jumped into the boats and shoved off, but were drowned in a cross-sea which half a gale of wind had raised. One boat was left for Jinks, Cummins, and Shepherd, the only three who remained on board. Jinks stayed because he had faith in his luck, and hoped to escape by the remaining boat; he was also earnestly wishful to get away a heavy box to which he attached great value, and which the drunkards might have prevented him from removing peacefully.

As the *Swallow* and *Garland* approached, the pirate, who had been below for some time, appeared on deck, tugging at his box. Having ordered Cummins and Shepherd to help him to get it into the only remaining boat, which was drawn up close under the stern, several bags of bread and kegs of spirit, a barrel of water, and a compass were lowered. Then the captain told the men to get into the boat as smartly as he did, for he had fired a slow-train leading into the powder-room; and in ten minutes, if they were not a good distance from the *Tyger*, they would all be blown to the devil with her. The order was obeyed with ready zeal, and the boat was only a few hundred yards away when the ship, having a large store of powder, blew up with a terrific roar, lighting the sea for miles around.

Doom now, and at last, overtook the rover. He had risen in the stern-sheets to behold the havoc wrought by his slow-train, and while gazing at the appalling spectacle he was struck on the head by a descending spar, and instantly killed. The same missile stove in the water-cask. It was lucky for

Cummins and Shepherd that they were not seen by the King's ships, for although they were confident of proving that they were on board the *Tyger* by compulsion, and not from choice, it is likely that the victors would have given them suspension from the yard-arm first and trial afterwards, even if they had troubled to inquire at all.

In accordance with a sailor superstition of the time, Jinks was not buried until the dawn broke. Then he was cast overboard, Cummins repeating the Latin prayer for the dead of the Roman Catholic Church—a performance for which his pious training had befitted him.

Cummins and Shepherd, after much suffering at sea, landed at Penzance, and without loss of time made their way back to Hull. Of their association with the pirate nothing was said, nor was reference made to the strong-box; indeed, for many reasons, the two found it advisable to announce that they had been providentially spared from the wreck of the *Speedy*, and after long and perilous wanderings in strange countries had been restored to their native town.

With the booty which had fallen to him from the pirate, Cummins carried out a yearning he had long felt, and, on 8th August 1475, sailed in the *Rainbow*, a stout, two-masted coasting vessel, with a crew of twenty-three men and boys, to search for gold and ivory. The godly uncle was consulted as to this expedition, and, upon his advice, such things as the savages of North Africa were known to prize—beads, knives, and other showy trifles—were taken for purposes of barter, with powder, arquebuses, pistolets, and fighting axes. The voyage

was favourable, but the crew, for the most part, proved a villainous set, only Shepherd and five sailors standing by the master. The African coast—Cape Palmas—was safely reached, but the crew broke into open mutiny.

The ring-leader, believing the captain to be asleep, crept into his cabin in the dead of night, meaning to murder him with an axe. He was detected, and hanged at the yard-arm; but this stern example did not make the peace and discipline of the *Rainbow* certain. The mutineers were determined that the master should perish, and a plot was formed to destroy him and Shepherd, and seize the ship. While ten of the disaffected crew were ashore with Cummins and Shepherd—great quantities of ivory and gold-dust being ready for shipment, and the captain bargaining peacefully in a tent with the natives—the mutineers burst in. There were, however, so many negroes about that they could not reach their victims, and two or three of them were stabbed by the infuriated crew. Springing behind some bales of cloth for shelter, Cummins and Shepherd shot two of the assailants dead; two more speedily went down, and the rest, dismayed, broke and fled to some neighbouring woods. The master and Shepherd instantly rejoined their boat, and put off to the ship just in time to help the loyal men on board to beat off an attack by mutineers who had not gone ashore.

After a fierce fight the assailants were driven below, several of them being severely—and one mortally—wounded. Resolved that he would not perish in a lonely fashion, this man set fire to a quantity of loose tow, and, the flames having reached a barrel of tar, the

ship was doomed. Seeing that the *Rainbow* could not be saved, but hoping that he might at any rate preserve some of the stores, Cummins cut the cable with an axe, to beach the ship, as the wind was blowing dead on shore; and then, with Shepherd, six sailors, and three boys, he jumped into the longboat and reached the land.

The plight of the crew was so terrible that even the stout-hearted captain despaired of salvation. But the natives proved kind and helpful, and assisted, amongst other things, to hunt down and destroy the sailors who had fled to the woods. The survivors began to hope that salvation would come in their ability to reach a friendly coast; but there was little prospect of this. The wreck of the *Rainbow* was worthless, and the longboat would hold only half the men and boys. At last it was resolved that Shepherd, two men, and three boys should leave, on the chance of reaching Europe and returning with help. These had been chosen by lot. The longboat carried 500 ounces of gold-dust, to buy a suitable craft for the rescue.

In April 1476 Shepherd returned to Hull, and told a marvellous and untrue story of what had befallen the ship and her people. He declared, amongst other things, that Cummins was dead. The fact was, Shepherd's nature had undergone a change. He had become faithless and avaricious, and was determined that if there were riches to be had he would possess them alone. He forgot when safe ashore again that he had pledged his soul to "save his captain and his comrades." But Shepherd had not allowed for everything; he had forgotten that as he and Cummins had had some

experience of piracy together it might be reasonable to suppose that the master did not altogether trust him. This was the fact, for Cummins had secretly given a letter to John Darling, the eldest of the sailor-lads, to deliver to the young wife whom the master had married only a month before he sailed from Hull in quest of gold.

By June Shepherd had secured a fine ship called the *Mary Rose*, in which he meant to go gold-hunting on his own account. But the ship was not fully paid for, and though Shepherd tried to get Cummins's supposed widow and mother to advance him money, they refused. He had declared that the captain was dead, and that he bore no message or letter from him, although, as a matter of fact, the master had given him sailing instructions in writing and a letter for delivery to the young wife — a duplicate of that which had been entrusted to Darling.

The boy Darling had done his duty faithfully, and it happened that the woman knew that the captain was alive when the longboat left. Darling had forwarded his precious parcel from London by a coasting-vessel which had put in at Hull. In a covering letter he warned Mistress Cummins not to be too trustful of Michael Shepherd, and said he would have delivered the packet personally, but he was unable to leave his bed, since he had suffered cruelly from the effects of three weeks' exposure in the longboat, until rescued by a whale ship. Before the rescue took place, two of the sailors and one of the boys had died.

The story now becomes more romantic. Shepherd was despairing of raising the needed money when a slim

and handsome young gentleman called, and, giving his name as James Carr, and explaining that he was adventurous and wished to see the world, said he would advance the loan on condition that he could sail with the *Mary Rose* as a passenger. Shepherd gladly took the offer, and the slim and handsome young gentleman had one of the best berths on board set apart for him. The *Mary Rose* sailed on Midsummer Day, 1476.

The story of Cummins from this point is long and exciting; but a few sentences will serve to indicate its leading points. The slim and handsome passenger was Mistress Cummins in disguise. She had taken this romantic means of rejoining and saving her husband, and she accomplished both her objects.

Poetic judgment overtook the faithless Shepherd, for he was massacred, with other members of the crew of the *Mary Rose*, by natives, whose women he had maltreated and whose goods he had stolen, in strict accordance with the spirit of the times.

The voyage home was marked by storm, mutiny, and a meeting with a French pirate ship, the *Mogador*. The mutineers captured the *Mary Rose*, which in turn was taken by the *Mogador*, and this craft having been cleverly seized by Cummins—who forced the rovers to work their own ship to Hull—he returned in safety to his native country. He became rich by trading with the Levant; but he had had enough of the African goldfields, which he never revisited. One of his sons commanded a “victualler” belonging to Drake’s squadron in the fight with the Spanish Armada.

That is the story of one of the many adventurers

who sallied forth from the most famous of all North Sea ports, a town which maintains its position and is to-day the third port in the realm and the headquarters of the largest private shipping company in the world—Thomas Wilson, Sons, & Co. Ltd.

CHAPTER III

PRIMITIVE NORTH SEA MEN

THERE were stirring times on the North Sea borders from the days of Elizabeth and her sailors until the period when Charles the First lost his head, and cavalry and infantry officers were given the command of ships and sent to kill and slay the Dutch. Many of the rough, gruff men who crushed the Armada were North Sea fishers, and their descendants followed Blake and Monk and the rest of the grim brotherhood of the Commonwealth.

Five years before the Armada came to England a return was prepared of all the masters, mariners, and fishermen belonging to "every shire through the realm." This showed a total of 14,771, including 957 wherrymen between London Bridge and Gravesend. The fishermen on the North Sea borders were—

London	191
York	507
North parts	450
Lincoln	334

Norfolk, Suffolk, Essex, and Kent were given as returning no fishermen.

These returns are obviously imperfect. On the Yorkshire coast alone, in the ancient ports and harbours of



A NORTH-EAST COAST PIER.



SMACKSMEN ASHORE.



Hull, Scarborough, Filey, Bridlington, and Whitby, as well as many fishing villages, there were considerable bodies of men who won their living from the North Sea, although they did not venture far upon it, and it was these toilers who for a long period came into conflict with the enemies of their country, especially the Dutch. Numberless small encounters took place, of which only incomplete records exist, but there was almost ceaseless warfare, in greater or lesser form, between the peoples on each side of the North Sea, until there came the devastating period of the three Dutch wars.

Of national affairs the primitive North Sea men of the seventeenth century knew little and cared less; but to fight the Dutch was a thing after their own hearts, for the sons of Holland were dangerous trade competitors. Herrings were a source of national wealth, yet the Dutchman had the effrontery to cross the North Sea and expect to be allowed to compete on equal terms with his English rival. Time after time the Hollanders ventured into east coast ports, for honest purposes; and as often they were cast forth, when North Sea toilers got the chance to push them out. State papers give abundant proof of that—for instance, several Dutch “skuits” put into Yarmouth in September 1675 to take herrings and sell them at that port, as they had been accustomed to do until stopped by Act of Parliament. They claimed the right to catch and sell the fish; but the town thought differently, and seized the Dutchmen’s catches, salving their consciences by giving a moiety to the poor.

Those were adventurous times on shore as well as at sea. Afloat merchandise was not safe; ashore it

was equally in peril of being looted by robbers, and accordingly, whenever anything of value was intended for transport, great precautions had to be taken to secure its safety. On 6th October 1676 the Duke of Monmouth issued a warrant to Sergeant John Wrangham to march from Hull to Gainsborough with the file of musketeers under his command. At Gainsborough the sergeant was to receive some waggons belonging to merchants trading with London, and he was to convoy them to the capital, being charged to secure and defend the waggons to the utmost of his power from any attempts to take them. When he had done his task the sergeant was to return with all convenient speed to the garrison at Hull. He was to take special care that the soldiers all along the march behaved civilly and duly paid for whatever they had occasion for.

That record indicates the state of affairs on land. Nothing of moment could be done without protection or the exercise of force; and the same state of things existed on the seas, especially the North Sea, where fishing operations brought the rival nations into constant conflict.

In August 1676 a fleet of 200 Dutch doggers were seen about a league off Flamborough Head, convoyed by two or three men-of-war. They stood to the southward about a league and then stood off to sea. French warships were at that time constantly swooping on the fishing-craft, and they had just made a descent on a Dutch fleet of doggers and busses, taking away the masters and holding them to ransom. These unhappy toilers had already suffered considerably owing

to poor fishing, for "they were all badly fished, none of them having above a barrel of herrings apiece."

The times were indeed tumultuous. Simultaneously with the report of the descent on the Dutch doggers was an account of a French man-of-war being in Scarborough Road. She was a ship of about forty guns and had two prizes with her, one a "raft-laden" ship from Norway and the other a Dutch West India-man of between thirty and forty guns, laden with sugar, indigo, and other valuable commodities. The Frenchman did not remain long, and the news of her going was promptly conveyed to Bridlington by Scarborough fishing-boats, for the men of the North Sea were the news carriers of the coast on both sides of that stretch of water.

Bridlington and Hull loomed large in the official correspondence of the times, mostly in connection with fishing and shipping. Bridlington then, as now, provided in certain winds a vast natural harbour of refuge for vessels which could not make headway. When gales were blowing ships put into Bridlington Bay for the shelter of the great Flamborough Head. Fleets of colliers, light or laden, were constantly sheltering in the Bay. In September 1676 a score of light colliers were at anchor, "the wind having blown very hard, much northerly, most of this week." Several of the sheltering ships were from Holland, and eight or ten soldiers were landed at Bridlington who had been at the siege of Maestricht. They reported that of three British regiments which were there not one was left, and that great privations had been endured and heavy losses suffered. "The poor

soldiers look as if they had come out of gaol, miserably poor."

Soon after the landing of the soldiers twenty light colliers were at anchor, waiting for a fair wind, as they had been doing for many days. They had already got up their anchors and sailed as far northward as Robin Hood's Bay, "but the wind took them short and brought them in here again."

With so much traffic there were from time to time many exciting happenings in connection with ships. Some dragged their anchors and went ashore, or were blown out to sea, according to the wind; others took fire or fell into the clutches of a prowling privateer. In November 1676 a fire and a great smoke were seen ten miles southward of Bridlington Bay. When the morning broke it was learned that the vessel was a dogger of London, laden with deals from Norway. In the thick weather she had run ashore, and, being left with a candle burning, she was set on fire and badly damaged, and most of her cargo was destroyed.

Shipmasters who were anchored in the Bay, with time passing wearily, were glad to give and get the news. They brought tidings of victories or defeats on the other side of the North Sea; and as often gave accounts of their own doings or adventures. The master of a Newcastle ship, who sheltered just after Christmas, told how, in coming from Gottenburg, he was forced to get the ice cut for more than four miles, to clear a passage to the sea.

All along the North Sea coast of England and Scotland there were exciting happenings to chronicle; but more particularly in relation to those places which



AN ANCIENT LOOK-OUT ON THE NORTH SEA COAST.



D. Phillips

DOLPHINS.



then, as now, were particularly closely associated with the continental ports. Hull was the centre of many strange events by land as well as sea, amongst them being the affair of Walter Morgan and Corporal Emerson. This may be mentioned as an illustration of the fierce spirit which prevailed on the North Sea borders, and how ready men were to use force in settlement of quarrels. A difference had arisen between the two, and the consequences were described in a letter written from Hull on 4th September 1676 to Sir Henry Pomeroy, captain of a company in the Holland regiment. The affair happened on 1st November 1674, so that a considerable period passed before the letter was dispatched.

“I had the guard of this town,” wrote Morgan, “and a little after one in the night went my round and found all well. I returned to the main guard, where I found all in an uproar, and all but one complained against the corporal, for, not being able to tie one neck and heels, which they refusing, he broke their heads with such an oaken plant as scarce is worn by any. The two pieces of the stick the soldiers brought me to see, a third the match that tied the soldier who made the difference, a fourth and a fifth their broken pates. I told the corporal I thought him too severe, and that these men might come to be corporals in time, as well as he, and that I never did such a thing in my life and prayed him to do so no more, and so left him. He said, ‘Surely my officers knew what they did when they made me corporal, for it is twelve years since I was corporal, and I am not now to be taught my duty, but know

it as well as you,' at which I stepped back and, being muffled with my coat, struck him one blow with my flat hand. He turned up his eyes, biting his tobacco-pipe, twisting his hands as if he had been troubled with the falling sickness, and fell on my foot with some three or four drops of blood out of his ear. I got him laid on the settle. After a while he rose and went to the fire and asked me leave to go home, and I sent one with him to light him, after which I never heard of him till he was laid out for dead. Then the Governor, without any examination before a court-martial or himself, disarmed me and delivered me over to the civil power, who forthwith sent me to prison, where I had still remained, had you not bailed me. I hope you will labour for my trial at our next Michaelmas sessions."

In those primitive times ships blundered north and south as best they could, steering by landmarks when they were able to see them and anchoring when there was fog or bad weather. But, in spite of all their caution, mariners were caught in the hard gales which arose so swiftly on those treacherous waters, and great numbers of vessels and their crews were lost. Navigation was largely a matter of guesswork, and frequently a master was hopelessly bewildered as to his position, and consequently came to grief.

In November 1676 the *Success* of London was wrecked off Yarmouth. She was bound for Venice with 800 barrels of red herrings and about twenty tons of lead. The night was very dark and a tempestuous south-east wind was blowing. The master judged that he was ten leagues at sea when, as a matter of fact, he

was just off the land, and the *Success* came ashore within two miles of Yarmouth. Five men who went off in a boat were drowned; but all the people in the *Success* were saved. The ship herself was broken to pieces, and most of the herrings were lost; but the greater part of the lead was saved, and some of the guns.

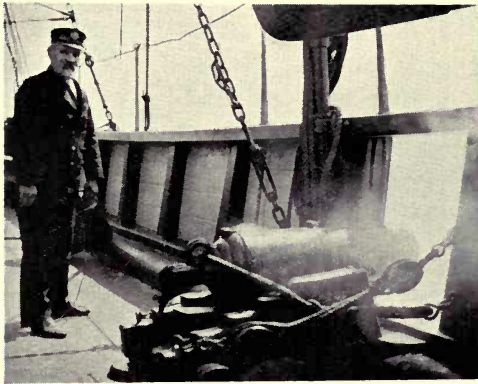
Long years after that particular *Success* came to grief I saw another old-world vessel with the same name off the east coast. I had gone seaward down the Valley at Scarborough, and there, in the South Bay, I set eyes upon her—a phantom-like vessel that surely had no business on the ocean. I hurried to the harbour, and discovered that the freak was the old convict ship *Success*, which, despite her century of age, had worked her own way, under her own sail, from Australia to England, and had done the trip in almost clipper time—four months.

So far back as 1669 the question was being considered of building lighthouses on the east coast. A double lighthouse was proposed at St. Nicholas' Gatt, and lighthouses at Cromer, Flamborough Head, and on Farne Island. A licence was granted to Sir John Clayton and George Blake to build these structures, and to receive, "by way of voluntary contributions and not otherwise," towards their maintenance, any sum not exceeding the following rates: "For every loaden ship 1½d. and 1d. per ton for every light ship passing by the places where the lighthouses should be erected, for sixty years at the yearly rent of 20s., all of which lighthouses are built, but only that at St. Nicholas' Gatt is lighted." There still stands on Flamborough Head, hard by the lighthouse and Lloyd's Signal Station, the fine tower which is called the Old Lighthouse, but concerning which

little that is reliable is to be learned. The structure was doubtless at one time a look-out place; but it does not appear to have been used as a beacon.

The constant traffic up and down the North Sea caused some of the earliest of all efforts to light our shores to be made on the eastern border of Great Britain. Long before lighthouses were built there were in use fire beacons and coal beacons, braziers in which wood or coal was burnt, and which served their purpose well enough in good clear weather, but were useless in bad seasons. An open grate in which coal had to be kept burning by a man with a pair of bellows was not a promising contrivance, especially in a winter snow-storm; yet such beacons were in use on the east coast so lately that only half a century ago there was still living the man who tended the coal beacon at Harwich. A coal fire was shown at Cromer from 1719 to 1792; but primitive lighting structures were employed at various places a century earlier, and doubtless the famous Boston "Stump" in days gone by did duty as a light for mariners, just as in the daytime the tower served as a landmark for mariners. The Lowestoft Lower or Beach Lighthouse was first illuminated in 1608, and was lit with oil in 1730.

The long stretch of dangerous east coast necessitates the employment of a great number of lighthouses and light vessels, most of the latter being stationed between Cromer and Lowestoft. Many of these craft are moored in positions in which they endure the full force of North Sea gales and the consequent discomfort of a particularly violent and unpleasant motion; indeed, the master of a former Hull light vessel, who had crossed the Atlantic



THE MASTER OF A LIGHTSHIP FIRING THE
SIGNAL GUN.



THE LAMPLIGHTER OF A NORTH SEA LIGHTSHIP.



sixty times, declared that he had never met such a nasty sea as that in bad weather in the Humber. When spending some days on board a lightship, in sight of land, I was assured by several members of the crew that they would far rather be well out at sea, because the sight of the fields and houses only increased the longing to be ashore.

The regions where these lightships cluster are those with which so many great North Sea achievements are associated. Most famous of all is Yarmouth Roads, where, before steam became universal, as many as a thousand vessels could be seen at anchor when sheltering in bad weather or delayed by unfavourable winds. Yarmouth and its people fascinated Defoe, who wrote his famous description of a storm, as did Dickens, long afterwards, in *David Copperfield*, when he found "bemoaning women whose husbands were away in herring or oyster boats, which there was too much reason to think might have foundered before they could run in anywhere for shelter. . . . The sea, having upon it the additional agitation of the whole night, was infinitely more terrific than when I had seen it last. Every appearance it had then presented bore the expression of being *swelled*." It was in Yarmouth Roads where the great, good-hearted fisherman Ham perished, and it was at Yarmouth that Mr. Barkis, doubtless for once unwillin', went out with the tide.

Robin Hood's Bay, on the Yorkshire coast, is locally associated with the renowned outlaw, who is supposed to have fled to this quaint spot when he was hard pressed. He had boats ready, so that if necessary he could hurry off to sea. At one time the romantic Robin

seems to have been moved to try his luck as a fisherman, for he declared—

“The fishermen brave, more money have
Than any merchants two or three ;
Therefore I will to Scarborough go,
That I a fisherman brave may be.”

Robin gallantly ventured forth, probably in a coble ; but, if he really meant to fish, he lost sight of his honest purpose on seeing a French ship of war approach. There was no doubt in his mind as to what he should do—he commanded that he should be tied to the mast, so that he could stand fair at his mark, then, taking his bow, and declaring that he would spare never a Frenchman, he shot his arrows and vanquished his foes ; after which, boarding the ship, he was rewarded by finding “Twelve thousand pound of money bright,” as the ballad-writer duly puts on record.

The far stretch of east coast had its little nooks of harbours and established ports long before the days of Robin Hood. At the time of the Conquest the primitive North Sea men of Yarmouth went after the herring in their open boats, and in succeeding centuries they plied their ancient trade in vessels which grew larger, had better accommodation, and carried more men—forerunners of the modern lugger and the steam-boat. Yarmouth has its own historians—conscientious and laborious workers like Manship, Palmer, and Nall—and the town of gridirons gave them plenty of material ; while Defoe and Dickens added imaginatively to what has been recorded more prosaically. The name of Captain Cook is imperishably associated with the Yorkshire coast, on which he was born.

Some quaint particulars concerning the ocean toilers nearly two centuries ago were given by the Rev. John Lewis, who was vicar of Minster, and wrote of the antiquities of the Isle of Thanet. The inhabitants who lived by the seaside, he said, were generally fishermen, or those who went voyages to foreign parts, or those who depended upon "foying"—that was, going off to ships with provisions, or to help them in distress. Many of these people, especially those who went to the "North Seas" to fish, were "a sort of amphibious creatures," who got their living both by sea and land, being fishermen as well as husbandmen, and equally skilled in holding the helm and the plough. According to the season of the year, they made nets, went cod, mackerel, or herring fishing, sailed on voyages, exported merchandise, or ploughed and mowed and reaped and sowed, and generally led the life of a farmer. As boys they went to catch herring and whiting, and to the "North Seas," to which they made two voyages a year. From the second voyage they returned home soon enough to enable the men to share in the wheat season, "and take a winter's thresh." After the latter they returned to the sea. There were also two seasons for the home fishery, known as "shot-fare" and "herring-fare." Of these the first was the mackerel season, which usually began about May, when the sowing of barley was ended; the other was the season for catching herrings, which opened about the end of harvest and finished in time for the wheat season, which, in Thanet, was November, the wheat being then sown. Owing to the mixture of the two callings of land and sea it was not uncommon for farm-servants to bargain with

their masters that they should go to "shot-fare" and "herring-fare."

The North Sea fishery had been at that time much followed by the inhabitants of Thanet, but want of success had greatly discouraged them in recent years, and many of the men and boys had left the work. The tackle used in the North Sea fishing by the people of Thanet consisted of a peck, or heading knife, a splitting knife, a gutting knife, and a contrivance carrying two hooks with which very good results seem to have been secured. This was a semicircular bar of iron, in the middle of which was a lead to poise it through a hole, in the top of the bar there went an iron ring, to which was fixed a line of so many fathoms as the depth of water needed. At each end of the bar was a hole with a ring in it, to which was fixed a piece of line about ten inches long. This was called the "snood," and to it was fastened the hook, with a piece of lead on the top of it resembling a fish, and called the "fish." It was said that sometimes cod were enticed to swallow the hook when it was unbaited.

The "shot-fare" and the "herring-fare" gave employment to the "poor people on shore" who were busied in spinning, twisting, and knitting the nets. The prices paid were small enough. They were—

Spinning by the pound	2d.
Twisting	1d.
Knitting a shot-net, which is but two deepings by the awlne	$\frac{3}{4}$ d.
Knitting a herring-net of three deepings by the awlne	1d.

Beating or mending these nets, 1s. a day, with victuals, or 1s. 3d. per day, with a breakfast only.

An "awlne" was a French measure of 5 ft. 7 in. Sixty awlnes made a "dole," or parcel, of shot-nets, and twenty awlnes made a "dole" of herring-nets.

The reverend author spoke of the seamen of Thanet as being excellent sailors—very bold and dexterous in going off to ships in distress—but he deplored their practice of pilfering stranded ships and abusing those who had already suffered so much. The name they gave to the custom was "paultring," but, said the writer, "nothing sure can be more vile and base than, under pretence of assisting the distressed masters and saving theirs and the merchants' goods, to convert them to their own use, by making what they called guile-shares." It became customary from this "paultring" to use the expression "seafaring ways," as indicating the "utmost rudeness and barbarity." A learned antiquary named Twine was accordingly moved to represent the inhabitants of the seacoast as "rude, rough, cruel, given to robbery, and, in one word, the very worst of people." There was no rule, however, without an exception, added the vicar hopefully; but he did not seem to find it in Thanet.

There was a rude rhyme which ran—

"Ramsgate capons, Peter's lings,
Bradstow scrubs and Margate kings."

"Capon" signified not a fowl for the table, but red herrings, and the reproach was levelled at Ramsgate,

St. Peter's, and Bradstow because the people there formerly lived "very meanly and poorly," eating scarce anything but fish, and particularly red herring and ling, or "North Sea cod." On the other hand, Margate was the chief, if not the only, place of business, and its inhabitants were wealthy, and lived in plenty; but Margate fell on somewhat evil days and the "kings" departed. Meanwhile, Ramsgate prospered and allured many rich people, so that apparently the "capons" which were not genuine were succeeded by acceptable chickens and other good fare.

The primitive North Sea men of the past, the fishers who were also husbandmen, have their successors in the Scots who come from northern ports to southern climes, following the herrings. Their fine seaworthy luggers, a feature of many of which is the horizontal steering-wheel, often crowd English harbours, and the crews throng the streets on the Sabbath, decently dressed and orderly. These people from the Shetlands and elsewhere are still in many ways primitive. I have given a cigar to one of them, only to learn that he did not know how to smoke it. And just as their forefathers did long ago, so they do themselves—till the soil in due season, and at the proper time go fishing. They are industrious, reserved, and sober—though some of them, perhaps, when in port for the week-end, relax vigilance a little and snuggle in their cabooses and make themselves contented with the help of grateful waters. "The Cotter's Saturday Night" has its repetition on a broader scale in many a lugger which is in harbour for the week-end. At eventide you may see the men and boys carrying their basketsful of bread, meat,

vegetables, and groceries down the piers or on the quays of some quaint haven. They crowd into their confined and evil-smelling quarters, and make themselves comfortable and happy. To this end they brew innocuous drinks, or mix strong spirit with the contents of the water-cask, though there are primitive North Sea men who hold it more than half a sin to favour such unnatural alliances.

The tale is told—and, like many other stories, it may be true—of the Scotch skipper whose lugger was in port for the week-end. He gave the boy a sovereign, strictly charging him to lay it out in food and drink to the best advantage. In due season the youth returned, bearing half a dozen bottles of whisky and a penny loaf. For a moment the master gazed admiringly, then exclaimed despairingly, “Heaven forgive you, boy! Whatever shall we do wi’ all this bread?”

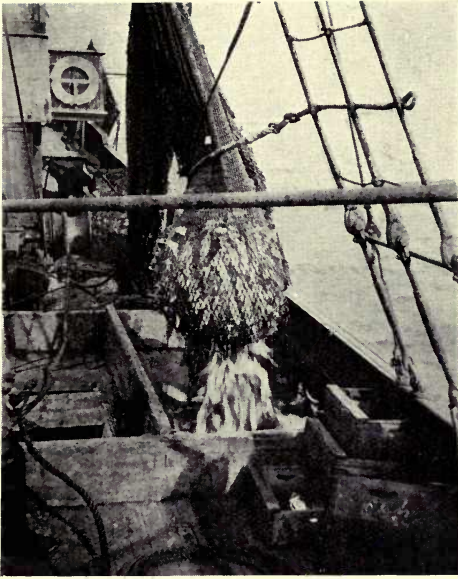
CHAPTER IV

FIELDS AND HARVESTERS

WAR to-day is waged as fiercely on the North Sea as it ever was when Jutlanders and Vikings came to England. But it is another sort of fight, a battle with unnumbered hosts that dwell in gloomy waters and are seldom seen till they are conquered. For generations armies of men have fished the Dogger Bank and other shoals, harvesters of fields that have been, and are, open to all who care to visit them.

Just as the early sea-wolves ravaged and pillaged on the shores of Britain, so these harvesters reap their rewards. From January 1st to New Year's Eve that follows, in steam or sailing craft, but mostly steam, they labour with incessant courage and endurance. The enormous quantity of 22,371,221 cwt. of fish was landed in the United Kingdom in 1909, the value being £10,691,183, and the bulk coming from the North Sea. To win such vast results there were employed thousands of men and boys and four standing fleets of steamboats, irrespective of many craft which operate individually, and are known as single-boaters.

If the North Sea waters were translucent, what a wondrous sight would be presented to the voyagers upon its surface! Countless myriads of fishes find existence



THE COD-END OF A TRAWL, WITH ITS CATCH.



THE COD-END UNLASHED AND THE CATCH OF
FISH IN THE POUND.



in them, and certain portions of the Dogger and other banks would not show sand or shell, or smooth or rough ground, according to the charts; but would reveal an almost solid moving dark or silver mass.

That famous submarine plateau which is called the Dogger Bank lies in the middle of the North Sea. To the ordinary mind there is nothing to distinguish this particular stretch of water from the surrounding sea; but the trawler man knows it as the Londoner knows his Charing Cross.

The Dogger, indeed, is the Charing Cross of the North Sea, for it is there that nearly all things fishing meet, and from which all operations start. The fleets are constantly on or near the Dogger; the steam-carriers surge up London River from the Dogger, and it is back to or near the Dogger that they mostly go when they are clear of Billingsgate and Gravesend. Just as the gold-fields of Africa and Australia have been the lodestars of countless adventurers and courageous spirits, so the Dogger Bank has been the object of armies who have left the North Sea shores in various sorts of craft. Rich hauls of gold have been taken by sinking shafts; hauls of silver fish, as precious, have been made from the prolific waters of the Bank. There is this difference between the two—that, whilst the mines have been gutted and laid bare, the sandy plateau has remained fertile, and myriads of fish have appeared to take the places of the unnumbered hosts which have been scooped by the relentless trawls.

Day and night throughout the year, ceaselessly, except when prevented by bad weather from working, the steam-trawlers are at work on the Dogger, gathering its harvest, and so it is with all the other fishing-banks of the North Sea.

No factory ashore is driven with greater regularity and persistence than a modern steam-trawler. The purpose of the loom is to weave, weave, weave; and the object of the trawler is to fish, fish, fish. But the mill has this great advantage, that it is a steady and reliable concern; the workers are sure of their feet, irrespective of weather. Hard gales may sweep down on the stout stone or brick walls, sleet may slat against the windows, but these things only serve to emphasise the comforts of the indoor workers. The enginemen and boilermen may go about their business unconcerned because of the weather; yet within a hundred miles or so—for the western edge of the Dogger is only sixty miles from the east coast of England—the fisherman is wallowing in weltering seas, the trawler is towing her gear amid the roar of the wind and the surge of the waves, and the engineer and stoker are carrying out their labours on their bucking, straining iron or steel floors which, as likely as not, are deep in dirty water. Only when the weather is uncompromisingly bad is the gear hauled, for loss of fish means loss of money on the Dogger. The skipper or steersman in his wheel-house on the Dogger is an object which always claims the admiration of the observer; and not less so is the engineer, often almost naked, who stands by his bucking, rattling machinery, and the grimy fireman who has scarcely standing-room on his steel or iron floor. There is the trimmer, too—whose position involves incessant toil and discomfort. May the day be not far distant when some efficient mechanical method of supplying boilers with steam will be devised, if only for the sake of eliminating firemen.

Time was, apparently, when the Dogger was a region

above, and not below, the surface of the sea ; and the day may come when again it will be a fertile and smiling stretch of country. Engineers of the future may reclaim it, as they mean to win back the Zuyder Zee, and the people of the Dogger may be a race of whom we cannot form any conception, and of which it is, perhaps, better not to think. Included in that people may be learned creatures who will tell their fellows what the Dogger used to be in the brave days when hard North Sea men fished it mercilessly ; and statistics may be forthcoming as to the amount of wealth represented by generations of trawling from the Bank. The time is not yet. Meanwhile, there are no figures available to give an accurate idea of the aggregate of the enormous wealth of the countless hauls which have been made from the Bank, since the early days when single-boaters ventured forth and shot their nets. We can only speculate and estimate, and use the figures of the present as a guide to the performances of the past and the probable achievements of the future. Of the past we know, fully or in part ; of the present we are well informed ; but of the time to come we only know that science will decide how best the fish supply shall be dealt with.

Not far from the Dogger, and due east from the Yorkshire coast, is one of the most famous of all the North Sea fishing-grounds. This is the Silver Pit, a region which, in its way, has been as profitable as some of the goldfields of Australia. The winter of 1843 was very severe, and myriads of soles had been driven by the cold into the deep water of this particular part of the North Sea. Very few trawlers were then at work ; but one of them, a Hullman, had his gear down. When the

trawl was hauled, it was found to be full of fish—not a mixture of prime and offal, but of prime alone, and the primest at that, for the entire catch consisted of sole.

Hurrying to Hull, the skipper sold his precious catch, and hastened back to the money-giving spot for more. Again the trawl was packed with soles, and the wondrous hauls were repeated, not only by the discovery of what became known as the Silver Pit, because of its wealth of fish, but also by other trawlers who had heard of the presence of abundant prime.

The fame of the Silver Pit spread far and wide, and smacksmen swooped on Hull and settled there. The few trawlers rapidly increased in number, and money was made almost as swiftly as it was being taken from the goldfields. The wiser and more cautious men built the foundations of substantial fortunes; but the more improvident spirits acted on the principle of easy come, easy go. The man who discovered the Silver Pit and founded the east coast fishing trade died in Hull workhouse fifty years after he had led the way to fortune!

The Dogger is the father of the North Sea banks. It is with that famous region that the most courageous and romantic deep-sea operations are associated; but there are now many other localities which are being worked by steamboats just as hard as ever the Dogger was in the earlier days of fleeting. Great Britain is scarcely more clearly mapped out into countries than the North Sea is charted into districts, most of them known only to fishermen or those who are connected with the fishing industry. There is the Viking Bank, 450 miles from the Humber, and almost midway between the Shetlands and Norway; the Great Fisher Bank, north-



A NORTH SEA SKIPPER AT THE WHEEL.



A STEAM-TRAWLER'S FISH-ROOM.



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AUGUST 1960

east of the Dogger; the Little Fisher Bank and the Jutland Bank. There are the Horn Reefs, off the coast of Denmark, the Broad Fourteens, not far from the Dutch coast; the Great Silver Pit, almost on a line drawn between Flamborough Head and Heligoland; the Long Forties, due east from Aberdeen, and many places with strange names like the Puzzle Hole, Brucey's Garden, Clay Deep, the Hospital, and the Cemetery. Irrespective of romance or sinister import in the names, the localities serve as harvest-grounds for the merciless steam-towed trawls. Other great "regions" are the Fladen Ground, nearly 300 miles north of the Humber, and the Oyster Ground, which stretches half-way across the North Sea from Heligoland towards Flamborough Head. These shoals and grounds are named as fishermen have named them; there are also official designations which are specially adapted to help official work in connection with the North Sea industry. That work is being done with great zeal and ability.

These well-defined "regions" abound in fish, to be had by all comers for the trouble of catching; but the whole of the North Sea itself, outside the coast-limits, is the scene of operations of the modern British trawler. She has the vast area of 152,000 nautical square miles to work in, the greatest of all fishing-regions frequented by trawlers; yet nowadays not even that immense locality—nearly three times the area of England and Wales—satisfies the enterprise of steamboat owners. There are eighteen "regions" frequented by British trawlers, these "regions" having a total area of more than 700,000 square miles. The Baltic Sea takes second place in extent, with nearly 135,000 square miles, and

the White Sea third, with nearly 129,000. The table from the official chart may be quoted, showing the "regions" and their actual dimensions. The table indicates at a glance how wide afield the modern British trawler goes in quest of prey—

No. of Region.	Name.	Approx. area in sq. mls. (nautical).
I.	White Sea	128,917
II.	Coast of Norway	29,648
III.	Baltic Sea	134,891
IV.	North Sea	152,473
V.	North of Scotland (Orkney and Shetland)	18,096
VI.	Westward of Scotland	32,099
VII.	Iceland	36,608
VIII.	Faroe	4,949
IX.	Rockall	3,430
X.	West of Ireland	9,066
XI.	Irish Sea	15,743
XII.	Southward of Ireland	50,416
XIII.	Bristol Channel	8,613
XIV.	English Channel	25,238
XV.	West of France	25,422
XVI.	North of Spain	5,464
XVII.	Coast of Portugal	9,997
XVIII.	Coast of Morocco	10,499
	Total	701,569

Fishes may and do change quarters ; but their instinct is no match for the experience and wisdom of the ruthless admirals who, as soon as a particular ground is fished bare or ceases to yield satisfactory hauls, order their fleets to new regions perhaps a hundred or more miles away. These sudden shiftings are a sore trial to carriers returning from market. Their skippers have to go on seeking till they find, and there are cases on record of skippers burning all their coal and consuming all their

stores, and even then failing to join their fleets. Wireless telegraphy on the carriers and at least the admirals' vessels would abolish this evil, and it is surprising that keen business men, such as those who control the great North Sea fleets, have not yet made use of this invention.

The Germans have more than half a dozen steam-trawlers fitted with wireless apparatus, and special measures have been taken to instruct skippers and fishermen in the use of it. The German purpose seems to be to employ the system not only in connection with fishing operations, but also to give warning of approaching storms. In existing circumstances no advantage could be taken of such warnings by British trawlers, except the single-boaters, which might run for shelter. The fleeters have to ride out gales and make the best of them, although the splendid modern boats have little to fear from wind and water. Occasionally, however, a steam-trawler founders with all hands, and there is the ever-present danger of serious damage being done and life lost through shipping heavy seas.

The gloomiest of prophecies have been made concerning the harvest fields of the North Sea. Every year for generations has brought forth its dismal seer who has foretold the utter depletion of the banks; yet these Jeremiahs have been consistently confounded, for, despite the vast growth of the fishing industry, the total quantities of fish increase annually. This is largely due, of course, to the opening of new and distant grounds; but while there has been a falling off in some heavily trawled localities, notably the Dogger, other regions have been developed and the shortage more than made good. The

incessant cannibalism amongst fishes and the remorseless scooping of the trawl has not apparently affected the incredible population of the deep.

Death, damage to property, and injury to person have been at all times associated with North Sea trawling. The end comes so swiftly and unexpectedly, too, in such terrible and pitiless fashion, and often there is no avoiding it. Damage is done by every gale that blows, and daily in the fleets there are greater or lesser injuries to men and boys. Seas sweeping fiercely over or crashing on smacks and steamboats have crushed the life out of thousands of splendid fellows; collisions in fog or clear weather have sent one or both of the colliding craft to the bottom of the sea, and there have been more fishing vessels lost, with their crews, because of liners and cargo steamers driving over the North Sea, than have been ever reported or will be ever known.

I remember being in a fishing-vessel south of the Dogger, in the early spring, amusing myself and at the same time doing useful work by blowing the trumpet which served as syren, for there was a dense fog, and we had little or no way.

The fog abruptly lifted, and so near to us that I read the name on her bow quite easily without the help of glasses, was a German Atlantic liner, driving full speed ahead and making never a sound by way of signal. She went past and was enveloped in the clammy air.

I was standing near the skipper. "Well?" I said. "A near enough shave?"

"Ay," he answered bitterly. "A few seconds late in gettin' where we are, an' we shouldn't ha' bin talkin' now. They slice you—an' slink away. They're too

mighty to stop, an' in too big a 'urry, them liners. Besides, what do a few poor fishermen matter?"

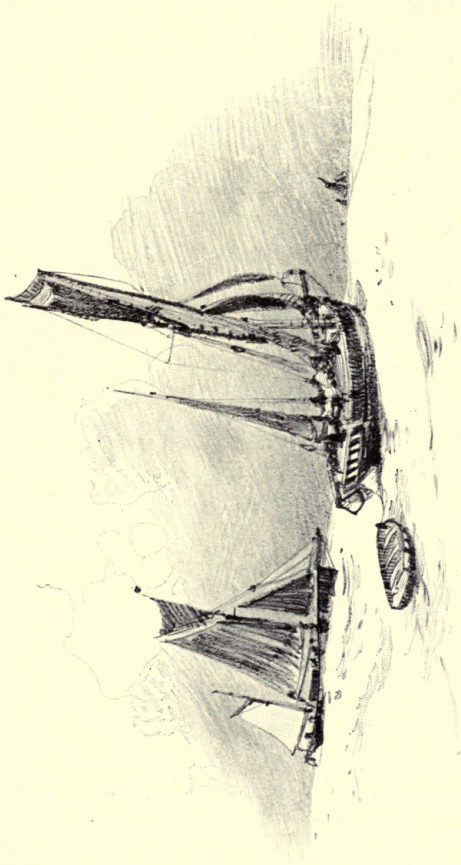
Many a home on the east coast of England, to say nothing of the other side of the North Sea, has been desolated by the reckless deeds of steamboat men. True, commanders of stately liners and masters of tramps are just as mercilessly driven in the race of life as any slave ashore, and where the loss of a tide may mean a lost market, or, worse, dismissal, there is not much room for sentiment.

Just as the Russian warships blundered through a North Sea fleet, so other steam-craft have cut their way through peaceful trawlers, and, though they have not wantonly and cravenly fired guns, yet they have wrought just as much mischief, for they have sent many an in-offensive vessel to the bottom, with all her crew—and there has been no talk of retaliation or compensation.

In thick weather or snowstorms on the Dogger and other fishing-banks smacks especially have suffered greatly. In the old days of sail alone, when craft were almost helpless, a steamboat would loom up, and before she was fully seen she had cut through and destroyed a smack, and kept her course without so much as slowing down or troubling to learn what mischief she had done and how much death she had dealt.

The total number of fishermen employed in 1909-10 was 103,719, and the number who lost their lives was 243—a death-rate of 1 in 427, but the death-rate in the larger fishing-vessels was 1 in 203. The greatest number of deaths were due to accidental or other injuries, 217 fishermen meeting their end in this manner. The bare official returns for the year named show how

perilous still is the calling of the fishermen around our coasts, despite the advances that have been made towards securing safety; but in one direction at least there has been an enormous improvement, and that is in connection with the boarding of fish. Under the heading, "Boat Accidents when Fish Ferrying," the total number of deaths for the year was only four, and these related to steamboats, there being no casualties for sailing vessels. This is a wondrous change from the days of smacks, when often enough there would be four or more men lost in a single morning in one fleet. Heavy seas carried overboard or killed thirteen men—three from sailing, and ten from steam, vessels; and miscellaneous accidents accounted for twenty-five lives—twenty-one in steamboats and four in sailing vessels. There were four suicides—all in steam vessels—and three cases of supposed suicide, three out of the total of seven being firemen and trimmers. Disease accounted for twenty deaths—seventeen in steam, and three in sailing, vessels—no fewer than five skippers of steamboats being amongst this number. The total included eleven deaths from heart disease, which is strong indication of the severe and prolonged bodily strain to which fishermen are subjected. Of the total number of deaths twelve were directly or indirectly attributed to drink.



Sailing Smacks & Steam Trawlers

OLD BEAM-TRAWLERS.



CHAPTER V

SMACKS AND TRAWLS

YARMOUTH was the cradle of beam-trawling. From that famous old port the first of the beam-equipped smacks sailed, and it became the headquarters of the great sailing fleets which worked the North Sea.

In the vast and astonishing developments which have taken place in connection with deep-sea fishing during the last quarter of a century, no port has shared in greater vicissitudes than the town whose harbour is the Yare. Towards the end of the Forties there were not more than four or five trawlers leaving Yarmouth; less than twenty years later the number had grown to 150; in 1887, when smacks had reached their highest development, four fleets sailed from the port, and nearly 3000 men and boys were serving in them. The chief spirit of the industry at that time was Mr. Samuel Hewett, who began life as a smack's boy. In 1863 he owned between fifty and sixty trawl-smacks and carrying cutters, and was paying £20,000 yearly for wages and victuals. He also possessed half a dozen line vessels, catching haddock, cod, and whiting; but he was abandoning these for the trawlers, which paid better. The time was coming, and was not far distant, when the steamboat was to oust the trawl-smack just as she had crushed the liner.

Barking and the Thames were very intimately associated with the early days of trawling, but little has been learned of the position which the town held as a fishing port a century and a half ago. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, however, Barking, Greenwich, and Gravesend were building welled-smacks, to share in the North Sea fishing, and in 1852 Barking had no fewer than 134 trawlers and 46 smacks engaged in lining for cod and haddock. Twenty-five years later Barking had ceased to be reckoned as a fishing port.

Barking and Brixham claim the renown of originating deep-sea trawling. There has been much controversy on the point, which has never been satisfactorily settled, nor is it likely to be. Brixham and Barking trawlers were certainly amongst the very first to adopt this form of fishing, and their bluff, stout little smacks were numbered with the first of the reapers of the Dogger.

The early trawler was a vessel of from 30 to 50 tons, carrying six or seven hands, men and boys. These were paid by wages, the skipper having five per cent. of the earnings. As a rule, the smacks did not go so far north as the Dogger, but fished on the south edge of it, and about Botney Gut, 80 miles from Yarmouth. They trawled at a depth of from 18 to 23 fathoms, the greatest depth being 40 fathoms, at the Silver Pit, and an average good day's fishing was a ton per smack. In calm weather the vessels got but little fish; a fair catch in a smart breeze, and in a gale nothing. The trawlers remained out for six weeks, though the Barking smacks were at sea for two months together.

An average good day's fishing was a ton per smack. A ton would contain about 3 cwt. of soles, and half a ton of haddock, the rest being plaice and whiting, a few turbot, a few brill, and a very few cod. A good fishing-ground had a smooth bottom, and the smacksmen knew by practice when they got to rocky ground. In fine weather short hauls of two or three hours were made. With such hauls the fish were alive, but they came up mostly dead, and the longer the trawl was down the worse the fish were. The fish changed their place according to the season. In very cold weather they got into deep water for warmth; in fine weather they went into shallow water, and Mr. Hewett, when on the Dutch coast in the height of summer, saw turbot a few inches from the surface.

As a rule, the trawlers went with the tide for four or five hours. The tide would go from two to two and a half miles an hour, and the vessel would drive a knot or a knot and a half. Moderate weather—a two-reefed sail, would suit a trawler best. The total useful speed would be three and a half miles an hour, with tide and wind, though a little faster was desirable for soles, and faster still for plaice and haddocks. It was impossible to fish against the tide, as the bottom of the net lifted up. The early experience of trawling showed that, the more the ground was stirred up, the better produce came from it. Trawling disturbed the ground and brought the insects up, supplying the fish with food. A Hull smacksmen stated that the fish followed the trawl, "like a parcel of crows, to catch these things."

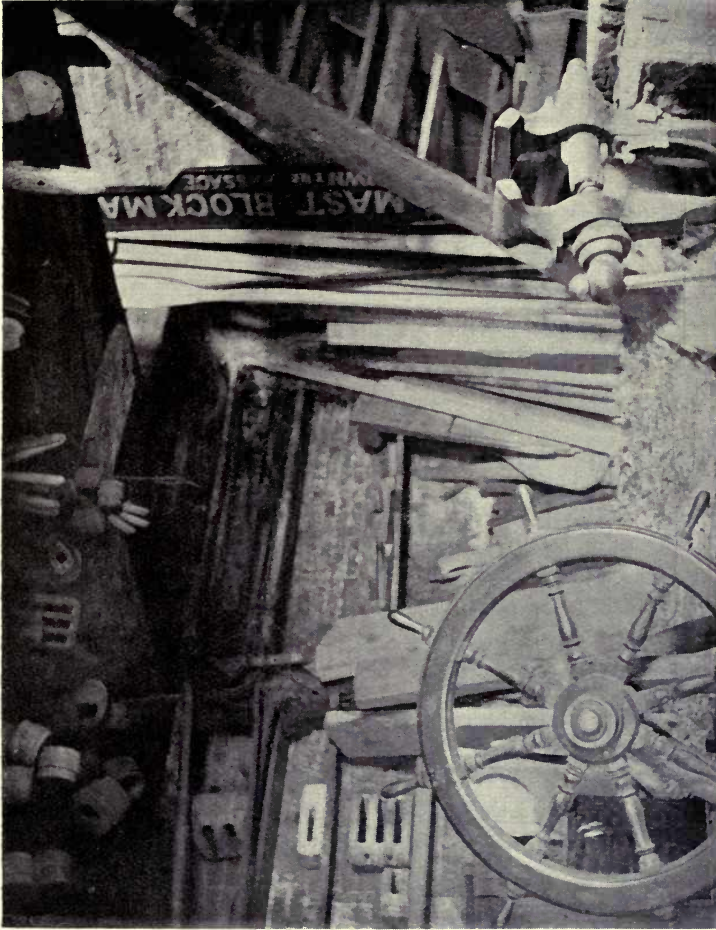
"I compare trawling almost to farming," said a Yarmouth fisherman. "You plough the field and cast

out all that's bad, and you think every year you get better crops. So it is with us. We disturb the ground and the soil comes up underneath, and the fish are able to get at it." The trawl with a 36-ft. beam was found most serviceable by Yarmouth men, who worked in strong currents which would break longer beams. Larger beams were used by smackmen on the north-east coast, and these were called by Yarmouth men "sea-rakers."

In those early days, the beginning of the halcyon period of trawl-fishing, some amazing catches were made, for there were still comparatively few beams at work over a vast area, and the fish had not developed the cunning of the modern haddock, of which it has been said that it is crafty enough to see a trawl coming and to give it a wide berth. In three weeks one skipper caught 326 packages of fish, of $1\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. each, and he was at Smith's Knoll with thirty trawlers which, for several weeks, were within hail of each other, working backward and forward with the tide; and there was little or no difference between the catches of the foremost and the sternmost vessels.

It will be seen that for the three weeks' catches referred to the average catch per day was more than a ton, and as a trawler cost less than a thousand pounds—£800 or £900—and the wages of the mate were only 18s. and common hands 16s., there were ample chances of owners enriching themselves and skippers becoming owners. Many a steady man, who as a small boy had been sent to sea by Boards of Guardians, became a rich smackowner.

It was found in the early Sixties that it did not pay



AN OLD MAST AND BLOCK-MAKING SHOP WHICH HAS PASSED AWAY.



to employ steamers to carry the fish from the fleets to the markets, and accordingly fast-sailing cutters, specially built for the purpose, took the fish to Billingsgate and the coast ports. One of Whistler's etchings shows nearly a dozen of these cutters lying off Billingsgate in 1859, with the porters carrying the fish ashore—a quaint and quiet spectacle compared with the rush and hustle of the steamboat days. The fish was packed in ice, and three or four days—sometimes a week or more—elapsed between the catch and the delivery.

The cutters took from 400 to 600 packages each to Billingsgate, where, daily, several of these vessels would be lying. The packages consisted of about one-half prime, and the other half plaice, haddocks, etc. The haddocks were mostly bought by costermongers, who cleaned, cured, and smoke-dried them. These were sold as Finnan haddocks, and realised on an average 12s. or 14s. a basket, but sometimes as low as 8s., at others as high as 20s. Each basket weighed 150 lb. or 160 lb. The plaice were mostly bought by "friers," who cleaned the fish, cut them in slices, and fried them in oil, after which they were hawked on barrows or sold at shops in poor neighbourhoods—the heralds of the many existing fried-fish shops in London and the provinces. At that time plaice would sell for as low as 6s. or 7s. a hamper of 150 lb. or 160 lb. There has been a change in this, as in many other respects in connection with fish, for at present plaice is invariably dearer than haddock.

The strong feeling that existed between the line and trawl fishermen was the cause of much trouble in those earlier days, and the liners suffered greatly, both in mind and pocket, owing to a "contrivance" which the trawlers

placed in front of their vessels—possibly the forerunner of the torpedo-net-cutters—to enable them to cut through a fleet of nets without any interruption.

The trawl revolutionised North Sea fishing and drove out of the industry the old-fashioned methods. From half a dozen in the early Sixties the smacks grew in number until, twenty years later, there were 3000 British deep-sea trawlers, excluding the steam-carriers, for, in spite of expert prophecies, it was found necessary and profitable to employ steamboats to convey the fish to market from the fleets. Even an authority like Holdsworth, writing in 1874, when steam-carriers were at work and a "steam-cutter fish-carrying company" had just begun working from Yarmouth, wrote: "It is yet a question whether it will *pay* to apply steam to the actual trawlers." Yarmouth led with 700 smacks, mostly owned by Messrs. Hewett, and Hull and Grimsby came next, these three ports possessing about 1500 smacks, the rest being attached to other ports around the coast.

It was calculated at that time that the total amount of the capital invested in the industry was not less than £15,000,000, and that no fewer than 20,000 men and boys were exclusively employed in deep-sea trawling, mostly on the North Sea. From the earlier vessels of 24 and 35 tons the smacks had grown to a tonnage of 90 in some cases, with a corresponding increase in the size of beam and net, the beam being as long as 50 ft., and the net having a length of 70 ft.

The cost of a modern, thoroughly well-equipped sailing trawler was as high as £1600, and, exclusive of the wages paid, the yearly working expenses were about

£400. Simultaneously with the growth of the industry was a change in the method of paying the smacksmen, the tendency being to adopt a plan which would give them shares in the catches proportionate to their positions in the craft. The sum mentioned—£1600—included a fit-out of all that was needed for fishing, which cost £70 or £80. This fit-out consisted of a double set of almost every part of the gear, so that loss by accident could be made good without returning to port. Ordinarily a trawl-net would last from three to four months, but parts of the net would have to be renewed during that time, the under parts twice and the cod five or six times before the net was finally condemned.

Smacks derived their name from the smack or cutter rig which in the early days of trawling was almost universal. When the vessels increased to double the original size a change of rig became desirable so that there should not be an undue increase in the cost of working; consequently the size of the mainsail was reduced and a mizzen-mast was added, with great success. This new method was called "dandy" rig, and was generally adopted by the North Sea trawlers. With larger vessels came greater comfort and safety for the crews and the power to carry considerable quantities of ice.

The finest of the North Sea smacks were the most splendid sea-boats in the world, and they were handled with a skill and courage worthy of their beauty. The old-time fisherman and owner pinned his faith to these craft, and nothing would induce him to believe in steam. Only a year or two ago there were sold five of the smacks which helped to build the foundations of Grimsby's success as a fishing port. They belonged to

Mr. Thomas Campbell, who in the old days was the largest individual owner of sailing trawlers, and steadfastly refused to abandon wood and canvas in favour of steel and steam. The original total cost of these vessels was probably not less than £7000, yet they only realised £215. The prices paid were £60, £53, £40, £32, and £30, the buyers getting all the stores, sails, and running gear as well as the craft. One of the smacks was built so recently as 1894, the oldest dating from 1884; another of them, with the romantic name *Red Nell*, was built in 1885. Small though the prices named are, yet they are greater than many of the sums for which splendid vessels have been sold. I have seen a fine smack auctioned for £25, and others withdrawn because not even a bid like that was made. Numbers of these famous vessels are rotting in creeks and harbours on the east coast, because there is no use for them and it does not pay to break them up for firewood. Surely, before it is too late, one or two of these old fighters of the North Sea might be preserved as a link with the past, and kept with just as much care as the *Victory*.

The beam-trawl was an apparatus consisting of nine distinct parts. These were the beam, the trawl-heads, the ground-rope, the bosom, the cod or purse, the draw-rope, the rubbing-pieces, the pockets, and the bridle. The beam was proportionate to the size of the net. The wood usually employed to make it was elm, experience proving that this was the best material. For the smaller beams, which had a length of about 36 ft., it was not difficult to find single pieces of wood which could be used with little or no trimming. If, however, the trawl beam was very large, two or



“FOR SALE.”



SCOTCH HERRING-BOATS PACKED LIKE HERRINGS.

three pieces of elm had to be scarfed together and secured by iron bands. This was the form most commonly seen on the Dogger when trawling had reached its height. To each end of the beam an iron trawl-head was fixed into a socket. A pair of trawl-heads weighed from 360 to 400 lb. These trawl-heads stood in relation to the beam as the runners do to a sledge. The lower part was quite flat, the front part being curved and the back and top practically straight. The object of the trawl-heads was to keep the beam about three feet above the ground and so afford an uninterrupted entrance to the net itself. The upper part of the net was known as the back, and the bottom portion was called the "belly." The front edge of the back, technically called the "square," was fastened to the beam; but the "belly" part was extensively cut away so as to form a sort of semicircle on the ground. The middle of this curve or sweep, the "bosom," was thus at a considerable distance behind the beam and in front of the net, the distance, as a rule, being about equal to the length of the beam itself. The ground-rope protected what might be called the lower lip of the net. Generally the ground-rope was an old hawser "rounded" or covered with small rope, which served two purposes—to make it heavier and to prevent chafing. But there was a greater object than that to be served, and this was to stir up the ground and so rouse the fish which, as a rule, would immediately make their way into the net, and, having once done that, there was little chance of escape. It was essential that the material forming the ground-rope should be old, so that in case an obstruction was met—and this very frequently happened

on rough ground—the rope would be destroyed and the net itself saved.

The net would sometimes have a length of 100 ft., the meshes being of four different sizes, varying from 4 in. square near the mouth to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. at the cod-end. The net with a length of 100 ft. would have a width of 50 ft. at the mouth, so that there was an immense triangular bag towing at the bottom of the sea, which, if it came across a shoal of fish, would scoop a tremendous haul. It was not uncommon for 3 tons of fish to be caught at a time, and on the Dogger I have seen one of the old beam-trawls so crammed with haddock that it could not be hauled; as a matter of fact, the net burst and the dead haddock were as thick on the surface of the water as an icefloe.

The most interesting part of the beam-trawl net was in the old days, as it is now, the cod-end, for here the fish are found when the net is hoisted inboard and the moment comes for the big-bag-knot to be unlashd and the catch released. The cod-end is a narrow jail for the fish, and once in it and in the pockets there is about as little chance for the creatures to escape as there is for a convict to get out of prison. It must be remembered that the fish are swimming against the tide and that the net is being towed with it, so that, the more they try to escape, the smaller is their chance of freedom. If, however, fish turn about and try to get away from the enveloping meshes, they seek to do so by keeping to the two edges or sides of the net. In this case they are doomed, because then they swim into the pockets. These pockets, two in number, are placed near the cod-

end and are made by lacing the upper and lower parts of the net for about 16 ft. Each pocket is practically a reversal of the cod-end, and is literally a trap, for the entrance consists of a valve or curtain of netting, called a flapper. This flapper is so constructed that, although it allows free admission to the fish, still, it prevents them from returning. If they turn at all, they must go into the pockets, which are practically inverted cod-ends, so that there is no chance whatever for them to escape, especially as fish are constantly entering the net and often enough forming a solid mass.

To the trawl-heads, by means of shackles, the bridle was attached, and to this in turn was fastened that important part of the trawl's equipment—the warp. The warp had a length of 150 fathoms, consisting of two sections of 6-in. rope spliced together.

In the old smacks the trawl was almost invariably carried on the port side, and when the beam was not in use it formed, with its trawl-heads, net, and gear, a very prominent feature of the vessel. The great beam usually projected beyond the stern.

The shooting of the trawl, although a comparatively simple matter, required much skill so as to prevent the trawl from reaching the bottom upside down, and so making the work of towing useless, because the beam would drag on the bottom and the net would not be opened and consequently incapable of catching fish. The mere fact that heavy labour was involved in hauling the trawl was in itself a sufficient reason why a skipper should be careful in seeing that the apparatus was properly shot. First of all, the cod-end was thrown overboard, then the rest of the net followed until it was

all hanging over from the beam and towing alongside as the smack went through the water. At this stage the fore-end of the beam was slacked away until it was completely clear of the vessel and turned by the action of the water at nearly a right-angle from the stern. Then the other end was lowered until the whole beam was level with the water, and the trawl being in its proper position, the vessel was forced along a little faster and the bridle and warp carefully paid out, so as to allow the trawl to sink to the level of the sea. Immediately on touching the bottom, the fishing began, for the trawl-heads ran on the ground, the ground-rope stirred up the fish, and the creatures were captured in greater or lesser abundance, quickly or slowly, according to numbers and the nature of the locality.

It was while the smack was towing her gear that the crew would snatch some rest and be ready for the heavy work of hauling the trawl and cleaning, sorting, and packing the fish and getting it ready for conveyance to the carrier. Once the gear was shot, the skipper and his crew were in the hands of fortune. Not even the most experienced fisherman could tell, except occasionally, what the luck of the sea would bring him. His net might be full to bursting, or the catch might be so meagre as not to be worth the trouble of sending to market. It might happen, too, that the net would foul a submerged wreck, or an old anchor, or, being on rough ground, might become entangled with stones or rocks and torn to tatters. Frequently a net would be hauled in a state of wreckage, and it was then necessary to set to work at once to repair the damage.

Some astonishing hauls have been made in the North

Sea, not only of fish, but also of undesirable débris, to say nothing of those ghastly catches which are inevitable in such a calling as this—the bodies of fishermen. Sometimes a single body will be brought up, occasionally a couple would be recovered, and once at least three were found in one trawl. This was in December 1887, when three men were lost out of the boat of the smack *Spark*.

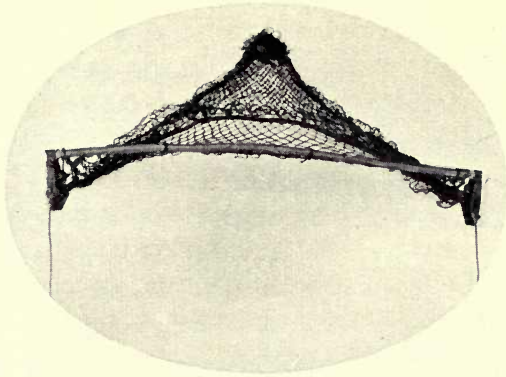
The beam-trawl, in the early days of trawling, was entirely man-handled. Shooting the ponderous, clumsy apparatus was easy and simple, for it simply meant that the crew had to get the contrivance overboard without fouling the vessel, and then leave her comfortably to do her work of fishing. But hauling the trawl was a vastly more difficult and laborious undertaking. The whole of the work had to be done by hand, and often enough the crew, working in the blackness of a winter night on the piercing Dogger, would toil incessantly for three hours before the cod-end could be hoisted on deck and the fish released. Then, when even the powerful frames of North Sea smacksmen were exhausted by their labours, the men would have to set to work to clean, gut, and box fish which froze while it was being handled.

A great and welcome relief came when steam was introduced to work the capstan. Donkey-boilers were installed in many of the smacks, especially the fine new craft which were built just before steam-trawling became universal. Steam proved an enormous help and a welcome blessing, for it abolished the weary tramping hour after hour round a capstan and the incessant struggling with the handspike. But, even with the help of steam, the working of the beam-trawl was, and is,

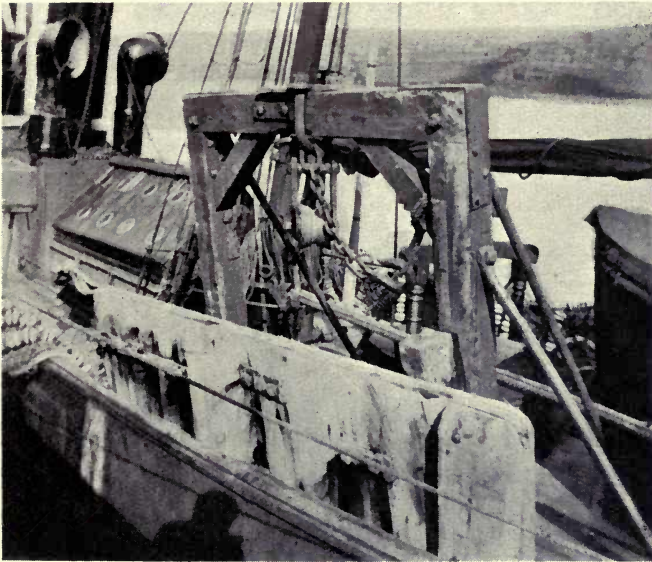
excessively laborious, because there is still much manual labour involved in the management of the primitive apparatus. No one who has not actually shared in it can understand what that labour meant. The *Aurania*, in which I made my first trip to the Dogger, was one of the finest smacks ever built, and one of the most thoroughly well equipped in every way. She was practically new, and was put into commission just before the almost incredible revolution of the North Sea fishing as an industry; yet, even with the help of steam and in good spring weather, the work of getting the trawl on board, in which I shared on several occasions, was a heavy and disheartening undertaking, especially when, as sometimes happened, the catch was so meagre as to be scarcely worth the trouble of ferrying to the carrier. The *Aurania* long since vanished from the unequal fight with steam, and, for anything I know, she may be still afloat as a little coaster or broken up for firewood.

The beam-trawl was fitted to the earliest steamboats, the old paddle-craft from the Tyne and the north-east coast generally, which were the pioneers of steam-trawling, and these old trawls were the link between the original gear and the skilful scientific apparatus which is now universally employed in deep-sea fishing.

The first great change that was made in the method of trawling was the abolition of the beam. To-day there is little difference between the net which is used and that which was originally employed, but there has been a vast alteration in the complete apparatus and the system of shooting, hauling, and trawling. The change has been so great that it is essential to go into some detail with regard to it.



A MODEL BEAM-TRAWL, MADE FOR THE AUTHOR
BY AN OLD NORTH SEA SMACKSMAN.



AN EARLY TYPE OF GALLOWS.



Experience proved that the beam was unwieldy and unnecessary, and there came into being the ingenious contrivance which is called the otter gear. It was not until 1894 that the new method superseded the old plan of fishing. Like all other improvements, the otter was at first ridiculed and condemned; but the opposition died very quickly, for even the most conservative smacksmen saw in it a welcome change from needless labour, a vast improvement in fishing, and a means of greater profit. In place of the beam, two boards, each about $4\frac{1}{2}$ ft. square, were attached to the mouth of the net, where the trawl-heads had been, and so arranged that on being dragged through the water they kept the mouth open in the same manner as the rigid beam and irons. An enormous advantage, too, was the lightness of the contrivance compared with the weight of the old apparatus, and the possibility of shooting and hauling in weather which would make the employment of the beam impossible. With a lessening of weight and the further use of steam, the labour of handling the net has been very much reduced. Powerful steam-winchies have succeeded the hand and donkey capstans; yet even to-day the final work of getting the net on board is hard enough to satisfy even the most robust of toilers.

At the outset a modified form of the otter apparatus was used, and I remember photographing one of the earliest types of "gallows"—a square invention which was unpleasantly suggestive of the real thing which is stealthily concealed in unassuming sheds in gaols. To-day the "gallows" consist of arched girders fitted to the trawler's side, and they form a prominent feature of her equipment.

At the outset many patents were secured for the otter apparatus, and it was necessary to pay a fee of £25 yearly before it could be used ; but, as improvements were put on the market and the demand for the modern appliance grew, the charge was abolished, and to-day the principle is employed, free, in all modern steamboats engaged in trawling.

The otter trawl had been in use, and its value fully proved, many years before it became universal in steamboats. So long ago as the middle Sixties the beam had been superseded by two boards and a number of corks, the corks replacing the great spar, and the boards serving the purpose of the irons. A number of amateur fishermen regularly used the otter apparatus because of its portability, for the boards were detachable and were easily stowed away in small craft. A beam was considered a very ugly thing on board a yacht, and the otter trawl was proved to be not only more compact, but also far superior to the beam-trawl for fishing. Amateurs were enthusiastic in praising the new invention, but in speaking of it even an experienced sea fisherman like Wilcocks, of Guernsey, said, "The regular beam-trawl is too firmly established ever to be superseded amongst fishermen."

Appropriately enough, it was a correspondent in the eastern counties who gave Wilcocks details of the practical employment of one of the earliest of the otter-trawls, which was procured through Lapthorne, a well-known sailmaker of Gosport. "The use of the otter-trawl is very simple," the writer stated. "There is only one thing to be cautious about, which is that you must weight the foot-rope exactly right, neither too heavy nor too

light; if it is too heavy you get such a quantity of mud, weed, and stones that you require powerful tackle besides all hands to get the net on board, but you at the same time catch plenty of fish. If you do not weight it sufficiently your net does not drag the bottom nor open properly, so you catch no fish, as the cork head-rope and the leaded foot-rope come together. I found my net, after altering the leading twice, go quite right, and catch double the quantity of fish that the professional trawlers here catch with the beam-trawl. My head-rope is 42 ft. long, foot-rope the same; at every half-fathom of foot-rope I wrap a piece of sheet-lead round once and a half; when all is on, I serve the whole foot-rope over with one strand of an old Manilla hawser, which makes it very thick and prevents it cutting into the mud too much; I think if I did not it would pick up a fourpenny bit."

A primitive form of the otter-trawl is recognised in many places on the east coast of Scotland as the most deadly of all forms of trout-fishing. A Scotchman who explained the method to me, with the warning that the practice of the plan involved hard labour, if discovered, said that the principal apparatus needful is half a barrel-head. To the centre of this a weight is attached—lead, iron, or other metal—and to each end of the barrel-head is fastened a line, the two lines forming a bridle. A line, corresponding to a trawl-warp, is attached to the bridle, and to this warp is fastened hooks bearing flies. My informant, who had often seen the device in operation by other people—under his own direction—spoke enthusiastically of the results. The system, he declared, succeeds when all other plans fail. He swore by it just

as earnestly as he declared that all men who boast of triumphant trout-fishing with flies do not speak truthfully; and that their success is due to the use of worms as bait. On that point I am not competent to give an opinion. I merely quote what my companion said, and refer to this primitive engine as a curiosity. Its effects certainly seem to be as deadly as the operations of the otter-trawl in a powerful modern steamboat.

Sailing cod-smacks worked on three different grounds according to the season of the year. These seasons and places were: October to Christmas, on the Great Fisher Bank and Dogger Bank; Christmas to April, alongshore; April to September, Iceland and Faroe banks. For the first-named season a cod-smack's fishing outfit was: 16 dozen lines, each 30 fathoms long (two of these lines, equalling 60 fathoms, were called a "piece"); 6000 hooks and snoods. A snood was $2\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long. Fifty-two hooks were put on a "piece" of line, the distance between them being 8 ft. 6 in.; or, if 12 ft. apart, 32 hooks. A dozen large anchors were carried, as well as 12 small anchors, 12 buoys with staff and flag, and 12 buoy-ropes; 16 trays, 16 tray-lashings; 60 whelk-nets, each net holding a "wash"; 1 sweeping-in and 1 sweeping-out net; 2 tomahawks, 2 prickers. The same number of lines was needed for the alongshore fishing as for the Dogger, except that a small anchor with a buoy was placed between each shank to keep the lines on the bottom.

For hand-lining in the Iceland or Faroe fishing the outfit needed included 4 dozen lines, each 35 fathoms long, wound on reels or frames, 3 dozen cod-leads, 300 to 400 hooks of various sizes, 9 splitting, 2 heading,

and 6 gutting, knives, half a dozen small brushes for cleaning fish, 3 files for sharpening hooks, a sharpening stone, a dozen tomboys, a dozen reels, and 3 cod-prickers. These are the details given by O. T. Olsen.

Many special committees have been appointed by Parliament to go into the whole question of deep-sea fishing, and these inquiries have put on record a vast amount of evidence with regard to deep-sea fisheries, particularly those of the North Sea. Nothing can be more astonishing than the difference in the points of view expressed by men whose lives had been spent in that particular industry. One smacksman, for instance, would declare positively that the use of the trawl would inevitably result in the utter depletion of the fishing-grounds; while another witness, with equal honesty, would express the conviction that the trawl could do no harm whatever, and that to fish the sea bare was an impossibility.

When the trawl was first introduced it was bitterly condemned by the old-time fishermen who had depended on the line and the old-fashioned nets, and whose methods differed but slightly from the systems pursued in the time of Peter, the patron saint of fishermen. The first Parliamentary Commission had before it a number of fishermen whose work had been carried out entirely on the Dogger and other North Sea banks. One of them, who was avowedly hostile to the beam-trawl, said he was certain that, thirty years previously, double the quantity of fish could be obtained that was available at the time he spoke, but that gradually the supply had fallen away. He predicted that some day, if trawling were allowed, England would cry out for

want of fish. He said that when he was a young man there were nine of them in the family, and for twopence his wife could buy enough haddock to give them a dinner; but at the time he spoke the same quantity could not be bought for less than ninepence or tenpence. Another witness said that the trawlers not only swept away the lines, but also destroyed the fish, and the only remedy was that trawl-fishing should be abolished. He added that, although ten years previously he used to take sixty or seventy codfish a day, still, at the time he gave evidence, when trawling had been in existence for about six years, he could not take one. A South Shields fisherman stated that the number of trawling vessels on the Dogger Bank had increased ten per cent. during the year, and yet the smacksmen were getting about a quarter less fish, and some of them scarcely made a living. A smack would sometimes catch five tons of fish a day; but the average was a ton and a half. He declared that the fish caught in the trawl were not fit for the market, as the insides were broken and the galls burst and ran through them. Much evidence of the same sort was given, some of the witnesses declaring that not only was the fish diminishing in quantity, but also deteriorating in size.

According to the custom of all commissions and inquiries, evidence in direct opposition to that which had been tendered was given, for experienced fishermen declared that trawling did not damage the industry, and that in it was the only real hope for the fishing of the future. Some of the witnesses gave valuable information relating to the fishing during the early part of last century. One of them, who had fifty



A LONG-LINER ON THE NORTH SEA.



A DUTCH HERRING-VESSEL.



years' experience, said that when he first went to sea the boats were about one-third their present size. In 1812 every boat brought in more white fish than they could carry. A boat's crew was not so well off at the time he spoke as thirty years previously. In one year, about 1825, he made £126, but a few years back he earned only £78. For the last five years his average for the white-fishing was about £50, and an additional £50 might be made from the herring-fishing. The cost of a line-boat with fittings was about £40, but a herring-boat with nets cost not less than £100. He calculated that a young man ought to earn £100 a year. A full third of that amount would be necessary to maintain the boat and tackle. The boats lasted about fourteen years.

In the old trawling days poetical, romantic, and sentimental names were freely chosen for the smacks, and some of these are still borne by craft that sail lazily from quiet ports in the summer-time, or go to sea in a freshening breeze, solely for single-boating. There is still something of romance and poetry in such a vessel as the *Tranquillity*, as she tumbles over the blue waters, Dogger-bound, from an old-world Yorkshire harbour, with the smoke curling from her galley, and her crew in brown jumpers that match the deep tan of the sails. There are the *Wayside Flower*, *Star of Hope*, *Eye of Providence*, *Good Design*, *Piety*, *Brotherly Love*, the *Radiant*, and the *Venture*, to keep the *Tranquillity* company; while from other North Sea ports there still venture forth, dependent on their canvas, the *Early Blossom*, the *True Vine*, *Lily of the Valley*, *Happy Return*, *Emmanuel*, *Boy Ben*—one

of a large family of "boys"—*Purple Heather, I'll Try, Rose of Devon, Fear Not, Forward, Intrepid, Thrift, Strive, and Perseverance*; and the *Fame and Glory*. All the human virtues, and a few of the frailties, have been and are represented by the names of sailing craft, and many a fragrant title or double name has been the product of some loving meeting by the North Sea shore. The lovers have departed, but their craft remain.

Equally appropriate to the days of steam are many of the names which are borne on the bows and sterns of steamboats. Here romance has disappeared before the hard graft of steam, and in some instances vessels are actually numbered consecutively from *One*—and she and *Nine, Ten, Twenty-Two, Twenty-Seven*, and other arithmetical craft trawl the North Sea waters as industriously, and doubtless as profitably, as the *Gleaner, the Zealot, the Breadwinner, the Bounteous Sea, and the Brighter Hope*.

With so many fleets working the North Sea grounds, there is obviously a wide field of choice in the selection of names for the vessels, and many fads and fancies are gratified in christening the craft, while, at the same time, there are numerous opportunities of paying tributes to departed smackowners by keeping their names green, to living pioneers of trawling, and to public men. Illustrious naval and military officers, unknown to themselves, have provided names for North Sea craft, and *General de Wet*, an enterprising motor-boat, probably harries fish as persistently as her namesake troubled British soldiers in South Africa.

In one respect there has been little change compared

with the days of sail, and that is in the use of fishing numbers and letters. The smacks carried these on the bows and sails; the steamboats have them painted on each side of the bow and quarter and on the funnel, and give also the name and port on the stern.

CHAPTER VI

IN THE DAYS OF SAIL

ROMANCE and peril are naturally far more prominently associated with the days of sail on the North Sea than with the age of steam. North Sea trawling is to-day a gigantic industrial undertaking, and, while the work is perilous, still, the element of danger is infinitely less than it was when the fishermen had to depend solely on the wind. Romance has to a large extent, and inevitably, disappeared, and even the *coper*, the notorious grog-shop of the Dogger, which was a marked feature of the fleets a quarter of a century ago, has vanished. The fierce, rough days of smuggling and kindred offences are practically no more, although occasionally a North Sea man will by care and cunning get the better of the watchful Customs.

It is doubtful if a thoroughly modern young skipper, a man of great skill and knowledge compared with his predecessors, could understand the smacksman of half a century ago if he were suddenly put into their midst and had to lead their life and follow their work; it is certain that the old-time fisherman could not credit his senses if he were spirited back to the Dogger and introduced to the wonderful and ceaseless fighting life of the modern steamboat man.

In former days everything depended on wind and sail; to-day everything in the fleets is done by steam, except boarding, and I am inclined to think that in the near future even this will be accomplished with the help of machinery. There is a fine opportunity for an enterprising man to introduce and at least fully try, as an experiment, a motor-boarder. It would doubtless be maligned and belittled; but I believe it would triumph.

The conditions under which the boarding of fish were carried out in the sailing days involved a heavy loss of life. In one fleet alone the average yearly loss was thirty-five men. "Boat upset while boarding fish," was one of the commonest records, and when it was made it meant that life was lost.

North Sea trawlers are the most skilful and daring boatmen in the world; but all their skill and courage were at times powerless to save them from death. The fish had been caught, and was packed in readiness for conveyance by the carrier to market. A dangerous sea would be running, but the admiral would not consider it essential to order that no attempt should be made to board. Some of the skippers had sent off their boats in worse weather, and they would not want to miss the market and lose the fruit of their all-night's toil. So the boats were thrown out and the trunks put in, a few skippers only preferring to suffer loss of money rather than pay toll in life and limb.

Of necessity a host of small craft would be afloat, struggling with the vicious cross-seas. The men then, as now, stood up to their work, one facing the

bow and one the stern, so that a watchful eye can be kept on the seas that charge from all quarters simultaneously. But iron nerve, giant strength, and wondrous skill at times availed nothing—a snarling comber came, and, when it had roared past, the boat had capsized and the men were struggling in the savage seeth. Short the fight must needs be, for the fisherman's heavy clothing and ponderous boots bore him down, and, unless help was just at hand, he was doomed. Help, if near, is never withheld, and in giving it to-day, as in the time of sail, North Sea men perform deeds of valour that put to shame many of the acts, some of them brave enough, many of them paltry, which ashore are so lavishly praised and generously acknowledged.

In one of the fleets three men hastened to the rescue of two who were struggling for life. In a moment they themselves were the victims of the fierce waters—and all the five were drowned. In the Short Blue Fleet I spoke with a skipper who was collecting money for the relatives of three members of his crew who were swept from their boat the first day they joined the fleet for the eight weeks' trip after the brief visit home. The accident happened on a fine morning, and the men were drowned before the skipper's eyes, and almost within reach of a carrier; but the sea had grown so suddenly that it was impossible to give any help. On one February morning seven men were drowned in the Great Northern Fleet through the capsizing of their boats, and two were lost in the Grimsby Fleet—making nine in one morning. The total number of lives lost in the

North Sea fleets during the year which ended on 30th June 1910, was four, a number which goes to show how much safer are the days of steam than were the days of sail.

That was the sort of toll which had to be paid yearly, and was paid, while ferrying the fish on the North Sea from the smacks to the carriers.

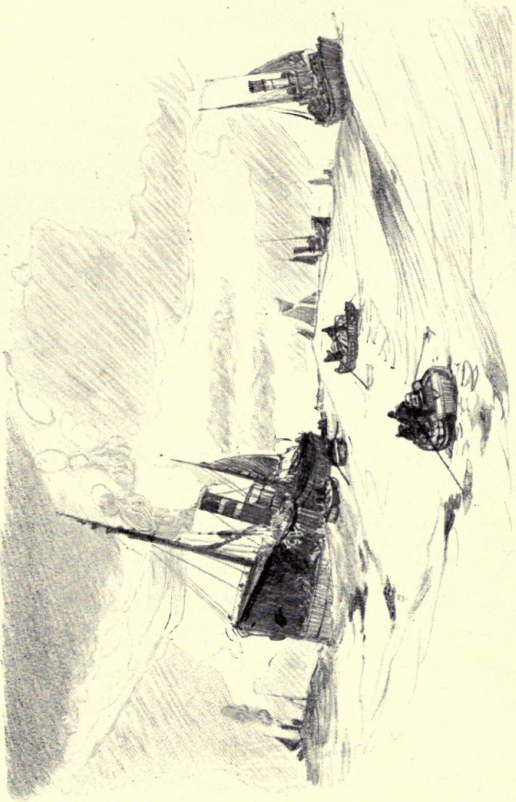
The old-time smacksmen scorned and hated all protective measures. "We're used to being drowned," they said, and dreaded more than death itself the chance of being ridiculed for taking precautions. The Board of Trade might make regulations as to lifebuoys, but there were few means of enforcing laws on the Dogger, and, often enough, when lifebuoys were available they were not put into the boats. With sails, too, involving the necessity of dependence on the wind and a dangerous clustering of smacks near the waiting carrier, accidents were bound to happen amongst the crowded boats, and sometimes, when a smack had to bear away because of a freshening wind, the boat would have to be pulled through waters which had become swiftly troubled, and perhaps from sheer exhaustion the men would be unable to meet a charging sea and would be overwhelmed and perish.

Nowadays the steamboats can be manœuvred so skilfully that the carrier is only a stone's throw away, there is but a short distance to ferry, and, if need arises, the trawler can run down and pick up her boat before serious mischief happens. In this respect steam, if more remorseless than sail, and steamboats, if not so romantic and picturesque as smacks, have worked wondrous changes in connection with boarding

fish on the Dogger, just as steam has added vastly to the all-round safety and comfort of the men who labour ceaselessly to keep the markets well supplied with fish.

“Sending a man fleeing is like sending him to the gallows,” a smacksman once told me, in the days of the sailing fleets, and he bitterly condemned a system which cut a man entirely off from shore life and compelled him to spend his existence on the open sea, with never a change from his workaday surroundings, except such as weather, runs home, and the luck of trawling brought him. Can it be cause for wonder that he sought the refuge of the *coper* and forgetfulness of toil and misery in a mad debauch? Was it not natural enough that he should seek and find oblivion in the vile drinks which were slinkingly sold in the fleets, and out of which enormous profits were made by the foreigner? And can it be matter for marvel that when he got ashore on a place like Heligoland or one of the other islands, or the mainland on the east side of the North Sea, the smacksman should behave more like a savage than a civilised being?

There were men in the old days into whose souls the iron of the North Sea had settled, and who saw no gleam of hope or prospect of salvation in the future. They were almost as much the slaves of their employers as negroes were the chattels of their masters on the plantations, with this difference, that the nigger had at least joyous sunshine and surroundings, and not infrequently a happy existence. He was not cut off from his womenfolk and children and compelled to lead a grey, lonely, and bitter life. Under a good master there was much to



BOARDING FISH.



make existence agreeable. Not so with the smacksman. He had one small dog-hole of a cabin in which he was forced to eat and sleep and drink and spend his leisure time, and often enough that cabin would be wet or flooded during the whole of a ten or eight weeks' voyage in the dead of winter, while for long spells, in bad weather, it would be impossible to get a hot drink or hot food.

Even at its best the living accommodation in a smack was bad. There was one cabin only, right aft, and in this the cooking was done, meals were taken, and the crew slept. The largest cabins in the largest vessels scarcely afforded height enough for a man to stand upright, and the task of entering and leaving the cramped space was at all times difficult and often dangerous. A wooden ladder with half a dozen steep steps usually formed the means of going down and coming up from below, the companion being just spacious enough to enable a man to get in and out. In bad weather the hatch had to be drawn, and those who ascended or descended had to watch for the chance which the breaking seas gave them. Light was usually given by a very small skylight, like a little box whose sides were glazed and protected with brass or iron rods; and air was admitted, when possible, through the skylight and the companion. When a gale was blowing the skylight had to be battened down, and, as the companion was kept closely shut for the most part, the atmosphere below became stifling and poisonous. Round the sides of the cabin were four bunks, a pair on each side on the same level, dark, fearsome cupboards, with doors which could be shut. Into these enclosed shelves, in winter-time, the sodden and exhausted smacksman was glad to climb, and to shut himself in, probably doing nothing

more than throw down his sou'-wester or other head-dress, but at times taking off his great boots. More often he would simply drop to the sodden foul floor, stretch himself out, and sleep like a log. Vermin might swarm—as it often did in the old wooden vessels—insects of the filthiest type; but the smacksman was impervious to the onslaughts. Woe to the fresh and appetising landsman or apprentice who adventured on the Dogger. I know that in my own case every sanguinary insect on board claimed me for its own, inflicting suffering that became positively maddening, and was only alleviated by going on deck in the middle of the night and getting the solitary hand to be merciful enough to drench me with repeated pailsful of water. How horrible was the sight just then of the scores of smacks in the peaceful moonlight! How unromantic the twinkling lanterns which were scattered on a wide expanse of sea! I fared no better when I tried to rest on a bed which had been made for me in the hold by the simple device of spreading a piece of canvas on the top of a spare trawl-net; nor when I sought forgetfulness by curling up on the bare boards of the deck. I bitterly regretted that I had not taken the advice of the owner before sailing—"Spend eighteenpence on a feather-bed made of straw—you won't sleep either on a locker or the floor."

When steam was introduced into the smacks for the purpose of working the capstan, or dandy-wink, a donkey-boiler was installed, usually just outside the cabin, from which it was separated only by a wooden partition, at one end of which was a door leading to the engine compartment. This door was mostly open, so that the hot air would come through into the cabin even on a blazing

summer day. Yet in such a den the little apprentice, who was cook and general drudge, would spend most of his time, attending to his glowing stove with the huge kettle on top with its constant supply of smacksman's tea. There was this to be said for the cook-steward—that his dishing and waiting duties were simple. He merely took the tin dish of beef, vegetables, fish, or whatever might be in preparation, and put it on the floor or the table, and the crew helped themselves, pronging with their own forks or, more often, helping themselves with their fingers. If a cabin had a table, it was hinged, so that the sides could be quickly let down and provide a space between the table and the lockers. When seated on the lockers, the flaps were raised and the meal proceeded.

Sometimes these little cabins were crowded to suffocation. These would be on notable occasions such as "mutton parties," of which I attended one. We had towed a leg of mutton astern for three days, to keep it fresh, and on joining the fleet the joint was cooked, with an enormous supply of vegetables. A number of friendly skippers were bidden to the feast, and the cabin became a mass of huge human bulks. The mutton turned like magic to a bone, which was picked clean by a favoured guest who had it in his great hands; the beer vanished, vast quantities of tea disappeared, and the atmosphere turned to the density of a London fog with tobacco smoke. For some time I could not understand a solemn silence which possessed the company, broken only by low but earnest ejaculations. At last I discovered that the men were gambling for cabbages.

Very rarely, when the weather was exceptionally fine

and calm, and trawling was impossible because there was no wind, the cabins would be abandoned and the decks used for a kind of grand reception, for perhaps as many as a score of smacks would be lashed together, so that it was easy to step from one to the other.

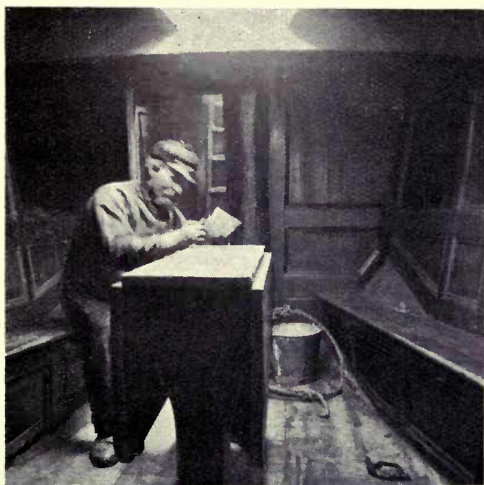
There were no sanitary arrangements whatever in the sailing smacks, whose domestic economy was throughout of the most primitive description. They were as different from the splendid latest types of steam-trawlers as was the old emigrant ship from the *Olympic*. The North Sea skipper of to-day has his own cabin and may, if he pleases, live in isolated splendour; the general cabin is a fine, well-ventilated room of the most comfortable sort, and there is every facility for cooking and serving good and abundant food. Excellent sanitary provision is made, and some particularly well-appointed steam-trawlers have bathrooms. I have seen two or three of them, but they were used for the storage of boots and clothing. The average North Sea man gets quite enough of the water on the outside of his vessel.

The marvel is that in past days men and boys could be found to undertake the work, and probably the smacks could never have been provided with crews if it had not been for Boards of Guardians and reformatories. Legions of miserable children have been sentenced to the Dogger, to perish there, or become men and heroes. Those who survived and remained did at least get inured to sufferings and hardships, and provided the finest race of seafarers in the world—and that they remain to this day.

I think that there is no officer or man in the Royal Navy, or the merchant service, accustomed to big ships and change of scene and climate, who will not readily



THE CABIN OF AN OLD SMACK, SHOWING THE LADDER DOWN WHICH MEN TUMBLED WHEN THE WARNING SHOUT AROSE OF "WATER'S COMIN'!"



THE INTERIOR OF THE CABIN, SHOWING A TABLE WITH FOLDING SIDES, LOCKERS, AND THE BUNKS ABOVE THEM.



TO THE
ASSEMBLY

say, as many have said to me, of trawlers, "Ah! That *is* going to sea!" And they as readily admit or confess that if all going to sea meant the same incessant toil and discomfort there would be remarkably few sailors. Perhaps the only parallel to the strenuous life of North Sea men is to be found in the adventurous seekers of the Poles; yet even these intrepid explorers are inspired with the spirit of adventure and the prospect of great rewards, to say nothing of an assured fame and profit on return to public life.

One of the worst features of the old sailing days was the apprenticeship system, which had many elements of inhumanity and barbarism in it. Grimsby became notorious for the number of unhappy little fellows who were sent to prison rather than return to a life of slavery and degradation on the Dogger, and so common became the system of disobeying orders that on an average, even so recently as twenty years ago, two hundred fishing apprentices were committed to gaol at Grimsby alone, for periods varying from a week to a month. Many of the boys were born and reared in the workhouse, and only occasionally, when some infamy had been perpetrated on the North Sea grounds, had the public any means of learning what the lads suffered. They were little better than slaves, with none of the slave's enjoyments and pleasures. They were at the beck and call of any man, brute or otherwise, and so hard and incessant was the labour, so dull and uninviting was the life in many cases, that a single trip to the Dogger was enough for even a young and robust lifetime.

Once ashore, nothing would induce many of the apprentices to go back to sea. There was no alterna-

tive ; they were taken before the magistrates, and sent to gaol. Time after time the boys declared in the police courts that they would rather go to hard labour than back to sea—and to prison they were committed. It was publicly and frequently declared that under the old sailing and apprenticeship system boys spent more time in gaol than on board their masters' smacks. Yet there were considerable possibilities of success, as many prosperous men to-day have proved.

In the old sailing days the smacksmen lived well, but in a very rough manner. The food was spoiled in the cooking, which was usually done by lads who had not been long at sea, and had not been trained in any way. On my first trip to the Dogger I heard of a youth who had run away from home and joined a smack. He was placed in charge of the galley, and as a first effort turned out a pudding. The crew ate it, but requested the cook, as a favour, to make the next with baking-powder. A faithful pledge was given that the instruction should be carried out to the letter. The boy did not know much about the work, and there was no one on board competent to teach him. He depended on his own resources and inventiveness. He boiled the pudding—and, just before serving it, scattered a handful of the powder on the top. The criticisms of the diners were repeated to me ; but they cannot be recorded here.

I asked the skipper of the *Aurania* to give me particulars of the victualling of his smack for her eight weeks' trip, and he did so. The *Aurania* carried four men and two boys—for whose sustenance she had on board : biscuits, $1\frac{1}{2}$ cwt. ; flour, 20 st. ; cheese, 25 lb. ; beef, 200 lb. ; a leg of mutton ; 4 hams ; tea, 6 lb. ;

cocoa, 28 lb. ; treacle, 28 lb. ; currants, 8 lb. ; raisins, 8 lb. ; lard, 40 lb. ; mustard, 4 lb. ; pepper, $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. ; salt, 3 st. ; baking-powder, 4 lb. ; carraway seeds, 1 lb. ; condensed milk, 16 tins ; relish, 12 bottles ; cabbages, 20 ; a bunch of rhubarb ; and three tanks of fresh water. There were also six dozen bottles of beer on board, many of which were emptied—opened with a pair of forks—before we were out of sight of land, and only two or three of which were untouched by the time we joined our fleet off Heligoland. Our stock of crockery and cutlery was neither large nor varied. The cutlery consisted of a few knives and forks and a teaspoon. The teaspoon was kept in the medicine-chest, but was produced for my special use.

I tried, without success, to show that the proper way to make tea was not to put a handful into an enormous kettle which was constantly on the fire, and from which the old leaves were not removed until the kettle was full to the lid—and then only in sufficient quantity to make room for a fresh supply of dry leaves. Long custom had established the art of brewing tea—and on the Dogger the smacksman likes liquid with bite and body in it—and I did not persuade the boy to deviate. He was a fine little fellow, full of talk and hope for the future and the days when he would have a smack of his own and be a great man. I listened and talked also, watching him knead some dough with which he designed to produce a North Sea delicacy called “busters.” These were depressing discs of unleavened bread, with sinister shadows, arising partly from the cook’s hands and partly from the smack’s chronic uncleanness.

We seated ourselves on the cabin floor and assailed

the kettle and the victuals. The time came when the "busters" were produced; but I let them pass. With all possible respect and goodwill towards the cook, who, poor little fellow, hovered near, with folded bare arms and exposed chest, to see the crowning glory of his toil, I could not grapple with them—for I had seen them made.

In these days, if my young friend of the Grimsby smack is still alive and following the calling of the Dogger, he must be a brawny man, probably master of a steam-trawler. If so, he has witnessed one of the most amazing of modern revolutions—the change from sail to steam in fishing—and as he dines in his comfortable cabin he must call to mind the crude days of wood and canvas, and recall, as he might conjure up a dream, the placid days off Heligoland, when, both of us younger by many years than we are to-day, we looked at the hull-like lump of land rising from the North Sea, and in our different ways pictured the paths before us. At that time Heligoland was a British possession, soon to be given to a foreign power and fortified, and to cease to be a place where British North Sea men, who were by way of being roystering blades, could land and spend the hours when calms made trawling impossible and brought much devilment into being.

And the great, bluff, burly skipper—the man who could not either read or write, but who knew his Dogger as well as the Biblical student knows the Scriptures. What of him? I wonder if his gloomy forecast that the Dogger, which had held him so long, would keep him, has been realised; or if that other foreboding has come to pass—that when he was incapable of going to sea he

would have to find refuge in the union. It is something to know that in these days a man who has toiled may, at the end of his labour, get at least a pittance from the country in the way of pension.

The spirit of devilment dies hard in North Sea men, and, even in these prosaic days of steam-fishing, some of them are guilty of acts of almost incredible folly and recklessness. Not long ago, on an October day, in Foxe Bay, Iceland, the crew of the *Balmoral Castle*, a steam-trawler, were amazed to see the *St. Paul*, another trawler, bearing down towards them in a manner that made collision seem inevitable. The *Balmoral Castle* was steered out of the way of the *St. Paul*, which, however, came on again to what proved a deliberate attempt to run her down. Twice, by skilful manœuvring, the threatened craft was saved; but for the third time the *St. Paul* tried to ram her—and succeeded. As the *St. Paul* crashed into her victim, her skipper tumbled out of her wheelhouse and shouted, "Now, laugh!" There was little indeed to laugh about, for both the steamboats were so badly damaged that they had to return to port for repairs. The skipper of the *St. Paul* admitted the facts at the Board of Trade inquiry, nor did he deny them when he was charged at the Hull police court with endangering the lives of both the crews by wilfully running his ship into the other. All he could do was to plead that he was mad drunk at the time of the outrage, and that he did not remember anything about it. The offence was a serious and uncommon one, and had to be met with severe punishment. This was inflicted by the stipendiary magistrate, who sentenced the skipper of the *St. Paul* to six months' hard labour.

Let me give a story of the brighter side of the old sailing days, insomuch as that aspect concerns the method of enjoyment which was afforded by the *coper*. It is a tale told to me by a friendly skipper.

“So you saw a *coper*, did you, when you were lookin’ for the fleet? Well, he still prowls about the Nowth Sea, but he steers wide o’ the fleets, an’ only does business wi’ the single-boaters. He never shows his nose amongst the fleeters—daren’t do it; an’ he isn’t wanted. Many’s the smart smack ’at’s been lost through him, many the home ’at’s been ruined; an’ many the life ’at’s been lost. Time after time I’ve spent my last penny on board of the old Dutchman, an’ when we’ve had no money left, I’ve seen boatloads o’ gear ferried to him from the smacks to swop for drink. He did a roarin’ trade in the old sailin’ days, when for days together smacks couldn’t fish because there wasn’t any wind. An’ when time ’angs ’eavy you get the itch for mischief.

“It isn’t very many years since I was fleetin’ off the Dutch coast. The *coper* had been very busy amongst us, for we could do nothing, owin’ to the weather, but drink, drink, drink. Suddenly some of us determined to go ashore for a spree, so we rigged up the smack’s mizzen-tops’l on an oar an’ got over the three miles that lay between us an’ a Dutch island. There were ten of us when we started, an’ we went steadily at it day an’ night till we had proper skinsful, I can tell you. Then, somehow, there were only two of us left. We hadn’t had a bite to eat—it was sup, sup, sup all the time—an’ we were ravenous. But it was night, an’ there were no places open. A trifle like that didn’t count, so we went explorin’, an’, seein’ a nice little cottage with a big tree growin’

up alongside an' overhangin' a bedroom window, we swarmed up the trunk. I clambered on a branch that touched the window an' tumbled in. Then you might have thought the end of all things had come, for there were two women asleep in the place, one old an' t'other young. An' they both rushed to the window an' raised squalls 'at fetched out all the police an' people in the place. I can't tell you how it happened, but my pal had disappeared an' I was left all alone to face it out as best I could.

"Well, they talked a lot an' shouted a lot. I told 'em my tale an' they told me theirs, but they talked foreign, so we couldn't understand one another. However, there was no mistakin' what they meant, especially as they began firin' pistols, an' makin' it plain 'at if I didn't get back to my boat it 'ud be all the worse for me. So I cleared out as far as the beach, an' there I saw my pal with his feet in the flood-tide an' a' empty spirit-bottle clasped in each hand, sleepin' calmly on the sand, an' just within an ace o' bein' drowned—not that he'd ha' cared, for he wasn't in a state to care for anything. I hauled him high an' dry an' then left him an' slipped away to try an' get some breakfast. I hadn't touched food for three days an' three nights, an' when a man's like that he doesn't care even for police with pistols.

"I wandered about an' wandered about till I came to a likely lookin' little restaurant. I slipped in, an' findin' only one or two people lookin' after the place, I began to tell 'em what I wanted. What wi' their fright an' their botherin' foreign lingo, I couldn't make 'em understand, so I fell back on signs, an' that worked 'em. But the worst o' them foreign breakfasts is 'at they don't

satisfy you—what's rolls an' coffee for a man to start the day on? However, I drank their coffee an' ran through their rolls in a way 'at amazed 'em, an' left 'em without any for anybody else. I wasn't satisfied, but there was nothing more to eat, so I had to stop.

“Now, you must understand 'at I hadn't a coin of any sort in my pocket—it had all gone in drink; but the way I looked at it was 'at they'd got my money amongst 'em somewhere, and I hadn't got vally for it, so I wasn't troubled much on that point. However, they'd been very kind, an' when I clearly saw 'at they wouldn't hear o' bein' paid, an' 'at they begged me, in their foreign way, not to mention it, I made a big pretence o' feelin' in my pockets for the money. At last I thanked 'em very kindly and left 'em, an' they came down to the beach to see us both off, an' gave a very willin' shove to the boat when we got her afloat again. The police had a wonderful lot to say, an' we could plainly see 'at if we went back we shouldn't be welcomed. The fleet had gone, becoss a breeze had sprung up; but we came across a single-boater, an' he kept us aboard till we picked our own smack up again.

“Well, there you are. There's a little yarn o' the way we used to amuse ourselves in the old days—an' not so very long ago, mind you—before the Mission drove the *coper* off the Dogger an' provided beautiful ships where we can get tobacco at cost price, an' where, when a man's ill, he can be looked after by a doctor an' pulled round without havin' to go home, an' ten to one losin' his berth.

“Why, it's only a few weeks since one o' the *coper's* skippers wrung his hands an' said 'at the Mission had

completely ruined him. 'Before it came,' he said, 'I could live without workin'. Now I'm forced to fish.'

Connected with the days of sail were many quaint expressions and sayings, some of which are still employed, but with lessening force and meaning. Many are pure localisms and quite incomprehensible to dwellers outside the radius in which they are used. For example, there is the term "Wrangem," which, although fully understood by the fisherfolk of Scarborough, conveys no meaning to the stranger. "Wrangem" has been in use for nearly a century, and may have had its rise in the old custom of putting aside fish for drink, unknown to the men's wives who, on that robust coast, were quite as prompt to use their fists as their tongues when need arose. There is another and more romantic version of the origin of the word. In the old days there dwelt in Scarborough a skipper of renown called Wrangem, who was justly famed for the excellence of his liquors. With him the fishermen did serious business when they came in from the sea, and it was their custom to put certain fish aside, and say as they did so, "That'll do for Wrangem." By a simple process of exchange the fish was represented by full-bodied grog or other welcome refreshment. In course of time the word was applied to all offal fish which was claimed, as it used to be claimed, by apprentices, and also for what the men caught by hook while the herring-boats were riding at their nets, this fish being free from auction dues.

It was a common enough sight, until quite lately, on the north-east coast to see men come ashore from steam and sailing vessels carrying considerable quantities

of fish, which came under the heading of "Wrangems" or "stocker," which is another term for perquisites. I have repeatedly seen men and boys bearing these trophies, and many an agreeable little bargain has been struck between the conveyers of the fish and householders ashore. The custom, however, is almost a thing of the past. Owners find the cost of running modern trawlers so heavy that they cannot afford to allow any fish to be removed from their vessels except for legitimate and regular sale in the market. The easy-going ways of the past are vanishing, or have gone with the lazy brown sails and creaking spars; many a quiet, old-world haven has been converted into a bustling fish port, and the observer may, in some of these places, witness sights and hear language which are not what one expects to come across in such romantic neighbourhoods. In one of the quaintest of north-east coast havens I have heard a blustering bully of an overseer in a fish-market use expressions which would have caused his expulsion from Billingsgate. The words were directed, too, to men who were accustomed to put off in their cobbles in bad weather, and who would be expected to retaliate at once on such a person. Their fathers, contemporaries of Wrangem, would have given him an early opportunity of cooling himself in the harbour.

I am sorry to have to say that on many recent visits to the east coast I have been struck by the astonishing change that has come over some of the longshore men, not the deep-sea fishers. This summer, in some of the most inaccessible places, I talked with, and saw, many men and boys who a few years ago would have been



Burning off Smacks

“BURNING OFF” SMACKS.



fishing or tumbling about in cobles, but who were content to act the part of degenerated pier-rats and hawk picture post cards and hover round promiscuously in the hope of being rewarded for doing nothing in particular. The finest type of fisherman is undoubtedly the class of man and boy who goes fleeting and on the long voyages such as Iceland and the White Sea. The inshore fisher is being spoilt and softened by too much contact with the holiday-maker and loafer, well-dressed and otherwise. Quite lately one of the hard, fine old school of fishermen declared bitterly to me that it was almost impossible to get a mate to go to sea with him, if the weather was at all unfavourable. "Yet it's in bad weather that I can do best and am almost sure to do well," he added. "Look at this beach. It swarms with young fellows who ought to be off fishing; but that doesn't suit their ticket. They'd rather hang about here and take trippers off in their cobles. I wouldn't let any man under fifty do soft work of that sort. The truth is, a lot of the old deep-sea men have been spoilt by visitors, and those that ought to be deep-sea men are just blow-about."

Until a recent period there was maintained at some of the north-east ports, particularly those which are dangerous of entrance in bad weather, the old and striking custom of "burning off." This warning was to be seen at Scarborough when the old "platform" existed at the foot of Castle Hill, and before the new Marine Drive was finished. The "platform" was an old wooden shed with three small look-out windows commanding a view of the North Sea towards the south and east, and within the building pilots and fishermen

assembled in time of gales to watch for the coming of smacks to harbour, and the appearance of vessels which might need pilots or a tow. If the weather allowed a coble to get out, off a pilot would go, sometimes picking up a five-pound note for the trouble of telling a master his position or guiding him to a neighbouring port; or a steam-trawler would thrash out and get hold of the lame duck. The "platform" was the rendezvous of the old-time smacksmen—and there were quaint neighbouring inns to which they could withdraw, and in whose cosy corners, over glasses of hot grog, they could re-spin many a North Sea yarn.

The "burning off" took place when it was considered unsafe for a smack to enter the harbour, owing to the dangerous sea running. A great iron brazier was placed on the top of the outer pier, and in it a big fire made of wood. When the flames and smoke of this device were seen a skipper knew that he was officially forbidden to attempt to enter the harbour. Often enough a smack would be kept dodging about in the heavy sea for several tides. I remember seeing one, in a winter gale, that was burnt off for five successive tides, and for sixty hours she was wallowing and thrashing about within a stone's throw of refuge, yet forbidden to try and get the shelter of the harbour. Occasionally a reckless or worn-out skipper defied the warning, and made a dash for port. He usually succeeded in entering safely. There is a famous tale of one of the old-world skippers who saw the signal burning, and defied it. He swore that he would get into harbour, warning or no warning, and he made a desperate dash for it. Fortune favoured his reckless-

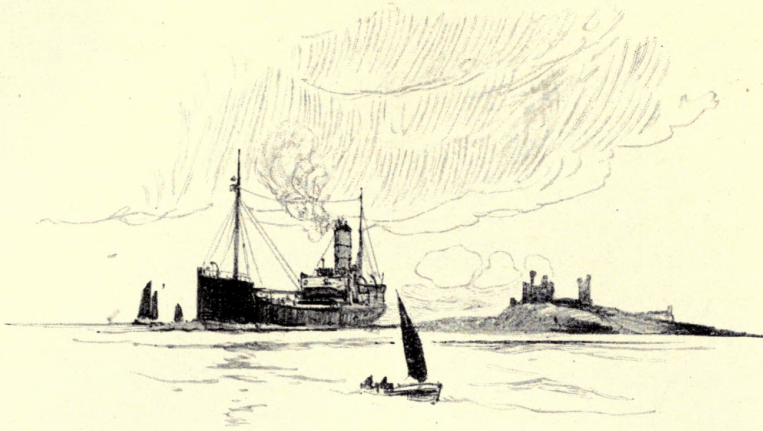
ness, but in an unexpected and amazing way, for an enormous sea lifted up his smack bodily and carried her safely over the outer pier and dumped her down in harbour. They called the skipper Mad Isaac, and his wonderful achievement was numbered with the thrilling records of the old frequenters of the "platform."

Not far from the "platform" was, and is, a bend or elbow in the pier, which is called John Donkin's Bight. John was a comrade fit for Mad Isaac. He was a fearnought who fought his way out of harbour in his coble when no other man would venture; and, seeking the shelter of the bend, he would lie in wait for pilotage or salvage. So it happened that the spot became known as John Donkin's Bight, and that is the name by which old North Sea men still speak of it.

There are so many different classes of workers on the North Sea that these peculiarities in describing fish and things are naturally only understood by the men who are specially associated with them, just as "flithers" is a word peculiar to the Yorkshire coast—and certain parts at that—or "buckfanning" to a particular locality in that county. "Flithers" is another term for the limpets which are gathered on the cliffs by buxom women, for use as bait by husbands, or brothers, sons or sweethearts. I suppose the day is not very far distant when you cannot wander down the shore or on the cliffs in winter and watch these fine specimens of womanhood, these "flithers women," plying their simple calling, having walked miles with their empty baskets, and having to walk miles more when the baskets are full. These are the wives,

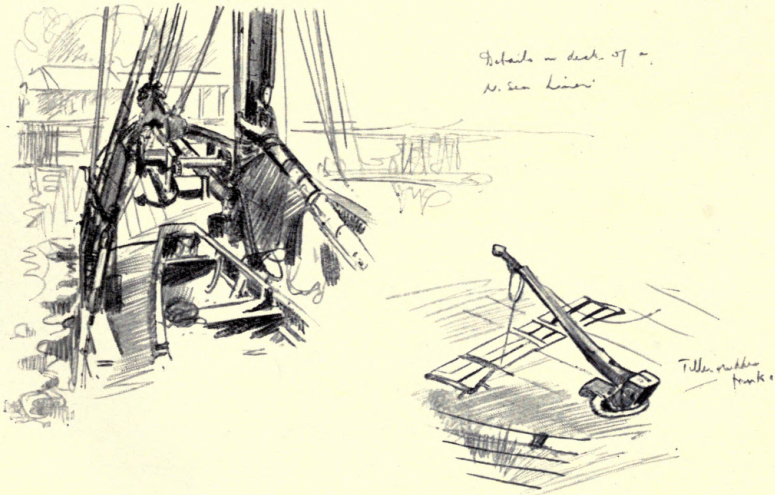
mothers, and daughters who have so often launched the lifeboats or cibles on the east coast when their menfolk have been in peril, and have at times pulled out and done as Grace Darling did before them. It is mostly the womenfolk of the inshore fishermen who are seen at work of this description—the men who go out for the night or a few days. The wife and sister, daughter and sweetheart of the deep-sea fisherman, whose life is mostly spent in fleeting, sees him but seldom, and for only a few days in the year.

If I ventured on a prophecy, which I think is likely to be fulfilled with regard to North Sea fishing, it is that before long the fleeting system will be either abolished or completely reformed. With so many growing demands on the part of the employed, it is unlikely that men will be found who are willing to remain at sea, cut off from home and family, for such protracted periods. Even as I write, a fishermen's trade union is being formed at North Shields. It is a scheme for the labour organisation of the Tyne fishermen; and all the east coast fishermen are being organised. Industrial combinations are quick to detect or suspect grounds for grievance, and it will be deeply interesting to watch the development of this movement which originated on the mighty Tyne.



Coaster off Dunstanburgh Castle.

A COASTER OFF DUNSTANBURGH CASTLE.



*Details on deck of a
N. Sea Liner.*

*Tiller and
rudder
frame.*

A NORTH SEA LINER'S BOW AND TILLER.



CHAPTER VII

PRIME AND OFFAL

ALL the fishes that are trawled from North Sea waters are divided into two great classes—prime and offal. The prime is composed of the upper ranks of fishes, and the vast lower orders constitute the offal. Naturally enough, the prime goes to the high and rich community ashore, and the offal to the people. The exception to this rule is found mostly on the North Sea, where the fisherman may, if he is so disposed, regale himself with a sole or turbot, the primest of the prime; but he seldom does so, for he prefers to send the best and most valuable of his catches to market. He is content with the inferior sorts; but even these, when cooked as North Sea men can cook them, are delicacies such as are seldom found on inland tables. Yet fish can be too fresh, and there are species which are tough and rather unpalatable when taken straight from the net to the galley. These, like freshly killed beef, are better for twenty-four hours' keeping.

Soles come easily first amongst the prime. Nothing gladdens the heart of the fisherman more than a good haul of this aristocrat of the deep, for, however erratic the market may be, there is always a certainty of profit on the catch. It seldom happens that the supply of sole

exceeds the demand, and there is not in connection with this fish that wholesale waste which has to be recorded when there is a glut of the inferior descriptions. Often enough the wholesale cost of sole at Billingsgate is 2s. or 2s. 6d. a pound, although it will be occasionally as low as 6d., the price being entirely dependent on the supply. Turbot, which comes next to sole in order of merit, will command as much as 1s. a pound wholesale in a good market. Brill, which so closely resembles turbot in many ways, realises almost the same prices as that lordly fish, and about the same as those which are paid for lemon sole and the most superior sorts of plaice.

The offal comprises many sorts of fish, most of which are familiar to housekeepers by name, while others are designated in a manner that would puzzle any one but an expert. Haddocks and halibut are known to all, especially the former; gurnets are not unfamiliar, and whiting, of course, is known to every caterer, and appears on many bills of fare; but few ordinary buyers would venture on witches, megrims, latchets, skate, or roker. All these classes have a constant place in the Billingsgate list, while other fishes are dealt with which are not considered worth offering as regular "lines." Yet nothing is more surprising than the change which will sometimes take place, and has taken place, in the estimating of fish as an article of food. For example, skate, ray, and kindred fish are despised at many ports, even by the poorest classes, while, on the other side of the North Sea, skate almost ranks as prime. Haddock also is frequently looked at dubiously, largely because it is so cheap and plentiful, but, properly cooked and served, a choice haddock is a welcome dish at any table.

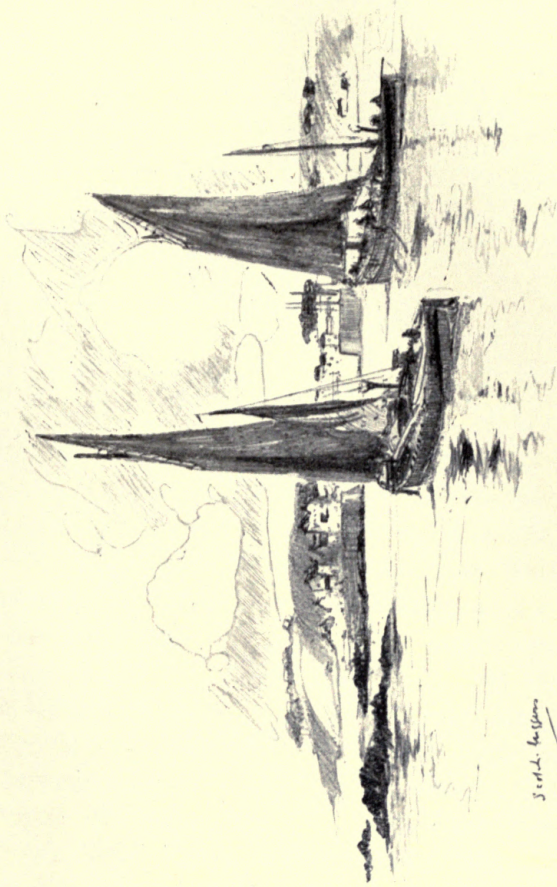
Time after time the markets are glutted with plaice and haddock, huge quantities of which are brought by British and foreign trawlers to Billingsgate, Grimsby, Hull, and Aberdeen, from Iceland and the White Sea. If the markets have been badly supplied owing to heavy weather in the North Sea, these trawlers from distant waters make enormous profits; but, if there is a big supply on hand, then the cargoes fetch infinitely less.

Looking casually at the excellent "Echoes of the Markets," in *The Fish Trades Gazette*, I find, under the Hull report for 25th May 1911, that heavy catches of Iceland and White Sea fish were still being landed, but that deliveries from the nearer grounds continued quite inadequate to meet the requirements of the trade, "and during the early part of the week the order business was practically suspended through the absolute failure of North Sea supplies. For some days Iceland and White Sea varieties have monopolised the market, and during the week-end values fell to rock-bottom level. . . . White Sea plaice was difficult to dispose of at any price. Monday's supplies consisted of three big catches of White Sea plaice, and five voyages from Iceland, the North Sea and nearer grounds being represented by one solitary boat." For the same week "substantial consignments of White Sea plaice met a slack sale at low figures" at Billingsgate; while on the Monday, at Grimsby, there was a huge supply from some eighty steamers, Iceland and Faroe fish making an immense show. There was a keen sale for haddocks; "soles, turbot, and brills were cheap enough in proportion, brills occasionally selling for more than turbot."

For winter months the reports naturally showed

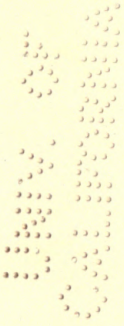
short supplies and high prices on many occasions. At Aberdeen, in February, owing to continued stormy weather and scarcity of fish on certain areas, supplies were short and prices advanced "until very high figures were reached." At all the east coast ports the state of business was the same; and Billingsgate on one day was without carriers, a single steamer finding her way to the market on another day, with a scanty cargo of 900 trunks — 36 tons — which she had managed to collect from her fleet. During that week "no calm weather was experienced" on the North Sea banks; there were continual gales, with mist and rain. A singular effect of the bad weather was that at Grimsby there was only a small rise in the noon tide, and for the first time in some years the port's traffic was suspended, vessels being unable either to enter or leave the docks. A score of trawlers were kept outside, many of whose skippers were anxious to land their catches that day, while about fifty were locked up in dock, although ready to go to sea. This was the first time such a state of things had arisen since the new deep lock was made. The failure of the tide caused a considerable loss to the trade, as well as great inconvenience. Another effect of the gale was the enormous rise in the value of haddocks, 5s. per stone being current at Billingsgate, while as much as 7s. was paid at Aberdeen.

Gloomy as that period seemed to be, yet it was succeeded by a time of remarkable prosperity on the markets — and all within a week, for after the bad weather "Wednesday's market (at Grimsby) was the best ever recorded at the port for a single day so far as deep-sea fish is concerned. Twelve Iceland trawlers,



Scotch herring-boats
(Herring-boats)

SCOTCH HERRING-BOATS ENTERING HARBOUR.



six from Faroe, and one from the White Sea, landed such enormous catches that the trade of the market overflowed on to almost every available adjoining space." There were also three dozen trawlers from home waters, and great though the accommodation is at Grimsby—the world's biggest fishing port—yet it was not equal to the extraordinary demand upon it. Competent judges estimated that the weight of the fish handled on that particular Wednesday—the last in February 1911—was nearly 1000 tons; while, for that and the two preceding days, it was calculated that the total weight was more than 2500 tons—a gigantic quantity. By way of contrast it may be stated that the record for Aberdeen was the aggregate of about 735 tons, landed during one day in April 1911.

Billingsgate cannot, of course, offer figures which compare with those for Grimsby. Most of the fish which is sold at Billingsgate is conveyed to that market by rail, the carriers from the North Sea fleets being comparatively few in number, and taking, as a rule, only a day's total catches. On the other hand, the vessels putting into Aberdeen, Hull, Grimsby, and the lesser ports are almost exclusively single-boaters, and many of these, coming from Iceland, the White Sea, and other distant fishing-grounds, have been absent from port three weeks or more, running out and home and trawling, so that their catches represent numerous shoots of the gear, unless there has been exceptional luck—and time after time the trawl may be hauled quite filled with fish. A very few such hauls and the trawler is homeward-bound.

Actual figures, taken at random, will show the pro-

portions of fish landed at Billingsgate, and the variations of the quantities. The figures are for days in the early months of 1911—

By sea. Tons.	By rail. Tons.	Total.
120	540	660
360	420	780
200	545	745
172	500	672
280	438	718
190	525	715
60	468	528
244	432	676
174	552	726
204	510	714

The totals for ten days are 2004 tons by sea and 4930 tons by rail, making a grand total of 6934 tons. The daily average of sea-borne fish was slightly over 200 tons and that of rail-borne nearly 500 tons, the daily average of both classes being 700 tons. An effort was made some years ago to develop and put on a firm basis the fish-market at Shadwell; but the scheme was not successful, and the deserted and forlorn buildings are a familiar sight to travellers up and down the Thames between the Tower and Greenwich.

A great difference has been made in the markets by the development of distant fisheries, particularly those of Iceland. Already the Icelandic region has been productive of numerous comfortable fortunes, many losses, and numberless adventures. The steam-trawler man in these days cannot tell what fate and fortune have in store for him, especially when he starts for the icy, lonely

regions of the Far North. Take the case of the Hull steam-trawler *Mackenzie*, of 93 tons and 75 horse-power. She left port at the end of 1910, and in December was lost off the coast of Iceland; but her crew of a dozen men, after excessive hardships, were got ashore by Icelanders, who bravely and skilfully rescued them by means of bladders to which ropes were fastened. A dozen wild, shaggy little ponies were secured, and on the backs of them the men made their way over the ice-clad country to Reykjavik, the capital, and afterwards returned home. They were lucky enough to escape with their lives. Compare their unhappy and profitless case with that of the Hull steam-trawler *Hercules*, which, in September 1904, put ashore one of the heaviest and most valuable catches ever landed at Grimsby. Her cargo included 500 boxes of Icelandic plaice and 400 kits of cod and haddock. The plaice was sold at 24s. a box, and the entire catch was valued at £700. The possibility of making such a haul as that is a great inducement to men to forsake the familiar Dogger and adjacent banks and steam long distances before shooting the trawl and starting to reap an almost monotonous harvest of prosperity.

But no business is more of a gamble than trawling. I have a letter written to me in the month of June from a skipper in one of the fleets. It shows what a miserable return goes to the trawlers for their hard work when the supplies of fish are greater than the demand.

"Markets are fearfully low just now," he wrote. "For our first two boardings" (he had just rejoined his fleet) "we made £1, 17s. 3d. and £4, 18s. 5d. for 106 boxes; out of that 12s. 6d. came to the share of

the crew. We all get a little out of that. We are hoping the prices will go up. We have thrown away a lot of small haddocks since we heard how markets are. The whole fleet have been shovelling overboard the small haddocks."

"Plenty of fish, and no money," he says, in another letter; "but we hope prices will soon pull up a little."

This skipper told me, both by word of mouth and pen, many little tragedies of the fishing-banks, and almost casually in one of his friendly communications I find this: "A fisherman went to sea the week before last, leaving his wife well. He came back in ten days, and she was in her grave. He left her well and hearty. Poor beggar! I did feel for him. He sold up his home and has cleared out of Grimsby. And so the world goes on." The skipper was ashore for a brief spell when he wrote that, and he finished by saying, "I am just going to take my craft out for a sail along the country lanes." How he loved to dwell, when talking on the Dogger, on the memory of those rare Sunday strolls with the wife whom he so seldom saw!

I have also kept particulars of the results of a day's fishing by one of the old sailing fleets of about 130 smacks. The catches totalled 2865 boxes of fish. With the exception of 139 boxes of "prime"—turbot and soles—all the boxes contained "offal"—haddocks and such-like inferior fish. Prime always commands a good price, but the fishermen are often heavy losers when offal is plentiful, for while this class of fish sometimes only fetches 1s., or even 6d., a box in the market, the cost of conveyance thither is 2s. 2d. per box.

The day's fishing mentioned was very good, and



UNLOADING HERRINGS FROM A "MULE."



GUTTING HERRINGS FOR EXPORT.



the smacksmen would not be out of pocket—although they would not be much in—for I noticed that the offal was selling at Billingsgate for 3s. 6d. a box, meaning that the fishermen would make 1s. 4d. per box on fish of that kind.

I had an opportunity on board the carrier—the *Pelican*—of analysing the returns of fish, and from these I noticed that the largest number of boxes sent by a single smack was sixty, while the smallest was one. Almost every other number between these two was included in the other returns. A box of “prime” will fetch on an average £5; but the price varies according to the market. The boxes contain about seven stones each when packed in the ordinary manner; but they will hold an additional stone.

The cod, which represents in itself a gigantic North Sea industry, ranks as offal. Vast quantities of this species of fish are caught by trawl and line, and there are always heavy dealings in both live and dead cod for the purposes of immediate consumption and drying and curing for export. For two hundred years at least the cod has received special attention from fishermen, and even in the crude early days of harvesting the sea special and ingenious efforts were made to devise means of getting cod on the market in the best condition. There is only one way of doing that, and it is to keep the fish alive as long as possible. What is known as live cod fetches a much bigger price on the market than what is technically called dead cod, although, as a matter of fact, both creatures are carcasses. The dead cod is the fish which has been hauled and cleaned and packed and sent to market in the usual way; the live cod is the fish

which has been kept alive and killed when wanted. To make this latter state of things possible there came into being two centuries ago the special kind of craft called welled smacks. They were first tried at Harwich in 1712, the idea, apparently, having been taken from the Dutch. These vessels were specially constructed for the purpose of keeping alive the fish that had been caught. The well was actually part of the vessel, the midship section, the sides of the smack being perforated with holes which enabled a constant supply of sea water to circulate in the well without endangering the safety of the vessel. A hatchway on deck gave admission to the well, into which the living fish, when caught by hooks, were thrown.

It was found that cod, being big, strong fish, and little damaged because of their gluttonous attempts to raven the hook as well as the bait, were particularly well adapted for preservation by this ingenious, if somewhat barbarous and primitive, method, and experience showed that in a properly constructed well they would live for long periods and could be brought to port in fine healthy condition and killed and put straight on to the market according to requirements. Of course, there were many casualties, but, owing to the constant supervision of the creatures, there was comparatively little loss, because if the cod died they were promptly removed from the well, or, if not likely to survive, were taken out and killed and packed in ice. As the years went on, the special industry pursued by the welled deck vessels grew rapidly, and large numbers of living, frisky codfish were landed at some of the east coast ports, especially Grimsby.

When a welled smack arrived a remarkable and

interesting performance was gone through. By using specially constructed landing-nets men removed the cod from their floating prisons and put them into what were known as cod-chests. These were boxes 7 ft. long, 2 ft. deep, and 4 ft. wide, the construction being very much like the fish-trunk of to-day. The top of the box was completely planked over, although in the middle there was an opening, provided with a lid, into which the fish were placed. As the bottom and sides of the chest were formed of planks with spaces between them, the chests naturally floated on the surface of the dock. Through the opening in the top the fish were emptied from the landing-net, and nearly a hundred small-sized cod and about forty large fish could be kept in one of the chests for two weeks without going off in quality. It was quite usual to have three hundred or four hundred of these cod-chests in Grimsby dock at the same time, and they would contain anything up to twenty thousand live fish.

With such a system as this it was not difficult to keep the market more or less adequately supplied with cod, just as butchers furnish the public with meat in proportion to the demand. The quantity of fish that was wanted for the market being known, the task of supplying it would begin, and men would fall on the cod-chests and produce and prepare the fish for market. It was not a question of getting the creature out and letting it die in the ordinary way, but a matter of expediency, humanity, and profit. The fish were promptly taken out of the cod-chests and as promptly killed. To each end of the chest was attached a rope or chain handle so that the big box could be easily dealt with. A chest was

brought alongside an old hulk specially kept for the purpose and moored near the market-place. Tackles having been hooked to the handles of the chest, it was hoisted sufficiently clear of the dock to allow the box to drain, and the cover having been removed, a man stood in the middle of the chest and, seizing the fish by the head and tail, took them out and threw them on to the hulk's deck. It was a lively and exciting performance, for a big live fish of any sort is no easy thing to handle when taken from the water. As soon as the floundering cod thudded and flapped on the deck of the hulk it was annexed by the experienced executioner, whose sole weapon was a short club, and whose only power was an iron grip and stout muscle. He seized the cod just behind the head, held the fish firmly to the deck, and in a second or two killed it with one or two heavy blows on the nose. A big heap of fish formed rapidly, and this was as quickly taken ashore and placed in the waiting railway-trucks for conveyance to Billingsgate. The fish were not put in boxes, but straight into the truck, which would hold about two hundred and fifty good-sized fish and a much larger number of smaller cod. By the adoption of this system of catching, keeping, and killing the cod when wanted, it was found possible to get the fish to Billingsgate in perfectly fresh condition, and put the cod on the market in a state which invariably enabled the dealers to get good prices for their commodity.

One of the most important items in the expenses of a cod-smack was the bait ; in fact, so considerable was it that it exceeded the wear and tear of sails and rigging. In long lining by codmen only one sort of bait was used,

and that was whelks, or buckies, as the Scotch people call them. Long experience showed not only that the cod greatly favoured this particular shellfish, but also that the whelks were tough enough to keep to the hooks. So great was the demand for whelks that the collection of them was an established business giving employment to a large number of small boats and people. Trawlers themselves would from time to time be able to supply considerable quantities of whelks, but frequently the supply would run short and the codmen suffer proportionately. The fondness of many of the poorer classes in the country for the shellfish would also interfere considerably with the supply available for bait.

Very great quantities of whelks were needed by codmen for each voyage. In the height of the season one vessel would take to sea with her forty wash of whelks, a wash being equal to twenty-one quarts. More than eight hundred quarts of whelks, therefore, would be needed as bait, and the breaking of the shells, extraction of the little animals, and hooking them was in itself a protracted and laborious business. Great care was taken to keep the whelks in good condition. They were placed in net-bags and kept alive in the smack's well until they were required for use. With attractive bait like this, enormous numbers of cod were caught by the liners.

Frank Buckland recorded, in his genial and careful manner, a talk he had with a North Sea skipper at Grimsby, apparently in the early Seventies. His informant had been master of the *Hurricane*, a fine smack, and he had knocked about the Dogger and other banks for two-and-forty years. The catch of one

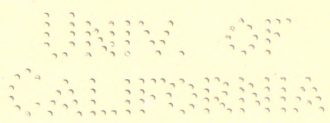
trawler for a voyage of eleven days he gave as follows : seventy kid of haddocks (2 cwt. in each kid); five score of turbot; forty boxes of plaice; two boxes of soles; twelve score of cod; and four very large sturgeons. "I have known another vessel bring in as much as one hundred and ten kid of haddock," the skipper added; "but she was gone a few days longer. We pack fish and ice together. We never use the same ice twice, and ice is often very expensive. It costs from £3 to £6 every voyage." Buckland was greatly interested in the Grimsby cod-chests, which were sometimes so thick that the water in the dock could be scarcely seen, and often enough men and boys would walk about on the tops of them and jump from one to the other. A box was hauled up for inspection, and, on the lid being opened, Buckland found a "solid mass of living cod, all struggling and gaping with their immense mouths. . . . In another of these boxes there was a large number of great halibuts. I had never seen a live halibut before. He is a curious-looking fellow, one side brown, the other a creamy white. The cod will live in the boxes about eight weeks; they have no food given them. The halibuts will also live from eight to nine weeks. A cod weighing 50 lb. is considered to be a large fish. . . . A 70-lb. cod is the largest ever known."

Buckland described a remarkable sight he saw while walking round the dock. He noticed some men hauling at a rope which was evidently made fast to something very heavy. When this body came to the surface he was astonished to find that it consisted of a solid mass of live cod, each fish being tied by the tail to a rope.



*Single boats
Iceland*

AN ICELANDER.



When the cod were in the water they spread themselves out in a circle, looking like a large cartwheel without the tire, only, the spokes were much more numerous. When the cod were hauled up into the air they looked like a rope of gigantic onions, and the cods' tails seemed very sore and much lacerated by the string which fastened them to the rope. Rightly enough, Buckland thought that this practice was very cruel.

These welled smacks cost considerably more than the ordinary trawlers, and their maintenance, too, involved a heavier expenditure. It may be remarked that the ordinary type of fishing-vessel was called "dry-bottomed," signifying that they had no well. As a rule, a cod-smack carried nine or eleven hands, about half of whom were apprentices of varying ages. In the case of these vessels only the skipper was paid on the share principle, although that principle became general with trawlers. The skipper of a codman received nine per cent. of the proceeds of the voyage, the rest of the hands being paid weekly wages. The mate received twenty-four shillings, and the men twenty-two shillings each, while the apprentices were paid from five pounds to twelve pounds yearly according to their length of services. In addition to the wages the owner found provision for all hands, nothing being deducted for food from the wages. This, of course, made a considerable difference to the fishermen, especially those who were unmarried and who found it necessary to pay for lodgings only when they were ashore. While in no respect lavish or even liberal, the wages, taken in conjunction with the food and the floating home, such as it was, at least compared favourably with the earnings of ordinary working-

people on land. At the same time the fishermen earned far less than the wages paid to miners and other men following dangerous or hazardous employment ashore.

There is one particular specimen of offal which infests the North Sea grounds, in common with other fishing areas around the coasts, and this is the dogfish. Ingenious attempts have been made to turn his carcase to some useful and profitable purpose; but so far without success. As an article of food he is despised, perhaps unjustly, and, with the exception of a few localities, he has no commercial value. The only satisfaction the fisherman can get out of association with him is to destroy him ruthlessly whenever the chance to do so comes his way. No mercy is ever shown to the animal, and when once he is on the deck of a fishing-craft of any sort he is doomed.

The cannibalism of the dogfish was markedly proved in the case of a codman which returned to port from the North Sea. The vessel's crew had more than six score cod on the lines, but only six were secured alive. As to the rest, the smack returned to harbour with her rigging decorated with their skeletons. The "dogs" had got the flesh. The dogfish and the cod will devour their own tribes as unconcernedly as they will raven any small fry that happens to be handy. Often enough, on being opened, a cod will be found to have swallowed half a dozen or more herrings. The voracity of this fish makes it easy to hook.

The dogfish is the shark of the North Sea, the past and present foe of all fishermen. He wages incessant war with nets and their catches; he never shows mercy, and never gets it. He is a game fish, and usually dies

fighting. He can do incalculable mischief to drift-nets and make vast numbers of herring and small fry utterly unfit for market, because he seems to kill and mangle for the mere joy of murder and the lust of maul. He is voracious and ferocious, and when he is hauled in the trawl at midnight it is needful to turn aside for settlement with him, for he will bite through any limb to the bone, and will not let go. If he is a big fellow of, say, 6 ft., he cannot be very easily or readily dispatched. I have seen them, when on deck, leap and writhe even after many heavy blows have been struck on the head. If a piece of wood, a handspike, or a plank from a fish-trunk is held near the fierce animal he will grip it with his teeth and hold so firmly that he may be dragged about the deck for a long time until he is finally settled. When he is dead he is thrown overboard, where he makes a welcome meal for his brothers. Occasionally the fish are eaten by fishermen, and they are regularly dried in the Orkneys for winter food.

"We catch lots of dogfish in the trawl," an old Yarmouthman stated. "They are very tiresome. They prick our fingers in the dark, and we can't afford to pay boys to hold lanterns. It's the piped dog, with two scales on the back. We get the spotted dog in the summer."

The sinister reputation of the dogfish is not confined to the North Sea. The pilchard and the southern herring-fishing suffer heavily owing to the raids of dogfish, yet the conservative toilers of the Channel, who might turn the enemy to profitable advantage, insist upon calling him "dogfish," instead of "flake." "Dogfish," as Mr. H. G. Murdoch pointed out at a meeting

of the Plymouth Fisheries Association, is not a marketable name. Mr. Murdoch strongly advised fishermen to bring to market all the "flake" they could catch, in order to sell it, and he made the interesting statement that some years ago he offered to send "flake" to Liverpool by his company's steamers, in lots of up to fifty tons, and to send it free of charge, but not a single pound was sent. On the other hand, at the same meeting, Mr. J. Jacobs declared that not only did the fishermen catch all the dogfish they could, but also used special bait; yet it was not worth while to trouble about this special fish, because the better sorts were so easily obtainable. Generally speaking, a profitable price cannot be obtained for dogfish. Ninety-five per cent. of this fish sent from Plymouth was sold for London fried-fish shops, and the rest was disposed of in south coast towns.

Prejudice is hard to conquer, and no objection is more difficult to overcome than that which relates to food. Dogfish is dogfish, if it is labelled honestly; but, described as flake and properly trimmed, it is a good and wholesome dish. Snails, appearing on a menu as such, would be unattractive as a course; but, written down as "escargots," and included in a French bill of fare, they become a delicacy to the epicure. In the same way catfish may be disguised and relished in proportion to the craft and cunning of the title; but, displayed for sale in all its native repulsiveness, it is not likely to find a buyer. In some of the coast towns, where great numbers of catfish are landed, the animal would not be thought of for a moment; but, with the hideous head cut off and the foul-looking hide removed, the firm white flesh is

most attractive and finds a ready sale in centres where fishing is not an industry. Another marine animal of unattractive aspect, which in its unadorned condition has practically no market value, is the skate. This fish ranks as offal, and in some districts even the poorest people will not touch it, although in certain parts of foreign lands the flesh is greatly esteemed. Fishermen, as a rule, will not on any consideration eat the animal, and if the reasons they give for their refusals are correct, it is no cause for wonder that they will not consume it in any shape or form. In a restaurant for which the caterers are an important West End firm I saw on the bill of fare recently, "Skate, 6d." The price was reasonable for a fish-course; yet that very day, at Billingsgate, skate was being sold at sixpence a stone! Assuming that at the restaurant a portion of the fish weighed 4 oz., the retail selling price was fifty-six times that of the wholesale price! The same proportion prevails with respect to many other kinds of fish, especially the offal; but for the prime sorts there is not such a great difference. On behalf of a very large firm of caterers who buy enormous quantities of fish, it was stated in a law case not long ago that the average price paid for fish, wholesale, was less than a penny a pound.

In dealing with halibut, Buckland recorded that the week before he visited Grimsby a halibut was sold for £3, 12s. 6d., and that in February 1874 an immense halibut was brought to the London market. This fish was 6 ft. 3 in. long, 3 ft. 11 in. wide, and weighed nearly 2 cwt. About the same time he made an outline in linen of a huge skate which measured 6 ft. 10 in. long with the tail, and was 5 ft. 3 in. wide. I saw recently,

in Aberdeen fish-market, a skate which must have been as big as Buckland's, and for which, apparently, owing to the hot weather, there was no demand. I imagine that it was taken off to be used as manure.

Much greater halibut than that of which Buckland gave particulars have been landed. In May 1911 the Hull steam-trawler *Macfarlane* brought to Billingsgate a halibut weighing 700 lb., or more than 6 cwt. This monster fetched only 45s., or about $\frac{3}{4}$ d. per lb. At Aberdeen, in July following, there was landed the biggest halibut which was ever received in that port. This fish weighed 448 lb. gross, and nearly 400 lb. when gutted; it was 8 ft. long, with a girth of $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft. Still larger was a specimen which was brought from Iceland last year, this being $8\frac{1}{2}$ ft. long and weighing 33 st. When cut into three parts the middle slice weighed 13 st.

Some fishes are peculiar to certain localities, and so much is this the case that the very names by which the animals are known are not understood outside the neighbourhood, any more than the Yorkshire dialects are comprehended by Londoners. In the North of Scotland, for example, there are fishes known as "witches," or "witches," a term unused in southern places; "megrimms" are a complete mystery to many deep-sea fishermen—a mystery as great as is the "wine-drinker," an emperor of herrings, sometimes called the King Herring, which, when caught, gives rise to almost Druidical rites by the fishermen who secure it. This creature rarely comes to the nets, and is symbolic of luck if cast back at once into the sea. It appears to belong to the Lowestoft district, yet a man who was

born in that town, who lived there for nineteen years, and is engaged and has been long engaged in the fishing trade, told me that he had never even heard the name and did not understand the description. Many a North Sea man is at a loss to say what a "megrim" is; yet great numbers of this fish are regularly dealt with at Billingsgate.

The megrim, as a matter of fact, was described and dealt with by Yarrell, who says that its common name is the seal-fish, megrim being the Cornish name for the animal. The megrim was then supposed to be confined exclusively to the southern coast, between Weymouth and the Land's End. It seldom exceeded 4 or 5 in. in length. The colour of the fish was a uniform pale yellow-brown. Megrim is equivalent in meaning to smooth sole.

CHAPTER VIII

LORD OF THE FISHES

IN value and renown the herring takes an unassailable position as the lord of fishes. Joan of Arc is associated with that famous "Battle of the Herrings" which in the fifteenth century crowned the English victories over the armies of France. That combat, one of the outstanding features of the Hundred Years' War, took place at Roncray-St.-Denis on 12th February 1429. Sir John Fastolfe was convoying salted herrings for the English army before Orleans, when news reached him of the coming of a French force under the Bastard of Orleans—the Duc de Bourbon—and he entrenched himself at Roncray. The French attacked him, and were driven off with heavy loss, the Bastard being badly wounded. It was at that time, when Orleans had been forced by famine to propose surrender, that Joan, prompted, as she believed, by Divine inspiration, presented herself at the French Court and begged to be allowed to relieve the beleaguered city. She was given permission, and raised the siege triumphantly. She entered the city with supplies, and the English force withdrew; but, later, Joan was captured and burnt by the English at Rouen as a witch.

Barrelled herrings changed the destinies of the world

during the early years of the seventeenth century, when Holland, striving for world dominion, and likely to be crushed for want of funds, found in the vast herring-fisheries the means to raise money and pay her way. In those days men went just as mad over the possibilities of this fish as a source of wealth as they do now in relation to gold-mines. The fishery, indeed, was called the gold-mine of Holland, and there were not wanting in England enthusiastic but deluded people who believed that from the sea was to come, with ease, the riches that were needed to save a decaying England. For long years the famous "busses," or deep-sea boats of Holland, had been working the Dutch herring-fishery. The first long herring seine net was made at Hoorn early in the fifteenth century, and in that period, too, was discovered the way of curing the fish which swarmed in countless millions in the North Sea. So ably were the Dutch operations carried out, so zealous were the Hollanders in developing their resources, and so courageous were the people on the waters, that there was no part of the civilised world to which herrings were not carried. It is said that in 1615 there were 2000 busses sailing from Dutch ports, with 37,000 seamen; and that within a few years the trade had grown enormously, with a corresponding increase in the number of busses and other vessels and crews employed.

So far-reaching in importance were the herring-fisheries at that period, that about 60,000 people in Holland were dependent on them for a living, and it had been long agreed that the fisheries of England and Holland should be allowed to proceed without molestation, despite the bitter quarrels and misunderstandings

between the two countries. So early as 1357 the "Statute of Herrings" had placed the industry under Government control, and on the accession of James I. no one could fish without a licence.

Charles I. in 1636 was roused from his indulgences to recognise that there was peril from the prosperity of the industrious Dutch, and he issued an Order in Council prohibiting the herring-fishing in English and Irish seas without a licence. Not long before that edict it had been claimed that Great Britain had sole rights over the seas around its coasts. Holland sent an embassy to beg that the Order should be revoked, but the effort failed, and so that he might maintain his position and be victorious over the united forces of Holland and France, Charles sent to sea a powerful fleet. To pay the fleet's expenses there was imposed that unjust burden of "ship-money" which resulted in such disastrous consequences to the English people until, in 1641, it was declared illegal.

Yarmouth was included in the places on the coast where the Dutch were forbidden to fish. The fisheries of that ancient port were greatly damaged as a consequence. One result was the disappearance of the celebrated Free Fair. The Dutch busses had been accustomed to sail for Yarmouth some days before 21st September, when the herring-fishery practically began with what was called "wetting their nets"—a ceremony in which, doubtless, "square-face" took a more prominent part than sea or fresh water. The Sunday before this was named Dutch Sunday, and a fair was held, the booths being ranged on both sides of the quay.

The herring-fair died hard, however, for it was described in 1785 by an eye-witness. About fifty schuyts sailed up the Yare, all on the Friday evening, and when they were moored alongside the quay the wide-breeched Dutchmen sat on deck in the moonlight and smoked peacefully. Great crowds of people went to see them, many going to Yarmouth from places like Norwich. During the war with France the fair was discontinued for many years. After the peace of 1814 it was revived, but in an imperfect fashion. A fleet of schuyts sailed into Yarmouth Roads. A fair was held on the beach, and there were many exchanges of goodwill between the two peoples who had been such bitter and inveterate enemies. The visit, however, resolved itself mostly into taking in water for the schuyts, and, having done that, the ample Dutchmen and their clean, bright, picturesque craft sailed away after the herring. From that time the custom of holding the fair slowly but surely died. To-day, however, there remains at Yarmouth the ancient and impressive custom of blessing the herring-nets in the majestic old church of St. Nicholas.

The vast importance of the herring-fishery for many centuries has been recorded in contemporary papers, none of which are more interesting than those relating to the period of the three Dutch wars.

The fish were so abundant at Yarmouth in October 1666 that there was not salt enough to save them; a prize had been taken containing 156 weigh of salt, and £7, 10s. a weigh was offered for the salt, so that the fish might be preserved. A quaint reason was given for the plentiful supplies of fish—that the Dutch had

not been fishing, consequently the beds of fish were undisturbed when the Yarmouth men got to work on them. Salt, indeed, was so dear that herrings, when caught in great abundance, had to be sold quickly for what they would fetch, as the salt necessary for their preservation could not be bought at a profitable rate. There never was a better herring-fishery at Yarmouth than that year's ; but salt was wanted ; " twelve herrings a penny here fills many a hungry belly."

The sea, indeed, was fuller of herrings than had ever been known. No sooner were fishermen's nets in the water than they were full, and some of the men had been forced to throw three or four lasts overboard, while others had lost their nets because of the enormous numbers of herrings in them. Salt was, however, £13 a weigh and bay salt £12, so that the herring harvest was not any great advantage to the reapers who could not afford to pay such prices for the salt.

It was for a long time the custom at Yarmouth to send to the sheriffs of Norwich a hundred herrings, which were to be baked in twenty-four pies or pasties and sent to the lord of the manor of East Carlton, for conveyance to the king. They are, or were, still sent to the Clerk of the Kitchen's office at St. James's. A bold attempt was made in 1778 to get more than the equivalent of the herring-pies in return for the toll. The sheriffs of Norwich attended personally with the pasties and demanded six white loaves, six dishes of meat out of the king's kitchen, a flagon of wine, a flagon of beer, a truss of hay, a bushel of oats, a pricket of wax, and half a dozen tallow candles. It was conveniently discovered that there was no precedent for

the delivery of these good and useful things, and they were refused, the discomfited sheriffs apparently retiring, baffled and pieless.

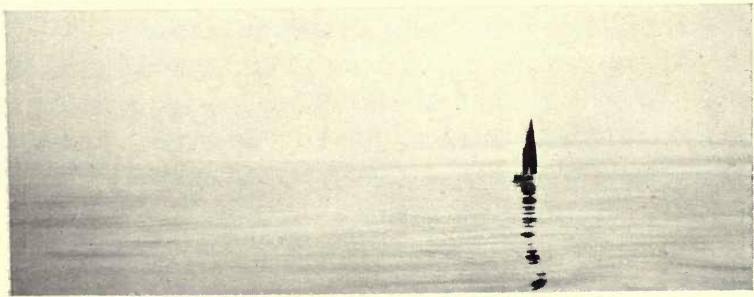
In his report on the Norfolk fisheries Buckland said it would be well within the mark to declare that every favourable night during September, October, and November there were fishing for herrings in the North Sea between 5000 and 6000 miles of netting. Writing of the enormous shoals, he said that Captain M'Donald, of the cruiser *Vigilant*, informed the commissioners appointed to inquire into the Herring Fisheries of Scotland (of whom Buckland was one) that at the end of August 1877 he fell in with a shoal of herrings at a depth of 108 ft. The shoal extended for 4 miles in length along the coast, and was 2 miles broad. In order to get some idea of this shoal, Buckland scaled out its dimensions on a map of London. Supposing one end of the shoal to be at the Marble Arch on the west, the other end on the east, extending in a straight line, would reach the London Docks beyond the Tower, and the width would be from the House of Commons to Euston Square Station. Captain M'Donald stated that the shoal was a solid mass of herrings. Buckland came to the conclusion that the progress of an army of herrings through the water might be illustrated by the observation of a flock of rooks or starlings flying through the air. Supposing a net were floated haphazard in the air, on the chance of catching a flock of rooks, the birds might strike the net in a body at the middle of the net, while the portions of the net to the right and left of it would catch only comparatively few birds. So it is with the herrings. If there is no indication of their where-

abouts in the sea by the appearance of birds, whales, etc., a fleet of nets is floated haphazard. Buckland instances the case of a Yarmouth fisherman who had been at sea three weeks without getting a fish, and was anxiously watching his fleet of nets when suddenly he saw a gull make a sweep at them and fly away with a herring. In almost a minute the whole fleet of nets was full of herrings, of which twelve lasts (120,000) were caught.

In July this year, coming down the North Sea, I passed through a fleet of Scotchmen and a fleet of steam-drifters. Going to my cabin, I wrote a brief account of what I saw, which I will reproduce without alteration. It is this—

While writing this I am passing through one of the Scotch herring-fleets of the south-east coast of Scotland. The boats cover an immense area of sea and are exceptionally close in shore. The nets are being shot in some cases, and in others the boats are already riding at them. The sea is perfectly calm, and there is the merest breath of wind. The sun is setting, big and placid, and the scene is one that will soon be a thing of the past, for there will be nothing visible on the waters but mechanically driven craft. In some respects that will be well, because just now the herring-boats have had very poor luck. Yesterday in many parts was quite a blank in fishing, owing to the complete absence of wind.

An hour later, nearing midnight, I am steaming through another fleet, mostly steam-drifters. A few of them have not even troubled to lower their fore-masts, as it is so unusually calm. All the vessels



HERRING-BOATS ON A CALM SEA : EVENING.

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ride serenely ; and the sight is one to gladden the heart of the superficial and impressionable onlooker. The full moon is shining placidly, and there is perfect and rare peace on the North Sea—yet the constant war is going on, for the floats and corks around us indicate the miles of nets that are hung down in the water, and in the meshes of which already scores of thousands of herrings must be imprisoned. The fishers may or may not have luck. So far the season has not been good. It began badly, with small catches, but big prices ; then came heavy catches, with such a glut of the markets that there was not in some cases any sale at all, and the fishermen had to take thousands of crans of herrings back to sea and throw them overboard.

The first attempt to hatch the herring at Grimsby was made in 1889 by the attendant of the Grimsby Marine Fisheries Society Ltd.—J. Epton. He went off in herring-boats three times for the purpose of getting herring ova ; but he was not very successful. On one of his excursions he found only one ripe herring. As the herring-fishing is done at night, and the ova must be procured while the herring is still alive, the work of getting it was difficult, especially as a good light is needed and appliances must be at hand. The ways of herring-boats are almost as erratic as those of the fish itself. The attendant was landed on one occasion at Scarborough, at another time he was taken to Lowestoft, so that by the time he reached Grimsby the eggs had suffered considerably. The eggs, which are adhesive, had been collected on sheets of glass at sea. For some time there was hope of

hatching them, as there were signs of life; a few, indeed, hatched out, but almost immediately died. It was feared that the current of water in the troughs was too strong for the tender fry.

No better means of realising the gigantic proportions of the modern herring-fisheries around our coasts, but mostly in the North Sea, is afforded than a study of the last report of the Fishery Board for Scotland. This was issued in May 1911, and forms a most valuable and fascinating work in relation to all the Scottish fisheries. The record herring-catch was in 1907, when 6,253,341 cwt. of the fish were landed, their value being £1,795,650, with an average price per cwt. of 5s. 9d. In 1910 the figures were 5,687,226 cwt. and £1,594,308, the average price being 5s. 7d. The average for 1899 was 7s. 0¼d., and that for 1904 was 3s. 9d., an astonishing comparison which shows the erratic value of fish. The operations of the Scotch herring-fishers are not confined to Scotland; they share largely in the herring-fisheries of England and Ireland. In 1910 1257 boats took part in the English fishing, their catches being of the value of £456,528, compared with £242,460 and 679 boats in 1899. It will be seen that the total value of the herrings caught by Scotch fishermen during 1910, mostly in the North Sea, was well over £2,000,000. More than one and three-quarters of a million barrels of herrings were exported to the Continent, the greater part going to Germany and Russia. From 40 to 50 per cent. of the total quantity of herrings exported to Germany is sent over the frontier to Russia. More than 80 per cent. of the herrings cured,

gutted, and packed in barrels in Scotland are exported to Europe and America, principally the former, the best customers being Germany and Russia. A large proportion of the herrings consumed by the Russians are shipped to the German Baltic ports and conveyed thence by rail. Herrings are the staple food of the peasantry, who usually eat them raw, with potatoes. The best qualities, particularly west coast matjes, are taken by the wealthy classes as *hors d'œuvres* and sometimes realise more than £5 a barrel.

“In the early years of the nineteenth century,” the report states, “the export trade was confined almost wholly to the West Indian plantations and Ireland. The slave-owners in the Indies found Scottish herrings to be both a cheap and a wholesome food for their slaves, and large quantities were purchased by them annually. The abolition of slavery, however, put an end to the demand from that quarter, and the prospects for the industry were of the most gloomy description. By a fortuitous combination of circumstances, however, the insignificant trade with European countries received a stimulus, and in 1843 that trade, which had begun in the closing year (1815) of the great European war, grew perceptibly, the export to Europe then reaching for the first time a total of 100,000 barrels. Its growth remained comparatively slow until the economic measures of Sir Robert Peel enabled Russia and Germany to become bigger customers of this country, and the repeal of the duties on timber still further assisted to develop the trade by bringing about a reduction in the cost of the barrels in which the herrings were packed. In 1850 the total export reached 250,000 barrels, in 1870 it had risen

still further to 486,000, in 1880 to 976,000, and last year to 1,767,544 barrels—a record of phenomenal progress.”

Of the 90,813 persons employed in 1910 in the Scottish fisheries and subsidiary industries no fewer than 38,941 manned the fishing-fleets, 17,010 were gutters and packers of herrings, 14,500 were engaged in the carrying trade, and the rest were employed in various ways in connection with the industry. There is no more familiar and interesting sight on the east coast during the herring season than that of the fisher-girls, many of them very comely, all strong and healthy, who “gip” the herrings. Their expertness with the knife is wonderful, and their industry untiring, for they are Scotch and are paid by results.



A MOTOR HERRING-BOAT.



A LOWESTOFT STEAM-DRIFTER.

CHAPTER IX

WITH A LOWESTOFT DRIFTER

SCARBOROUGH CASTLE, grim and ruined, tops the hill which overlooks the grey North Sea between Flamborough Head and Whitby Abbey, where Cædmon, founder of English poetry, was a monk, and not far from which was the monastic home of the Venerable Bede, father of English learning. When Bæda and Cædmon were alive they watched the early fishers sail away to catch and bring ashore that marvellously prolific creature which was and is of all fish the unchallenged king. They went and came, these small crude craft, when wind and sea permitted, and to-day, twelve centuries later, the men of the east coast put to sea, also at the will of wind and wave, to gather some of its abundant harvest.

The Lowestoft drifter, sail and steam, have come south after their voyage north to accompany the herring in that mysterious migration which begins at the Shetlands, the unnumbered living mass advancing almost as the Gulf Stream goes on its appointed way.

We sailed from Scarborough on a Sunday as the bells were chiming for the morning service, knowing that when they rang for evensong we should have shot our nets and be drifting at them.

These Lowestoft vessels are only part of that vast

fleet which is known as herring-drifters, and includes the small boat containing two or three men and the steamer with her round dozen. There are ketches, and a great variety of other rigs, such as yawls, luggers, mules, Zulus, keelboats, yuffers, and sploshers. The sailing "Lowestoftman"—it is typical of the North Sea fishing industry that boats are spoken of as "men" of their ports: the "Hullman," the "Fileyman," the "Grimsbyman," and so on—is a well-found craft, some 80 ft. in length and 17 or 18 in beam. They are honestly and stoutly built, and when they come to grief, it is through stress of wind and sea, and not because of owners' carelessness or fishermen's incapacity.

The drifters carry nets enough when they are fastened together and suspended in the sea to make a wall which may be a mile long, or even more, and several yards deep. The upper edge, called the "back," has a great number of corks which keep the nets upright, and to afford the necessary buoyancy barrels or great leather floats are used. The nets are shot over the quarter just before sunset, while the vessel sails slowly along. When all the nets are overboard the swing-rope is paid out; the boat is brought round head to wind, the ordinary sails are taken in, the foremast is lowered till it rests on the crutch of the mitch-board, the drift-mizzen is set to keep the vessel head to wind, and the fishing-lights are shown—the lantern on deck which can be seen in clear weather for five miles round, and a light at the head of the mizzen-mast. A watch is set, a solitary man, and the rest of the crew turn in until he hoarsely calls them up to haul.

The Lowestoft fishermen say that the method of

catching herrings has scarcely changed during the last thousand years or more, and that their nets must be the same in principle as those which were employed before Richard the Lion-hearted and his Crusaders sailed for the Holy Land. The statement has much of truth in it, and when a sailer drifts at the nets she presents much the same spectacle that could have been witnessed many centuries ago. It was at night when the herrings were caught, and night on the vast and melancholy waste of water hides that modernity which only day reveals. There are other riding-lights, and here and there, the mast-head and sidelights of a steamer going north or south ; but the steel and iron hulls are only guessed by some chance glimmer from a port or deck-house.

And the men have changed but little, surely ! Their dress for work is primitive, hiding all that is suggestive of the modern landsman. There is the jumper which the skipper and crew wear—a garment made of stout canvas and barked like the sailcloth. It covers the arms and trunk nearly to the knees, almost as the coarse smock garbed the serf of old, and the men of his rank who would alone, in those days, go to sea to fish. The jumper in its long variety is like a night-dress. Its short form is generally favoured, but skippers often use the long garment, as the covering keeps the cold out, and skippers, being leaders, have spare time in which to feel the draughts that invade all unprotected crevices. There are rough, thick, woollen stockings, and boots which may be thigh boots, or half boots, or clumpers, according to the weather, and as for head-dress, that is anything in the way of covering which comes handy ; but mostly a cap, except in bad weather, when it is the sou'-wester.

Our own skipper is a man who has followed the drifting for thirty years. His very life is wrapped up in the herring and its possibilities, for upon the success of the fishing his income depends. He is learned in the lore of herringing. You may try to turn him from the topics of the sea and drifters, but he will invariably come back to the herring, and you listen contentedly to his talk by the hour, for he has a subtle knowledge of his subject. He has much time to spend at the wheel, and in giving orders when the nets are shot or hauled; and there are the odd moments, too, when we assemble in the cabin aft, with its lack of light and air, and ways of life that are reminiscent of the customs of the Middle Ages.

The mate after awhile takes the wheel and we go below to dinner. George, the boy, who is the skipper's son, has laid the feast. There is no waiting, no helping, no ceremony. A leg of mutton is in a tin dish on the cabin floor; another dish, big and oblong, contains gravy—a small lake of it; a third is heaped up with potatoes, and a fourth is filled with Norfolk dumplings. They have been boiled, and consist of flour and water and baking-powder. On the Dogger, rolled out flat and baked, they would have been called "busters." George is proud of his cooking skill, and explains that he can make the dumplings better and richer by the addition of suet. We pour out tea, a heavy, sickly liquid, sweetened with condensed milk and much sugar, all boiled together with a mass of used leaves which have not been removed from the kettle. We help ourselves from the joint with our own little knives and two-pronged steel forks, and with a long, common, pewter spoon scoop up such gravy as we can catch between the drifter's rolls and pitches,



SHOOTING THE NETS FROM A STEAM-DRIFTER.



and if we want a dumpling we annex one with a fork-plunge. All of us can reach with ease, for our sea-boots are mixed up with the dishes. It is very crowded in the cabin, and we are thrown against each other with the lurches, and our lake of gravy partly mingles with the cinders of the stove-pan, while our enamelled mugs overflow into our jumpers.

George, with folded arms, gazes steadily upon me from a corner near the oil-lamp, and at times he smiles.

I know what is passing through his mind, and assure him that I have been out on the North Sea many times and have never yet been mastered by it, or by any other stretch of water. "You're sure you aren't goin' to be turned up, sir?" he says, and the men laugh hilariously but kindly.

"Now," says the skipper at last, knocking his pipe on the locker and clambering to his feet, "I reckon it's gettin' pretty nearly time to shoot." So we climb on deck, and just as the worshippers ashore are making ready for evensong we shoot our nets.

No confusion exists as to duty. The skipper controls and takes the wheel. The hawseman has to be forward to make fast the seizings of the warps; amidships is the whaleman, paying out the nets, while the net-ropeman also pays out and hauls in, holding the net-rope; the work of the net-stower is to pay out the nets from the net-room, which is a large chamber forward; the younker, being the man of all work, helps anybody who calls for his assistance, while the boy has all sorts of odd jobs to do, as well as the cooking and washing up.

The nets are floating near the surface, indicated by a mile-long line of bobbing barrels and buoys which mark

the quarter, half, and three-quarter lengths of nets, and we go drifting at the will of wind and tide. The sea appears to be evermore the same, but, although we are toiling on the deep as harvesters, we know that it is Sunday. Westward, dimly seen, is the high land of the Yorkshire coast, with Cædmon's old monastery crowning the cliff at Whitby, and there returns to mind the picture of the men who on these same waters plied the craft of herringing more than a thousand years ago—pretty much in principle as we are doing now.

When we are slowly drifting we assemble in the gloomy cabin aft and take our tea. There is the kettle on the floor, and near it some enamelled mugs; accompanied by a great stack of bread and butter, a dishful of wedges of cheese; a dish of sliced cucumber and another dish of sliced onions. The cucumber is part of my addition to the menu; also some bananas and oranges—and we Dutch the fare.

George has climbed into a cupboard-like bunk, which he is sharing with the whaleman, and though he feigns sleep, yet, from time to time, he makes sepulchral observations. He has resolved that I shall be distressed, and for aught I know to the contrary, he has some fearsome medicine that he wishes to inflict upon me. I am as stubbornly determined to have none of it.

The skipper strips a banana cautiously, rather distrustingly. He does not seem fully to understand, and after the first bite says that he has never before eaten one, and thought it was a thing containing seeds. "Fishermen don't often eat fruit," he explains. "They don't seem to need it—and fruit's dear. But it's good—like a meller apple, I reckon. Yes, sir, I'll take another.

I could learn to like 'em. Landsmen have a lot to be thankful for, when they can get things like that to eat, and why they should ever come to sea for pleasure is a thing I can't understand."

"I reckon," says the whaleman, with a sigh, "'at no man but a fool, or who wasn't forced, would go fishin'. It's sixteen week since I left my wife—an' I'm pinin' to see her again. She'll be goin' to church by this time. An' there's so much work to do an' so little for it when it's done."

"Yes," proceeds the skipper, "the men who do the most work don't get the most pay. The dealer an' the middleman comes in and sees that that don't happen. We used to sell the herrin' by the hundred, countin' of 'em an' givin' a hundred an' thirty-two to the dealer as a hundred. The thirty-two were 'over-tail,' an' belonged to the dealer, who got nearly a third of the profit of the catch for just a-handlin' it ashore, although he hadn't to do any o' the hard work o' fishin'. We sell by measure now, a cran bein' a thousand herrin', but it's the dealer first an' the fishermen a long way second. That don't seem to be right, nohow, but then there's so many puzzlin' tangles in this queer world. Think what it means for fishermen and dealers when there's been an extrordinary catch—as sometimes happens. Only four year ago, in November, a fleet of us was kept out o' Lowestoft by fog. When the fog lifted, four hundred drifters, sail an' steam, crowded in, an' all had big catches, too. It was Sunday, but special permission was given to use the market, an' thirty thousand crans were landed—thirty million o' herrin'. Think of the 'over-tail' in that lot! Most of 'em went off to Russia—an' I wonder

what'll happen to us if Russia doesn't take our herrin', but buys from the Japs? Them little coloured men are wonderful, an' we've had several of 'em out in the fleets with us, learnin' our ways, so that they can buy drifters an' catch herrin' for themselves off the Japanee coast, I take it.

"There's so many stories told of fishin' that aren't true, an' so many people come an' bother you with foolish questions. One tale that's made such a lot of is the death-cheep of the herrin'. They'll tell you that when the herrin' are caught an' shaken out of the nets an' are wrigglin' an' lashin' about, they'll squeak just like wee little kittens. Well, sometimes they do, but not often, an' that's only when they're full of wind an' you step on 'em or pick 'em up an' nip 'em.

"Then there's land people who come an' bother you with foolish questions. I try to put 'em off, but can't allus do it. There was an old lady who worried me past endurance with her questions, askin' if the herrin's were caught in the barrels, as she'd sometimes seen 'em that way in shops. I told her no, an' then she aggravated me to that extent that I told the only fib I ever spoke in my life—for I larned a lot about the Scriptures at Sunday School. 'How do you kill 'em when you've caught 'em?' she asked, an' I answered, 'We bite their heads!' She looked at the catch o' herrin's we had, an' murmured as she walked away, 'Lor! How tired your poor jaws must be!'

"There's a wonderful lot o' luck in the herrin' fishin'. I like it best when we can have a good clear sweep of sea to ourselves—an' that comes earlier in the year, say in June, when we go away North, and come down with



A STEAM-DRIFTER'S CREW.



THE CREW OF A NORTH SEA SHRIMPER,
SHOWING SMALL BEAM-TRAWL.



the shoals till we start to make Lowestoft our headquarters. That's a better time than this, when we're all so crowded that there isn't room enough on the sea for us, and we get bunched up an' foul our nets, and sometimes lose them an' our fish as well. I've known us lose a hundred nets, costin' three pound each—three hundred pound altogether.

“You were askin' about the Dutchman that we saw comin' away from the North—it allus seems so strange to me how them old boms make their way out and home again—they do things so leisurely, you see. He hadn't even got his tawps'ls set. I reckon 'at the Dutchmen are poor fishermen; the French are better, an', of course, Lowestoft men best of all. I once saw some Dutchmen with a catch of herrin' so big that the nets looked just like a solid mass, an' the Dutchmen were three days in haulin'. They had to get the foremast up an' rig halyards, an' they shook the herrin' out like apples from a tree. The Dutchmen were three days in haulin', but I dare say we should ha' done the work in fourteen or fifteen hours. It's cruel hard work when it comes to a heavy haul, because there's no stoppin' for meals when we once begin.”

“No,” observes the hawseman, “there's just a mug o' tea an' then breakfast, which may be served at five or six in the mornin', or the same time in the afternoon—an' that's the fisherman's best meal. He don't take no count o' dinner, nor yet supper, so long as his breakfast's got. Old Skip there, he don't want no more nor two herrin' for breakfast, I reckon; an' I don't care for more nor eight or so; but the old net-stower, he can't be satisfied nohow wi' less nor a dozen, an' I do know fishermen who manage to get through nearer a score—

an' herrin' are wonderful good things to eat, they say."

"There's no question, to my thinkin'," pursues the skipper, "'at herrin's get to know when you've come amongst 'em. They feel the loss o' their comrades an' swim away. An' I think that that's as wonderful as their want o' sense in not goin' astarn when they're meshed. If they did they'd escape, many o' 'em, but they allus drive ahead, an' keep stuck. They've no chance, what wi' the drifters an' the dogfish an' the cod, which carry off enormous numbers. The dogfish are cruel an' destructive creatures, doin' a lot o' harm to our nets, but in the case o' the cod we do get something for our pains and loss, for we bring 'em on board. With the dogfish we can do nothing but bang him on the head—an' we allus do that, givin' him a wide berth, for he's fair poison if he gets his teeth into you. I've seen cod that thick about the nets that they've been like a flock o' sheep, an' that crazy after herrin' 'at they just jump up out o' the water alongside an' beg for 'em, as a dog will beg for a biscuit. You see, we get to understand fish, us fishermen, just as gentlemen ashore know the ways o' dogs an' horses. Now, sir, I don't know about you, but I'm goin' to turn in. Take my bunk there, if you'd like it. I can manage on the locker."

"I think," I answer, "that I will lie down on deck."

George peeps from his dark cupboard and smiles broadly. The skipper gives me a coverless pillow and a couple of rugs and I climb the straight short ladder to the deck. "Take up thy bed and walk," says George, as a forlorn hope, and the laughter which greets the sally does not die till I am stretched on the planks,

with the raw wind striking across my face and the roughening water from the sullen Dogger lapping against the drifter's hull, telling its tales of hardship and suffering; bringing back oppressive memories, and resurrecting that nameless fear which comes to all who understand the North Sea and the smashing fury of its waves, when gales sweep landward from the east or north. I cannot rest, and rise and join the lonely watchman, and, smoking, we converse in low tones, pausing at times to listen to the spouting of a blow-fish which is swimming around the drifter, and whose presence is interpreted by the watchman to be a sign of herrings. Always our talk is of the sea and drifters and herrings. Insiduously there comes up from time to time some tale of loss and sorrow, and I call to mind the wrecks that I have seen. You cannot get away from the gloom and pity of it. The North Sea has you in its grip—and the grip is merciless.

"It's one o'clock," I tell the watchman in answer to his question. We rouse the crew, and in the darkness, sleepy, silent, heavy, oil-frocked, and sea-booted, and in most cases wearing woollen mittens, they come on deck to start the long, laborious work of hauling the nets, which may last four or fourteen hours.

George reels against me, owlish, but incorrigibly hopeful. "Still tawpside-up, sir? That's good. Like these old drifters—they're all right so long as they keep afloat, aren't they? There's tea in the galley, and there'll be breakfast by and by." With that he tumbles down a little square hole forward, to stow the warp as the nets are hauled in, and I see him no more until

the herrings have been shaken from the nets, and are slatting, slimply about with the drifter's heavy roll.

Four hours' hard hauling, shaking, stowing, and packing—and twenty thousand herrings as the pay for all the work. Not a heavy catch, not an overwhelming profit—ten pounds for owners and skipper and crew, with all expenses first to be deducted, but still something for the night's rough work; and so, with thankfulness that matters are no worse, we surge away to harbour on the rising sea. The skipper takes the wheel till breakfast is ready; then, willingly obedient to the summons, we tumble below again and fall hungrily upon tea, bread and butter, and herrings—herrings freshly caught, gutted, beheaded, and deprived of tails, slashed with jack-knives latitudinally, so that when the huge dishful of them is placed on the floor, piping hot from the boiling fat in which they have been fried, we can bend down and help ourselves, and with our fingers strip the crisp, delicious morsels from the bones and eat them. Savage, certainly; but cutlery is scarce, space is cramped, and there is no table.

Competition is as merciless in drifting as in other walks of life, and only the fittest of the fit survive. The sailing drifter is seen at her best when she is running for market in a smart breeze, not the "smart breeze" of the North Sea smacksman, which means a dangerous gale; but the strong wind in which the Lowestoftman can carry all his canvas and crack on with tautened gear and deck awash. That is the time when skipper and crew enjoy the triumph of success of toil, and run to port with some of the sea's good harvest. These Lowestoftmen claim that their craft are

the hardest-driven of any in British waters, and this may well be so, for on both main and mizzen they carry enormous jackyard topsails, and the Lowestoftman will hold on to these in strong winds which make it needful for lesser sails to be taken in.

“Yes, these drifters are fine boats,” our skipper says, “an’ bein’ what they are, we are pretty safe in them, an’ when it breezes up too much, we can run in to port an’ get away from the weather. The deep-sea trawlers can’t do that; they’re out on the Dogger and have to stick it through, be the weather what it will. No, I’ve no mind to go. All my thirty year have been spent in driftin’—beginnin’ in June or so, goin’ north to meet the herrin’, an’ followin’ on ’em south back to Lowestoft, an’ workin’ ’em till Christmas. It’s bitter cruel work in the cold late autumn an’ the winter, an’ I’ve had many a narrow squeak. I’ve seen drifters founder with all hands; but I’ve allus got safe back. It’s no good stayin’ out when the wind an’ sea are too strong, for you lose both nets an’ labour; but competition gets that fierce you’re forced to do as others do—an’ some of ’em hang on to the weather till there’s scarcely no chance to get away in safety. An’ when they hang on you’ve got to hang on too, for fear o’ bein’ left. It would never do to run back without herrin’ an’ find ’at other fishermen had stuck on an’ got some.”

When the drifters used to go to sea the urchins followed them along the haven, singing—

Herrings galore;
Pray, Master—
Gay Master—
Luff the little herring boat ashore.

Pray God send you eight or nine last ;
Fair gain all,
Good weather,
Good weather,
All herrings—no “dogs.”

The boys continued their crude and unmelodious ditty until they were pacified with biscuits which were thrown to them by the crews.

There is no singing to sea nowadays, and there are no spare biscuits, but when the herrings are landed, the ragged urchins follow the baskets and seize the fish which fall to the ground, claiming them as loot.



LAUNCHING A STEAM-TRAWLER, BROADSIDE ON, AT THE YARD OF MESSRS. COCHRANE, SELBY, YORKS.

By permission of Messrs. Cochrane.



CHAPTER X

STEAM, THE CONQUEROR

THE townsman, sleepless in the night, is often solaced by the thought that within a limited area of his couch there are thousands of men at work, and more awake than he. Lights are burning throughout the hours of darkness; armies of toilers are making ready for the coming day and its demands on food and drink. The restless being may direct his thoughts to London River and follow its involutions to the open sea, where he will at all times come across ships on which work never ceases, and where there is constant evidence of the triumphant march of steam. Only a quarter of a century ago the wisest and most experienced of smacksmen scoffed at the idea of steam conquering sail on the North Sea banks; but to-day no prophet, however bold and confident, would venture to forecast the means which will be employed to get deep-sea fish twenty-five years hence.

Matters move slowly on the North Sea, but when energetic owners set to work to bring about a change they do not rest till they have succeeded. As keen business men they recognise that the best results are obtainable only by the employment of the best appliances, and to-day there are at work on the North Sea ground splendid craft which are equipped with the

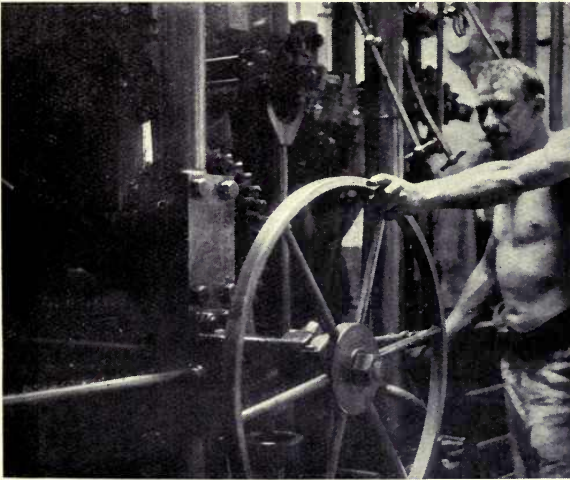
latest inventions, vessels on which neither money nor skill has been spared.

Wireless telegraphy, or some more modern method of communication between the fleets and the land, will be surely adopted—if only because the Germans have set the lead—and if the necessities of trawling demand a revolution in the methods of propelling vessels and working gear, then it is certain that the change from steam will be made.

At present, however, steam, the conqueror, rules the North Sea fishing industry. Even as I write, the ancient and venerable art of crabbing has been assailed by the triumphant engine. For almost unnumbered generations that class, which is known as the “Grimsby-Sheringham” fishers, has remained faithful to the open boat for crabbing and line-fishing, according to the seasons, off the Yorkshire coast. They have scorned to deviate from the ways of their fathers; but now experiments are being made for inshore fishing from Grimsby, and steam has been applied to an old motor-launch so as to allow the craft to be used for crabbing and line-fishing. If the experiment succeeds, as it doubtless will, we may in our own day and generation find it needful to bid good-bye to the quaint and quiet ways of potting and lining from little old-world harbours, such as those which still exist on the Yorkshire and other north-east coasts. We shall know the sadness of saying farewell to the ancient mariners who steer crab-pot-laden donkeys up the rough face of the North Landing at Flamborough, and tell you of the brave days of the Smugglers’ Cave, and of the Smuggle-Hole in T’Oard Ship at Filey.



THE ENGINEER OF A STEAM-DRIFTER.



THE ENGINEER OF A STEAM-TRAWLER.



By way of showing the actual working of a North Sea fleet of steam-trawlers, I will take the case of the Gamecock Fleet, because that assemblage of plucky little vessels came into so much prominence owing to the outrage by the Russian Baltic Fleet. That famous "incident" has been forgotten by the public, and is little more than a memory to those who took part in it; but the Gamecock trawlers ply their trade as stubbornly as ever on the banks, and the carriers, with the emblem of a bird on their funnels, still chunk up and down London River as if nothing had ever happened.

The Gamecock Fleet consists of steam-trawlers, specially built to carry large supplies of coal. No ice is carried. The fleet has been established about seventeen years, during the whole of which time it has fished in the North Sea without intermission. The Red Cross Fleet and the Great Northern Fleet have existed for about thirty-five years, but only for a portion of that time exclusively as steam-trawlers. The youngest fleet is Hellyers', which was established in 1906. The fleet left Hull on 20th February in that year to commence operations, and it has been continuously fishing on North Sea grounds since that period. Messrs. Hellyers' fleet in the North Sea consists of seven carriers and fifty-five fleters; but these do not include their vessels which sail to Iceland and the White Sea.

Although there is nothing approaching the rigid discipline of the Royal Navy, still, these North Sea fleets are well controlled by a specially selected and experienced fisherman who is officially known as the

admiral, but familiarly spoken of as the "Boss." The admiral is responsible for the fishing operations of the fleet, and, in theory at any rate, when he sets the lead the rest of the trawlers must follow him. Each fleet carries a vice-admiral, who takes charge or command when the admiral is absent. It happened that at the time of the Russian outrage the Gamecock Fleet was commanded by the vice-admiral, Mr. Thomas Carr, a Naval Reserve man. Occasionally a second vice-admiral will be carried in the fleet, so that whatever happens there is a responsible head, an experienced and reliable skipper who is capable of grappling with any emergency that may arise on even the erratic North Sea. Nothing is left to chance.

For both night and day there are certain established signals according to which the skippers shoot or haul their gear. In the daytime signals are made by means of flags, indicating how the fleet is to trawl. The regular night-signals are one green rocket when the gear is to be shot and the trawling is to be on the starboard tack, two green rockets for trawling on the starboard tack free; and corresponding one and two red rockets as signals to trawl on the port tack or on the port tack free. Two white rockets are the signal for the trawl to be hauled. When these coloured rockets burst they send up three green or red stars, as the case may be.

With each fleet there is what is known as a mark-boat, the purpose of which is to indicate the rendezvous of the trawlers when they assemble for the purpose of sending off their fish to the attendant carrier. The mark-boat is usually an old sailing



THE ADMIRAL OF A NORTH SEA FLEET.

smack. She is a stationary vessel which is shifted from place to place according to the direction in which the shoals of fish are moving. This direction is known daily by the relative catch of the vessels. The fleet's operations are usually conducted within a radius of ten miles of the mark-boat. The method of discovering the fish and finding the shoals has been well described as "skirmishing." Each morning a carrier collects the fish and goes straight off to Billingsgate market, while another carrier, which has returned from the market, waits near the mark-boat in readiness to leave the fleet on the following morning. In ordinary circumstances there are two or three carriers with the fleet. The mark-boat may be called the rallying-point for the steam-trawlers, which send their catches by the homeward-bound carrier and take empty boxes from the outward-bound carrier which has just joined the fleet after loading up at Gravesend with ice and coal.

The steam-fleeting on the North Sea banks is carried out in a routine fashion which was not known and could not be known in the days of sail. Steam has conquered everything except the worst of bad weather, and a North Sea trawler will have her gear down in a sea in which many a second-rate cargo boat would be glad to heave to.

The great majority of the vessels faithfully follow the admiral's signals, for it is only by exercising this obedience that the general well-being and safety can be secured. The vessels usually fish on the tack indicated by the admiral's signals, so as to avoid the risk of collision; but it is not obligatory to follow

the signals, and, if a skipper is disposed to do so, he may trawl on a different tack.

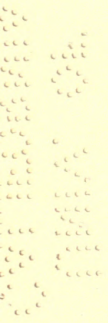
The gear is shot about noon daily. By that time the men have boarded their fish and received their supplies of empty boxes from the carrier. For five or six hours the steamboats trawl at the rate of about two and a half miles an hour. A faster speed would mean the risk of damaging the gear and catching less fish. At about five o'clock in the afternoon the gear is hauled, and all hands are very busily employed in gutting and packing the fish. Meanwhile, the trawl has been shot again, and is towed until at midnight the admiral's signal to haul is seen and the gear is got up, to be shot again and hauled once more at about six o'clock in the morning. There are, consequently, three shoots and three hauls in the course of the twenty-four hours.

I know of nothing more impressive and splendid as an act of labour than this hauling of a North Sea trawl, especially at midnight. There is all around the vast solemnity of tumbling water, and the bobbing, dipping lights of the floating town with its population of, say, five hundred men. The steam-winchies are wheezing and clanging, and the wheels of miscellaneous mechanism are rattling, with sudden stoppages and spasmodic starts. Drowsy men have tumbled up from below, and all are working harder, surely, than ever slave toiled at his oar in the bank of a galley. In my own special craft the skipper, with set face, gives the lead; next to him is the mate, prototype of Ham in *David Copperfield*, and each in his place in that serried little rank is another member of the crew.



HAULING THE TRAWL: "SET BACK ON HIM!"

52



The skipper gives the order and word of encouragement.

"Hey! Hey! Hey!" he sings.

"High up!" he shouts encouragingly.

Then "Set back on him!" and "Now again!"

There is panting and strenuous heaving.

"And again!" followed by steady tugging and pulling at the sodden heavy gear.

This is the slow, laborious man-handling of the trawl which still exists, despite all that steam has done for mortal man on North Sea banks.

"Up!" The word of command rises gruffly in the darkness, with its luminous patches from the big-wicked paraffin lamps on deck and verandah.

"All together! Oh! Ho! Ho, oh, ho!"

There is hardly a breathing-space before the skipper shouts, "Go on again. Up! Up, up, up!" Then there seems to be a desperate and final scrimmage with the gear, and you wonder whether it will ever be got on or above the deck. Suddenly the conflict ceases, there is a strange sizzling of water, a swift unlashng of what seems to be a complicated knot, and then the slither and clatter of falling masses of fish. There is at once a greater splash and clash, for the gear is overboard again, and the trawl, which has scarcely rested, is scooping up and collecting more fish.

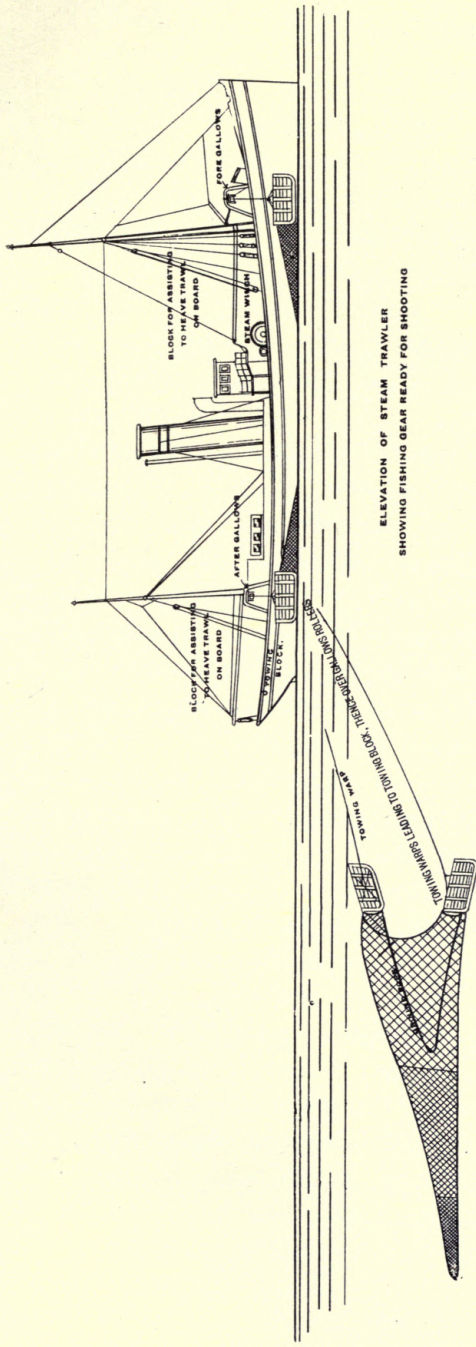
You have heard the curt command, "Right over!" and the next you know is that men are knee-deep in pounds of slithering fish and that gutting-knives are being fiercely plied. However often you may see that special sight, it never loses its awful fascination,

and you watch it just as closely as you follow the blows of the man who, in a Chicago stockyard, hammers the skulls of the big beasts in the two-pair pens, or the swift blood-sodden slaughterer of the pigs which have whirled the wheel and hang by shackled leg from the sloping bar of steel on which they travel to the jabbing knife.

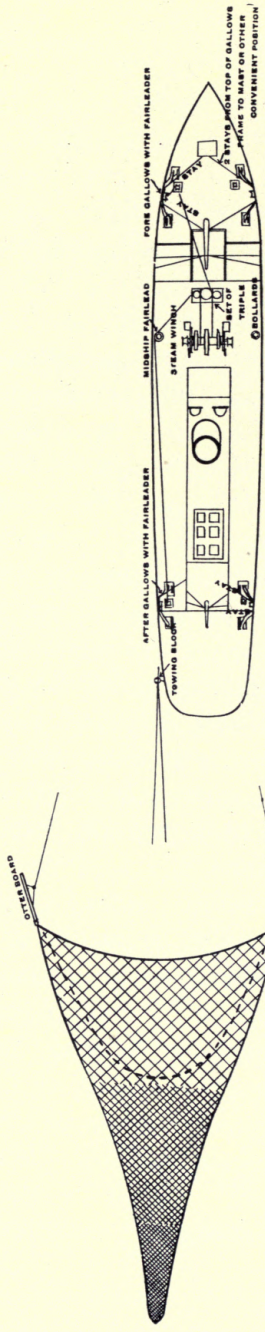
I have watched that wholesale butchery in Chicago, and have been too much stupefied to be sickened; and I have seen repeatedly the unlashng of the big-bag knot on sailing smack and steamboat; but while in the stockyards there is no escape from the horrors of the knife and hammer and the streams of blood, there is at least on the North Sea an absence of any gruesome spectacle—and always the chance to turn away to windward and take a deep breath of briny, uncontaminated air.

When fishing during the day steam-tracters have a ball hoisted forward, the ball being replaced at night by a white light ahead—a white globular light which is carried in addition to the ordinary mast-head and sidelights. The admiral's vessel has specially fixed cross-tree lights, so that she can be readily distinguished from the other craft in the fleet.

In ordinary circumstances a steam fleet of about 50 trawlers will be spread over an area of 7 or 8 miles. The mizzen is invariably set when trawling, and in some cases the mainsail as well. It is necessary when trawling to exercise great care, so that the gear shall not be fouled. Any sudden movement of the vessel causes the hawser to slacken and the boards to fall down. It happened in the

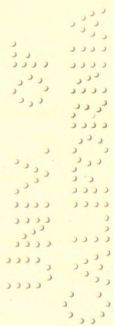


ELEVATION OF STEAM TRAWLER
SHOWING FISHING GEAR READY FOR SHOOTING



DECK PLAN SHOWING POSITION OF FISHING GEAR

DIAGRAM SHOWING THE WORKING OF THE OTTER TRAWL.
By permission of the Great Grimsey Coal, Salt, and Tanning Co. Ltd.



Gamecock Fleet, when the Russian ships began firing, that a great many trawlers, by suddenly going full speed, either lost or damaged their trawls.

The plan of a steam-trawler, which is given, shows the Otter gear ready for shooting, the position of the apparatus in the vessel, and the trawl when at work. The net is bag-shaped, the mouth being very wide, to give the greatest possible spread of net. The size of the net depends entirely on the power of the vessel using it; but the average size of a modern North Sea otter trawl-net is about 100 ft. in length, with a spread of from 80 to 90 ft. The otter trawling-boards are attached to the net, and it is the force of water passing between those boards which gives the "spread," or, in other words, keeps the net open. The trawling warps are fastened to the boards, the length of warp used being regulated by the depth of water in which the vessel is fishing. Hundreds of fathoms of heavy wire warp are used by a steam-trawler, so that powerful steam-winchers are necessary for hauling in the gear. As the illustration shows, the warp from one barrel of the winch passes first round a centre fairlead, thence round a midship side fairlead, and then over the after gallows; while the warp from the other barrel, after passing over the centre fairlead, goes direct over the fore gallows. The warps generally pass through a special warp-guide, or towing-block, which is placed well aft in the vessel, the ends of the warp, as already stated, being attached to the otter boards. On the underside of the trawl-net a ground-rope is fixed. This ground-rope, as its name implies, trails on the ground,

and is made of a steel wire rope over which old rope is wound. The length of the ground-rope is governed by the size of the trawl-net, but the average length for North Sea fishing is about 140 ft. Trawl-nets are, or ought to be, made from high-class pure Manila twine, Manila fibre having great strength, and being the best-known fibre for work in sea water. Otter trawl-nets are generally coal-tarred, this tar acting as a preservative of the twine. Many changes have taken place in the construction of the otter trawl-net since it was first introduced, and practical fishermen consider that the present apparatus has reached a very high stage of perfection.

One of the first steam-trawlers to be specially built for fishing was the *Zodiac*, which was launched in 1881 from Earle's yard at Hull. She was constructed on the lines of the powerful sailing vessels which were then employed on the North Sea, and in addition to her engines she carried a good deal of sail. The *Zodiac*, which was owned by the Grimsby and North Sea Steam Trawling Company, Limited, was completely successful. Since she was put afloat Earle's Shipbuilding and Engineering Company, Limited, have built and equipped more than 160 vessels of the same class. The *Zodiac* has vanished from the fishing-banks, so have most of her contemporaries, especially those wooden clinker-built paddle-boats with which steam began to conquer sail. Some of these stout little vessels were worked remorselessly, and I used to marvel, on seeing them fight their way into port in bad weather, how they held together. They looked like big bantams as they came on, thrashing away with their wings of paddles and immensely proud of

themselves when they were safely in harbour. Famous amongst the earlier steam-tractlers were the *Flying Sprite*, *Tuskar*, *Triumph*, *Hero*, and the *Flying Spray*. Some of the paddle pioneers were little better than venerable floating foundries; yet they were able to work rough ground on which a screw-tractler was almost helpless and practically useless.

Fleeters, single-boaters, and Icelanders are the three great classes into which the tractler fleets may be divided. The fleeters are generally a smaller class of vessel than the others, being from 100 to 110 ft. long; but I have been on board much smaller craft than these on the banks, one in particular being a hardy little warrior of just over 40 tons. Her skipper assured me that in a breeze she was a beautiful bird, and I am certain that he spoke the truth; but even the toughest of us do not, as a matter of choice, fix on a contrivance whose chief abiding-place is somewhere between the clouds and the crests of North Sea waves.

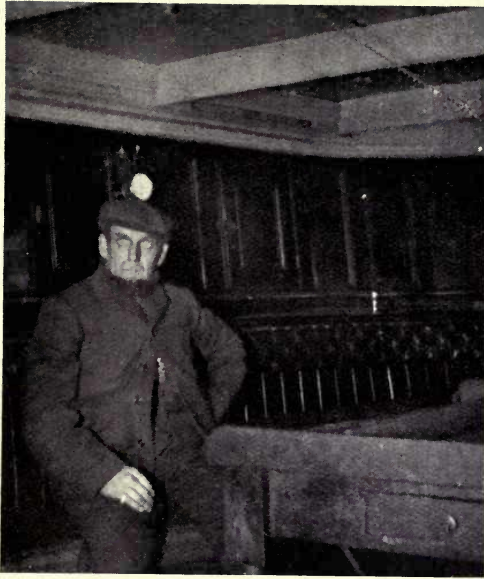
The fleeters go to sea carrying enough coal and provisions to last them for about six weeks, during which time they stay on the fishing-grounds and deliver their catch of fish every morning to the carrier.

The steam-tractlers which go single-boating leave port for some particular ground on which, in the opinion of the skipper, fish will be found. This ground may be 50 miles or more from the coast, or a lesser distance. The likely spot having been reached, a trial shot of the trawl is made, and if the result is satisfactory a buoy called a "dan" is placed in the sea, to indicate the location of the fish, and this neighbourhood is worked either until the fish leave it or the catch justifies a return

to port. As the fish is caught it is gutted, boxed, and iced and put in the steamboat's fish-room. As the single-boaters are constantly running to and from port, the lives of their crews are far more varied and agreeable than those of the men who are constantly fleeting far away from land and completely isolated from home.

The third class is composed of the larger vessels, which, during the season, go to Iceland and the White Sea, spending three to four weeks on the trip and bringing home large cargoes of fish, which realise sometimes as much as £1000, the result depending, of course, very much on the state of the market. These vessels are worked usually by about fourteen men, including the captain and engineers, and cost, when ready for sea, anything between £6000 and £7500. Some of the biggest afloat have been built at Selby by Messrs. Cochrane & Son.

From stem to stern they are crowded with appliances, not an inch of space being wasted. Starting from the after end, there is a cabin with accommodation for the captain, chief engineer, and four other hands; then comes the engine-room, boiler-room, coal-bunker, reserve bunker (this is used to carry coal when going to the fishing-grounds, and fish when returning), fish and ice room, storeroom, forecastle containing eight men, and sometimes a store forward of this. The fish-room is divided into several compartments, both vertically and horizontally, into which the various kinds of fish are placed and packed in ice to preserve them during the voyage home. The vessels are provided on leaving port with an ample supply of fresh provisions of various kinds, and have large tanks containing fresh water, enough, and to spare, for the longest



A NORTH SEA SKIPPER IN A STEAM-TRAWLER'S CABIN.



THE CABIN OF A STEAM-DRIFTER, SHOWING THE
SKIPPER'S BUNK.



voyage. These splendid vessels, owing to their being in and out of port so often, and having, throughout the winter months especially, to withstand the full force of the North Sea gales, are made exceptionally strong, and although they are built to Lloyd's highest class, yet their scantlings are in most cases very much in excess of Lloyd's requirements, and as a good sea-boat there is nothing to beat, and few craft to equal, a North Sea steam-trawler. I have seen them working far from their original homes, trying their luck in the Atlantic, the Bay of Biscay, and off the Morocco Coast, and lying snugly in such places as Oporto; steam-trawlers have gone out to the Cape of Good Hope, and I know a man who took one of the early paddle-craft to the other side of the world, a 12,000-miles' trip. To-day energetic measures are being taken to organise fleets of steam-trawlers for Australian and Japanese waters. Perhaps we shall see cargoes of frozen fish brought home from the Antipodes.

At the end of December 1909 the total number of first-class steam-trawlers registered in England and Wales and the Isle of Man was 1336, no fewer than 1122 of these being registered at English North Sea ports, including 514 at Grimsby, 446 at Hull, 76 at North Shields, and 31 at Boston. No steam-trawlers were registered either at Yarmouth or Lowestoft, where, however, there were 139 and 243 steam-drifters respectively. Grimsby alone, also Hull, had more steam-trawlers in 1909 than all the foreign countries bordering on the North Sea put together, this total being 433, of which Germany accounted for 290, the Netherlands 78, Belgium 25, Norway 15, France 10, and Denmark 15. The Scottish steam-trawlers

"employed" at North Sea ports during 1909 was 278.

At the time of writing some of these totals have been greatly exceeded. The Germans in particular have advanced. In June 1911 the number of German trawlers arriving at Aberdeen from Iceland was double the number for June 1910.



LOADING THE BOAT WITH TRUNKS OF FISH.



FERRYING FISH TO THE CARRIER.



CHAPTER XI

THE THREE GREATEST FISHING PORTS

GRIMSBY, Hull, and Aberdeen are the greatest fishing ports in the United Kingdom, and Grimsby is the largest in the world. In each of these places railway companies have enormous interests, and the towns bear witness to the gigantic development of the steam-trawling industry during the last quarter of a century. Because of its rapid rise from nothingness, Grimsby is more like an American city than an English town. In the United States many flourishing centres of trade and population have been brought into being entirely owing to a railway company's enterprise. So it is with Grimsby, which owes its importance and prosperity to the Great Central Railway, formerly the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway. The company solely owns the immense market and fish wharves, which are more than a mile long, and in which over 500 merchants do their business.

At the time of the Crimean War, Grimsby was an obscure town with little or no fish traffic; to-day it possesses nearly 700 steam fishing-vessels, representing a capital of £3,500,000 and employing crews numbering nearly 6000, while directly and indirectly half the population of the town is dependent upon the fishing industry.

The population of the port is nearly 70,000, so that about 35,000 men, women, and children subsist on the trawl, line, and herring fisheries in connection with the town. The population in 1790 was only 982.

The steam-tractlers are dealt with all the year round, and on a busy day as many as a hundred will be discharging their cargoes of live and dead fish, and at the same time huge quantities of ice, from the local factories and the Norwegian ice-fields, are being handled. Four trains abreast may be seen loading up with fish for the London and provincial markets. The fish is loaded direct from the market into the trucks, and is dispatched by special express and passenger trains as well as by the Great Central steamers to the Continent.

The first fish train leaves Grimsby at 9.9 a.m. for the West Riding and the North of England, as well as Scotland; the last departs at 8.30 p.m., for the Lancashire and Yorkshire districts. Between those hours thirteen fish trains are dispatched, conveying fish for all parts of the United Kingdom. The London supplies are sent away at 1.30 p.m., 5.30 p.m., and 7.40 p.m., these trains conveying the cargoes which will be sold at Billingsgate on the following morning. The times named are, of course, subject to alteration, to meet the requirements of the trade. These are frequently very severe, especially when there have been exceptionally heavy deliveries of fish; but the resources of the Great Central are equal to any strain that can be put upon them. An express fish train takes precedence of all other goods and minerals traffic, and even a passenger train may be shunted to allow the passing of the freight which is so perishable. A train of this description consists of about a dozen

specially made and equipped bogie-carriages, drawn by a powerful bogie-engine of the most modern type. Each van will hold about 15 tons, and an average load for a fish train is 150 tons. With a length of 44½ ft., a width of 7 ft., and a height of 7 ft., cemented floors which slope to a drain in the centre, so that all unnecessary liquid may escape, and with a system of thorough ventilation, these vans make it possible for fish to be conveyed in the best condition. For the carriage of live fish special tank trucks are provided, the fish being kept in the water in the tanks till wanted.

“The fish special for London, leaving Grimsby at 5.30 p.m., reaches Marylebone at 12.20 a.m.,” wrote a correspondent of *The Times*. “Here it will be drawn up at a fish wharf, where a night staff of men will be waiting to unload the waggons, and to dispatch the consignments, by means of drays, either to Billingsgate or to the termini of other railway companies. Begun within twenty minutes of the arrival of the train, this work will have been finished by 3 a.m. Meanwhile, the special leaving Grimsby at 7.40 p.m. will have reached Marylebone at 2.15 a.m., and this will be dealt with in the same way, the consignments for Billingsgate being all delivered there by 5 a.m.”

In addition to the business in bulk, thousands of parcels are conveyed daily from Grimsby by the Great Central. This is a feature of the fishing industry which has been developed enormously by firms who specialise in selling parcels of fish, weighing from a few pounds upward, direct to consumers in all parts of the country.

Vast quantities of fish are smoked, the daily output of smoked haddock, codling, herring, etc., being from

25 tons in the case of the large firms to lesser quantities with smaller but equally well-equipped concerns. Every possible appliance has been furnished for the preparation of this description of fish, which is exported to all parts of the world.

Codling and kindred fish are dried and salted in huge quantities, the fish being split, salted, and dried as soon as it is brought from the fishing-grounds. In connection with cod there is an extensive manufacture of the finest oil from the fresh livers.

The constant coming and going of such great numbers of steam-trawlers necessitates the provision of very large quantities of coal and ice. More than 700,000 tons of coal are needed yearly for these incessantly industrious steamboats; and over 200,000 tons of ice are required. Most of the ice is made in two large local factories, whose modern and perfect plant is capable of producing 600 tons a day. In addition to this artificial ice great quantities of the natural article are imported from Norway.

Graving-docks, a floating dry-dock which is worked by electricity, sawmills, engineering shops, and miscellaneous premises for the making of fish-trunks, building boats, and producing immense numbers of blocks and other articles needed by steam-trawlers, are constantly busy. A good deal of employment is found for women and children in connection with the manufacture and repair of nets. Universal providers of trawlers' gear and stores are the Great Grimsby Coal, Salt, and Tanning Company, Ltd., whose net manufactories are the most important in the United Kingdom, and whose concern is the largest of its kind in the world. Ex-

tensive works produce the gear with which steam-trawlers are equipped, and in this respect, as in every other way, machinery has superseded hand labour. The old hand-made twine is being replaced by twine which is produced by machinery. Slow manual effort was in keeping with the easy-going days of sail; but all things have given place to the inevitable pressure attendant on the victory of steam.

The whole of the Grimsby fishing trade is now conducted with an energy and bustle that amazes any one who saw it in the days of sail. I remember well the long business of warping out of dock at Grimsby and getting to sea, in a smack—a sleepy performance, indeed, compared with the promptness with which I got away in a steam-trawler the last time I left the port.

No. 1 Fish Dock has an area of 13 acres, and No. 2 Fish Dock has an area of 16 acres. The Pontoon Dry-Dock for fishing-craft has a length on the blocks of 116 ft. 8 in., and a maximum lifting-capacity of 425 tons. The extension of No. 2 Fish Dock, which was under construction for three years, was finished on 8th August 1900. The Pontoon Dry-Dock was opened for use on 1st October 1900, the first vessel to use it being Messrs. Moody & Kelly's steam-trawler *Blackbird*.

Natural ice from Norway was solely used by the fishing trade at Grimsby prior to 1897; but the supply was unreliable, and prices rose in consequence of the growing demand for the article. It became necessary, therefore, to introduce artificial ice, and towards the end of 1898 the building was begun of a large factory for making artificial ice. This was the joint venture of the

Grimsby Ice Company and the Grimsby Co-operative Ice Company. The factory, which began work on 9th October 1901, is built alongside the Fish Dock, and by means of the latest overhead appliances fishing-vessels can be supplied direct from the factory, which can produce 300 tons of block-ice daily.

At the close of the year 1910 there were registered at Grimsby the following fishing-vessels :—

	No. of vessels.	Tonnage.	Average no. of crew per vessel.	Total no. of hands.
Steam line-vessels . . .	38	3,175	13	494
Sailing „ . . .	16	850	9	144
Steam-trawlers . . .	521	38,080	9	4,689
Sailing „ . . .	18	511	5	90
Total . . .	593	42,616	...	5,417

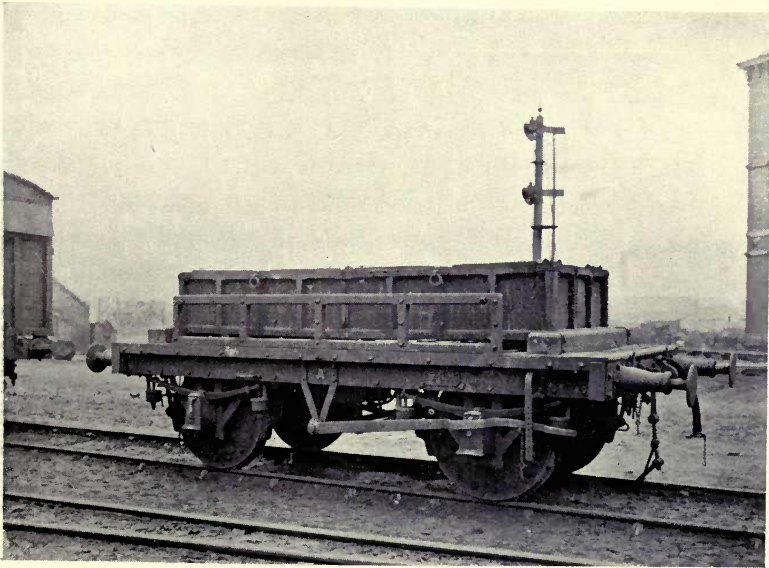
At the present time the total number of steam fishing-vessels registered at the port approaches 700, with a corresponding increase in the total number of hands employed.

The following table shows at a glance the enormous increase in the fish traffic which has been sent away from Grimsby since 1854. Before that year the town had little or no fish traffic :—

Year	Tons
1854	453
1860	4,537
1870	26,324
1880	46,931
1890	71,382
1900	133,791
1910	179,792



HAULING UP LIVE FISH FROM THE WELL OF A DUTCH BOTTER.



A TRUCK FOR CARRYING LIVE FISH IN TANKS.

By permission of the Great Central Railway Co.



The first annual report of the Marine Fisheries Society, Great Grimsby, for the year 1889, stated that Grimsby, which was even then the largest fishing port in the world, had a fleet of more than 800 fishing-vessels, including 38 steamers. It was estimated that the value of this floating property was £1,000,000. These vessels carried 4500 men and boys, and in the course of a year brought to Grimsby Market between 70,000 and 80,000 tons of fish. In those early days several trawling excursions were made in and about the mouth of the Humber in the steam-launch *Chapman*, belonging to the Manchester, Sheffield, and Lincolnshire Railway—now the Great Central.

The enterprise of a railway company to which Grimsby owes so much has its counterpart in the operations of the North-Eastern Railway Company with respect to Hull, the third port of the realm. The fishing industry here is conducted on a vast scale, although the total number of vessels registered at Hull is considerably smaller than Grimsby's. There are, however, about 500 steam-trawlers, with a tonnage of about 374,000 tons. During 1910 there were landed at the port 141,246 tons of fish, of the value of £1,300,000. Special trains and special waggons are used by the North-Eastern Railway Company to convey the fish to all parts of the United Kingdom. Ice factories, curing-houses, and every necessary convenience for the transaction of trade are provided, and there are four slipways for the repair of fishing-craft. With one exception all the docks at Hull are owned by the North-Eastern Railway Company.

Aberdeen has grown with almost phenomenal

rapidity into the headquarters of the steam-trawling industry in Scotland. It is only thirty years since steam-trawling and steam line-fishing as organised trades were introduced in the city. In 1891 there were only 59 steam-trawlers and 6 liners belonging to the port, the value of the trawlers, including their gear, being £180,102; in 1910 the number of trawlers had risen to 217, and of liners to 53, the value of the trawlers being £876,620, and of the liners £121,015. The total value of trawlers and liners was, therefore, £997,635. The total value of the trawlers and liners in 1891 was £192,822. The increase in the number of fishermen employed has been, of course, correspondingly great. In 1910 there were employed in trawlers alone at this port no fewer than 2127 men, a number which was much greater than the total of all classes of fishermen employed at Aberdeen in 1893. In 1910 the quantity and value of the white fish landed at Aberdeen were the highest in the port's history; the port contributed 65 per cent. of the total quantity, and 69 per cent. of the value, of the white fish landed in Scotland.

One of the most striking features of the industry at Aberdeen is the building and equipping of steam-trawlers. These vessels are beautiful examples of their class, and a peculiarity of them is their method of showing their sidelights. These are placed in lighthouses forward, in the same picturesque fashion as that of some of the earlier ocean liners, of which examples are still afloat. While dealing with this chapter, I saw at Aberdeen no fewer than 10 fine trawlers on the stocks alongside each other, and several more were being completed after launching.

Unlike Grimsby and Hull markets, that at Aberdeen belongs to the Town Council, who recognise the need of keeping up to date in everything relating to the trawling industry, and find the market a very profitable investment. The harbour dues on fishing-vessels at Aberdeen are: trawlers, 6s. per arrival; steam-liners, 4s., with a discount of 20 per cent. In addition 2d. per cwt. is charged on all fish landed, half of which is claimed by the Town Council. The revenue from fish, exclusive of herrings, was nearly £18,000 in 1910.

In varied interests of operations, so far as North Sea fishing is concerned, the lead is taken by the North-Eastern Railway Company, whose area of influence extends from the Humber to the Tweed, and, in addition to the enormous operations represented by the ancient port of Hull, there are the fishing ventures of North Shields, Sunderland, Hartlepool, and Scarborough. At Hartlepool the Company have just opened a fine new fish-dock. For different modes of fishing there is scarcely any region which approaches, certainly none which surpasses, that which is served by the North-Eastern system. The most modern operations in steam trawling and lining, as exemplified at Hull, are side by side with the old-world way of doing things, which may be seen at Flamborough, Whitby, Staithes, Newbiggin, Cullercoats, Robin Hood's Bay, and Berwick, to mention three or four of the towns and villages where primitive North Sea men still exist.

Lowestoft is another famous east coast port which owes much to a railway company—the Great Eastern.

The neighbouring port of Yarmouth, like Aberdeen, is under the direction of the municipal authorities. These two ports are mostly associated with the herring-fisheries, the days of their trawling glory having passed.

Though Hull takes second place to Grimsby in relation to the trawling industry, yet the ancient town maintains its importance. In the past the Humber port has been famous for fisheries which have either died out or ceased to be profitable. The Northern Whale Fishery was formerly carried on principally by Hull ships; but the industry drifted farther north, Peterhead securing most of it. In 1829 33 ships left Hull for the whaling, returning with nearly 4000 tons of oil and 236 tons of whalebone; but forty years later scarcely a whaler left Hull. Etty, the painter, who was apprenticed in Hull for seven years, spoke of the port, referring to the whaling days, as "memorable for mud and train-oil." The inhabitants, however, had reason to be grateful to the North Sea for its bounty. Taylor, the water-poet, who was at Hull in 1662, said—

"The people from the sea much wealth have won;
Each man doth live as he were Neptune's son."

That statement may have applied with truth in Taylor's time; but it certainly does not describe the general state of things now, unless Neptune's son subsisted in a very modest way. The steamboat fisherman of to-day has become a hard industrial toiler, and certainly, in great centres like Grimsby, Hull, and Aberdeen, there is not much romance associated with

his dwelling-place ashore. His home is usually some very ordinary house, in a very ordinary street or terrace, and not always so strangely or characteristically named as that renowned locality in Hull which is called the Land of Green Ginger.

CHAPTER XII

WAGES AND PROFITS

NORTH SEA fishers are paid on a peculiar and complicated system, one which has successfully resisted all attempts at change. The great element of chance, the luck of trawling, the gambling of fishing—these for generations have made it impossible to put the immense industry on the established basis of a great business undertaking ashore. A skipper seldom or rarely knows what the result of a haul may be; but the net may bring up a small fortune, a voyage may result in a wonderful profit, and consequently he likes to feel that he will benefit in proportion to the success of his toil. That also is the feeling of his crew. It is a feeling which has prevailed for generations amongst deep-sea fishers, and the opportunity of some remarkable good fortune has enabled many skippers and other deep-sea toilers to start building a substantial fortune. Innumerable chances of assuring financial success have been lost or wasted. I remember seeing, in the earlier days of steam-trawling, a vessel which had been single-boating so triumphantly that she brought to port a catch which realised £700. The profits of the skipper and crew, who were working on the share plan, were accordingly very considerable; but they went mostly into

the coffers of the publicans. Free drinks were plentiful for all comers, and while the money lasted the steam-boat did not return to sea. With such a fine chance many a deep-sea fisherman has paved the way for one of the numerous great concerns which are associated with the days of sail and the ruling age of steam.

Though the method of paying the deep-sea fisherman for his work is complicated, and depends largely on the particular form of industry and on local custom, yet there is a growing tendency to establish wages on a simple and regular basis. Steam-trawling has become such a carefully organised business that perhaps the day is not far distant when there will be a standard rate of pay for all who are engaged in it, and that the workers will be remunerated by fixed sums, according to the custom of the great manufacturing districts of the north of England. At present, however, the share system enters very largely into the earnings of North Sea fishermen, and the older men certainly favour this plan, to which they have been accustomed all their working lives. In the past there was a far better chance of making money in the lump by fishermen than there is to-day. A crew might have an exceptionally good haul and supply a depleted market, receiving big prices for their fish, and considerable fortunes were built by prudent skippers on the foundation of some such lucky catch. In these days the victory is mostly with the strong—the great companies which have been established to work the North Sea trawling-grounds. Some of these concerns, however, fall on disastrous times, while others pay high dividends. It is the luck of trawling.

The payment of a regular wage is favoured by many

large employers of labour in the steam-fishing industry, and there are certainly many skippers and hands who would be glad to know exactly what their weekly income is to be, irrespective of the results of their hauls. Employers and employed have their federations, and in time the system of remuneration will doubtless be settled on a mutually satisfactory basis. There have been serious troubles in connection with the wages of North Sea fishermen, the greatest of all being the strike at Grimsby in 1901, when hundreds of vessels were unemployed for three months and there was much suffering amongst the men, women, and children who were dependent on the fishing industry. The strike was a startling revelation to many people of the vast interests which were at stake in the North Sea fisheries—interests which have grown rapidly and enormously ever since that period, only ten years ago. The lock-out of the fishermen was a local and national calamity; but such a dispute would in these days be infinitely more serious. After many scenes of disorder in the town, both sides agreed to arbitration, and the dispute was settled, for the time at any rate, by Sir Edward Fry. The arbitrator fixed the following rates of pay:—

	Weekly wages.	Poundage after deducting the expense of the voyage.
Chief engineer	34s.	3½d.
Second engineer	27s.	2½d.
Third hand	20s.	2½d.
Deck-hands, cook, trimmer	18s.	1½d.

This basis of remuneration makes it possible for North Sea fishers to share in any extraordinary luck there may be upon the banks; but a fair average of

wages is maintained, and there are not too many cases of exceptional good fortune. An expert like Alderman Mudd, of Grimsby, a practical deep-sea fisherman and an owner of many crafts, calculated that the average weekly earnings of a skipper were £4; a chief engineer, 46s.; a second engineer, 36s.; a mate, 35s. to 40s.; a third hand, 27s.; a deck-hand, cook, and trimmer, 24s., with food in addition, in all cases. This provisioning is a most important consideration, and it should not be forgotten that lodging is provided for a considerable portion of the year, especially in the case of fleters. The entire estimated cost of a private soldier in a Line regiment is £75 a year; that is supposed to be what he gets out of the country in the way of pay, rations, and clothing and lodging. Considering his toil and discomforts, a trimmer, for example, is undoubtedly not so well off as the ordinary British soldier, to say nothing of the superior advantages of the Household Troops.

Like all share systems this method of remuneration on the North Sea is subject to great fluctuations. Writing to me from one of the fleets, a skipper said: "At present the North Sea is using us very well, but, by George! we have had about ten real bad days" (the month was November) "and are fair tired of rolling and knocking about. Yet it has done us all good, for the markets have taken a jump—and time too. Skipper — for sixteen weeks did not round 30s. per week; a mate was telling me that for ten weeks his wife received 15s. per week, and that brought him £5 in debt at the end of the two trips. Another told me that they had to part with some of their home, to keep things going. It

has been a hard summer for many of the fellows in the fleet—working for a dead horse, sending from 1000 to 1500 boxes of fish to market for five weeks, and then not to earn 15s. per week. The whole body were longing for breezes, and thank God they came. Our 807 boxes that we have had this trip out have cleared 5s. 6d. per box. Skipper — last voyage's 1200 boxes cleared him 2s. 11d. per box. However bad it is for the men, the company gets paid well. On the 1200, carriage, etc., was 2s. 9d. per box—£165; then £112 expenses make £277, and then 11 shares of what is left—not much left for the catcher. However, this applies to all the fleets, and there's nothing for it but to laugh and bear it."

On this question of remuneration for work done on the North Sea banks it is important to remember that in the old sailing days the system was adopted, in some cases at least, of paying a regular wage. The plan was not successful, and for a fairly obvious reason. Finding that they were paid in any case, skippers and men, being far away from land and their employers, very humanly took advantage of the situation and failed to put into their efforts that consistent energy which was essential to achieve success. The *cooper* and the attractions of adjacent shores proved too much for the fleeters, the result being that they fished when they were in the mood to do so, which was not too often, and they sought enjoyment when they felt disposed towards it, which was frequently. The system of paying a regular wage has not up to the present proved successful on the North Sea, though its adoption would be welcomed by those North Sea workers who, because of the share system, are unprotected by the Workmen's Compensation Act.

The share system prevails in the herring-fishing, on the following basis, in the case of a steam-drifter with her crew of ten: Say the gross earnings for a season are £1000; from that sum the expenses of coal, food, landing dues, fish salesmen's commission, and incidentals, amounting in the total to £250, are deducted. The owner of the vessel then takes half, and the other half is divided amongst the crew according to their rank, and the owner out of this half takes three shares.

The skipper	takes	$1\frac{11}{8}$	shares
„ mate	„	$1\frac{1}{4}$	„
„ engineer	„	1	„
„ hawsemen	„	1	„
„ whaleman	„	$\frac{31}{48}$	„
„ netstower	„	$\frac{31}{48}$	„
„ stoker	„	$\frac{3}{4}$	„
„ cast-off man	„	$\frac{3}{4}$	„
„ „	„	$\frac{11}{28}$	„
„ cook or boy	„	$\frac{1}{2}$	„

Such is the principle. The practice works out in an astonishingly erratic manner, for even a skipper's share will be sometimes so small as to be contemptible. Not long ago the skipper of a Lowestoft steam-drifter told me that for a whole year's fishing at the drifting, reckoning the lost time ashore in winter, his total earnings were only £34. "It's a bare, hard living at the best," he added. On the other hand, there is always the chance of a big success. For example, in 1899 the Yarmouth herring-fleet, in its voyage which ended in Christmas week, made a record catch of herrings, the aggregate being 26,000 lasts, with a value of £300,000. Lowestoft also had a record catch of 18,000 lasts. This

voyage began in August, and high prices were realised throughout the season. The most successful Yarmouth boat earned £3400, and her skipper received £200, the mate £140, six of her crew £124, and the cook, who was a boy, £31. For that season the Scotch fisher-girls, as they mostly were, were paid £13,000 in wages, the tellers who counted the fish received £2000, and the cartage amounted to £3600.

In the days when fishing was done entirely by sailing vessels there were occasionally strokes of good fortune which corresponded with the big hauls and profits of to-day. The mackerel fishery of 1821, for example, was astonishingly successful. On 30th June sixteen Lowestoft boats had catches of a total value of £5252—an average of £328 each. Four Hastings boats, on a Sunday in March 1833, brought to harbour 10,800 mackerel, and the next day two boats took to market 7000 fish. Early in February 1834 a Hastings crew, for one night's catch, cleared £100. The boats engaged in the mackerel fishery at that time were usually attended by fast-sailing vessels, and these were dispatched with the fish as soon as it was taken. These cutters sailed direct either for London or the nearest market from which land carriage could be got. The fish was sent from places like Hastings by vans, which travelled to London in the night.

The highest price ever known at Billingsgate market up to nearly a century ago was realised in May 1807, when the first Brighton boatload of mackerel fetched forty guineas a hundred—at the rate of 7s. each, reckoning six score to a hundred. The next boatload, however, was sold at only thirteen guineas a hundred,

although that was a very high price. In the following year, at Dover, mackerel were selling at sixty for a shilling!

Mr. Henry Knott, a Grimsby smack-owner, gave details of the weight and value of fish taken by one of his craft in each of the five consecutive years, 1860 to 1864. During that period 86 tons of prime sold for £23 a ton, and 357 tons of offal for £2 a ton, the total price realised for the 443 tons being £2702, an average of £6 a ton. The price per pound of the prime was 2½d. and that of the offal not quite a farthing.

A master of a fishing-vessel trading for the London market told Yarrell that eight men, fishing under his orders off the Dogger Bank, in 25 fathoms, took eighty score of cod in a day. These were brought to Gravesend in stout cutter-rigged vessels of 80 or 100 tons, called store-boats, built for the traffic, with a large well in which the fish were kept alive, and of these a portion was sent up to Billingsgate with each night tide. The store-boats remained as low as Gravesend, because the water there was sufficiently mixed to keep the fish alive; they would have been killed if taken higher up. At that period, half a century ago, there were more than 250 well-boats which brought the fish to Billingsgate. These were built at a cost of more than £275,000, and were manned by more than 2000 men and boys. Yarrell estimated that these crews must earn £140,000 yearly before the capitalists got any profit.

In his *Wages and Earnings of the Working-Classes*, published in 1867, Professor Leone Levi stated that the average earnings of a fisherman might be taken at 20s. a week, and 6s. for a boy; but in many cases the fishermen had other employments, and when they were

paid by wages, all the time they were at sea they were fed at the owners' expense. "The labour is great and intermittent," he said. "For many nights consecutively the men are out. In some cases, where the boats are large enough, they have sleeping accommodation; but when the boats are small the hardship is great. When the fisherman is paid by wages he defrays no part of the expense; but it is otherwise when he works by shares." Professor Levi estimated the cost of a pilchard-boat at more than £200; a herring-boat, £35 to £40; a trawl-boat about £20; a line-boat, £60; a seine-boat, £15, besides the cost of fitting up. These craft were, of course, much smaller than those which are now in use for similar purposes. In 1865 no fewer than 98 fishing-smacks were wrecked, "but many isolated accidents occur of which we have no account." In referring to "fishing-smacks" Professor Levi doubtless included all fishing-vessels; even so, the loss was heavy. At that time there was little or no interest taken in fishermen, many of whom were miserably poor and often forced to put to sea in rotten craft with corresponding sails and rigging and gear. In this respect there has been an amazing advance, largely owing to official encouragement, but mainly due to private enterprise. No man who understands steamboats would hesitate to journey to any part of the world in a modern North Sea trawler, especially with a North Sea crew.

Valuable and interesting information with respect to the earnings of Scottish fishermen is given in the last annual report of the Scottish Fishery Board; but the details cannot in many cases be considered more than approximately accurate because of the unwillingness of

many fishermen to divulge figures, and also because proper accounts are not kept. Motor-boat fishing, which has developed enormously, proved very successful, and these east coast craft—auxiliary motor-boats—occupy a position intermediate between steam-drifters and sail-drifters. The following figures relating to a typical Scotch district, with a fairly large motor-fleet, are considered to be authentic :—

Summer Herring-Fishing.

	Highest.	Lowest.	Average.
Steam-drifters . . .	£1050	£500	£800
Motor-boats . . .	910	500	635
Sail-boats . . .	600	105	355

English Herring-Fishing.

	Highest.	Lowest.	Average.
Steam-drifters . . .	£1100	£140	£610
Motor-boats . . .	540	90	320
Sail-boats . . .	310	75	162

The average earnings per vessel of the craft engaged in the principal fishings off the Scottish and English coasts were regarded as “fair.” The results for the chief districts were—

District.	Great Summer Herring-Fishing.		English Herring-Fishing.	
	1910	1909	1910	1909
Anstruther . . .	£840	£969	£547	£468
Aberdeen . . .	720	800	562	522
Peterhead . . .	1029	942	600	512
Fraserburgh . . .	1030	590	790	480
Banff ¹ . . .	750	850	646	582
Wick . . .	1000	1310	540	560

¹ Includes also early herring-fishing.

The herring-fishings did not absorb the whole energy of fishermen who owned steam-vessels. Some of them went great-line fishing during the early months of the year, while others followed the early herring-fishings. These fishings are not generally popular amongst the fishermen, for unless the catches are very good the earnings do not compensate for the labour involved and the wear and tear of gear owing to stormy weather. Another section of the fleet, which fished mostly from Aberdeen, were great-lining during the whole season. In 1910 these vessels were remarkably successful, one earning £4200, and the average for about seventeen being £3800. These agreeable results induced the owners of more than a score of trawlers to fit them out for the line-fishing during the summer months, and these craft also secured good profits.

A small motor-skiff in Shetland earned £607 gross for the year, seven-eighths of that amount being probably net earnings. In another case two crews working haddock lines for about ten weeks made a gross total of £220. Generally speaking, fishermen were pleased with the results of motor-fishing and their ability to make two trips a day instead of one, and to work their boats with four men, compared with five for the sailers, largely discounted the extra running expenses.

The replacement of sail by mechanically propelled vessels (says the last Report of the Scottish Fishery Board), which is now such a notable feature of the herring-fishing industry, was still further exemplified during 1910, when 706 steamers, 51 motor-boats, and 500 sailing vessels took part in the English herring-fishing, as against 645 steam- and 614 sail- and motor-vessels in

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1909. The average earnings of the steamers amounted to £530; of the motor-boats, £295; and of the sailing boats, £134. The earnings of the steamers were practically identical with those of 1909 (£529), but those of the sailing boats compare unfavourably with last year's earnings, which amounted to £204.

The great railway strike in August 1911 gave proof, which was scarcely needed, of the paralysing effect of labour troubles on the modern steam-fishing industry. It also showed the hardship inflicted by irresponsible demagogues on, amongst others, toiling fishermen. The strike meant that many laborious hauls of trawls on the North Sea banks were wasted energy, for when the cargoes of fish were brought to market it was impossible to unload them, and the North Sea men, who were innocent of any participation in the troubles ashore, were robbed of the fruits of their toil as the result of the glib vapourings of agitators. Enormous quantities of valuable and nutritious food were wasted solely as the result of the action of these self-appointed leaders in industrial troubles.

By way of showing how resourceful are those business men who direct the North Sea fleetings, I may mention that when the strike paralysed the fish trade of some of the ports, particularly that of Grimsby, arrangements were made to send a number of steam-trawlers direct to Billingsgate, and that in the middle of August there was to be seen the uncommon spectacle of several of these vessels unloading their fish, as well as the carriers from the fleets. The lesson was useful as indicating the resources of modern business enterprise and the impossibility of labour agitators carrying out

their own narrow and selfish purposes. These men were apparently under the impression that by creating a railway strike they were completely crippling distribution. It was a fine strategic movement to send the steam-tractors round by sea to supply the London market with fish. Equally resourceful was the order given to two Grimsby trawlers, on reaching the Humber, to land their fish at Ymuiden, in Holland, and at Ostende, and to make another voyage before entering Grimsby.

A brief and remarkable strike in connection with the fish traffic of Hull took place early in 1911. At the beginning of February six fish porters employed by the North-Eastern Railway Company struck work on the ground that although they were required to do the work of "checking" the fish packages they handled, still, they were only paid the rate of wages given to fish porters—checkers being paid 29s. a week and fish porters 24s. There was a strike on the railway which lasted a day only, although it seemed probable that the trouble would extend and cause very great disturbance of the fish traffic and a heavy loss of money.

CHAPTER XIII

SCIENTIFIC TRAWLING

IF anything had been needed to complete the thoroughness with which the fish of the North Sea were chased and captured, it was afforded by the scientific efforts of the Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom. This society was formed by men who were interested in our great sea-fisheries. Its object was to help industry and further science, and since the Association was formed it has added enormously to our knowledge of the habits and conditions of the life of sea-fishes. The headquarters are at Plymouth, where a fine Laboratory, built and equipped at a cost of £12,000, was opened on 30th June 1888. Practical and scientific investigations have been conducted continuously since that time. The permanent scientific staff consists of a Director of the Laboratory, a naturalist for fishery investigations, and a director's assistant who is chiefly employed in collecting, identifying, and preserving marine animals. English and foreign naturalists also visit the Laboratory for independent research.

Though the headquarters are at Plymouth, yet the work is thoroughly national. From 1892 to 1895 elaborate investigations were made by the society's officers, working from Grimsby and Lowestoft as

centres, regarding the destruction of immature fish in the North Sea. Those researches had special reference to the proposed closure of certain fishing-grounds, and to the proposal to prohibit the sale of fish below a certain size. On this point valuable evidence was placed by the Association in 1893 before the Select Committee of the House of Commons on Sea Fisheries. The Committee in their report stated that they had had "the evidence grounded on the observations of the scientific experts employed by the Marine Biological Association, and by the Scottish Fishery Board. Indeed, it may almost be said that this is the first fishery inquiry in which the more important complaints have been founded, not merely on the statements and the ideas of rival classes of fishermen, but upon facts and statistics."

Amongst the practical investigations upon matters directly connected with sea-fishing, which the Association has carried out, are the following:—

- (1) The reproduction and development of fishes, the determination of the characters of egg, larva, and young at all stages of growth, with experiments on the rearing of fishes in captivity, and on their rate of growth in confinement and in the sea;
- (2) The size at which maturity is reached in different species; the variations which this relation undergoes in different localities; the characteristics of local races of fish;
- (3) The food-supply and sense organs of fishes, with experiments on their methods of feeding, and on the manufacture and employment of artificial baits;
- (4) The distribution of flat-fishes at different stages of growth; their migrations; the destruction of immature fish on particular grounds, or by particular methods of fishing;
- (5) The natural history



A SCIENTIFIC STEAM-TRAWLER,
THE HUXLEY.

By permission of the Marine Biological Association.



A STEAM-TRAWLER LEAVING ABERDEEN.



NO. 2111
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of migratory pelagic fishes, including the pilchard, anchovy, and mackerel, with reference to their reproduction, racial peculiarities, and the extent and direction of their migrations; (6) The relation between the distribution, seasonal migrations, and varying abundance of fishes, and the physical conditions of the sea.

The Association's income is derived partly from a Government grant and partly from public and private contributions. The Government began with a grant of £500 yearly, a sum which was increased in 1891 to £1000; and £400 is contributed annually by the Fishmongers' Company.

In the summer of 1902 the Association undertook to carry out for the Government, amongst other things, the investigation of the fishing-grounds of the southern part of the North Sea. That work resulted from the deliberations of representatives of the European Powers bordering the North Sea, which was held at Christiania in 1901. For the purpose of conducting the researches, a large steam-trawler was hired and specially fitted out, and an additional laboratory was opened at Lowestoft. The English investigations were to be continued for six years.

The steam-trawler which was acquired was the *Khedive*, renamed the *Huxley*. She was built of steel at North Shields, in 1899, her net tonnage being 44 and her nominal horse-power 52. For five years the steamboat was hired, then she was bought, and, after the six years, was sold, and is now working as an ordinary trawler, from Grimsby. Altogether the *Huxley* made 112 voyages, and during her employment on North Sea fishery research work 920 hauls were made with the beam-trawl and 569 with the otter-trawl—a total of

1489. This apparatus is known as the commercial gear ; small gear included various forms of trawls and other tow-nets, as well as dredges, and with these a total of 1513 hauls was made. With the Association's steamer *Oithona*, of 28 tons and 20 horse-power, the Wash, Bridlington Bay, the Suffolk bays and estuaries, and the mouth of the Thames were fished, and altogether from this vessel 102 hauls were made in the North Sea.

A remarkable feature of the work that was carried out was the marking of fish, in order to trace their migrations and growth. Living fish, mostly plaice, were marked with numbered labels of different kinds (brass discs, bone buttons, vulcanite studs, etc.) and were set free in various parts of the North Sea. Plaice and other flat fish were marked by means of discs or studs fastened near the edge of the body ; skates and rays were marked with brass labels on the wings ; codfish, haddock, and latchet were marked by means of a silver or vulcanite label attached to one of the gill-covers of the fish, or near the back fins. Rewards were paid for marked fish as follows : For the fish and label complete, with information as to place and date of capture, 2s. ; for the label alone, with the same information, 1s. ; for the label alone, without information, 6d. In addition to the reward the market price was paid in the case of valuable fishes. These rewards are still given by the Board of Agriculture and Fisheries.

These experiments by the Association resulted in the marking and liberation of 16,104 plaice, 713 soles, and 552 other fish ; of which 4605 (28 per cent.) plaice, 57 (8 per cent.) soles, and 113 (20 per cent.) other fish were recovered. The object of the markings after March

1909 was to ascertain the movements of plaice east of the Dogger, when at a larger size than those fishes which were marked in the majority of the experiments carried out on the Eastern Grounds. In July 317 plaice were accordingly marked in Clay Deep and the vicinity.

It was found that with rare exceptions the recaptures of plaice marked either on the Flamborough Off Ground or among the Lemn Banks were confined to a definite tract of ground which follows the main direction of the English coast. Very few recoveries took place to the west of a line drawn from Flamborough Head to a few miles east of Cromer. Very little trawling, however, takes place in that region, except in the late spring or early summer, while the ground, being the typical rough area of the North Sea, is unsuitable for plaice. Of the recaptures 73 per cent. were known to be made by English steam-trawlers, while of the 17 per cent. which were returned from the Grimsby pontoon or fish-markets probably the majority were recovered by the same craft, for only 7 per cent. are known to have been retaken by foreign fishing-vessels.

On the Flamborough Off and neighbouring grounds the plaice of immature size are markedly stationary, being mostly caught after travelling a few miles from the point of liberation; on the other hand, mature plaice travel considerable distances within those limits, in what is clearly a spawning migration. Spawning plaice are taken on the Flamborough Off Ground and in the south of the Southern Bight, and spent plaice at these and intermediate positions. The number of mature, spawning, or spent males taken in the Southern Bight is in distinct excess over that of the females, while the

reverse is markedly the case on the Flamborough Off Ground. If spent fish are omitted that excess of mature males remains ; so does that of females on Flamborough Off Ground, but this is very slight. Accordingly, it is somewhat doubtful whether a greater proportion of the males than the females take part in a southward migration, or whether the sexes both move southwards, but the females, returning earlier, are caught farther to the north than the males. Generally speaking, a greater proportion of the males than the females appear to travel, more males than females leaving the Flamborough Off Ground. It is evident that in the Southern Grounds the females move northward at an earlier date than the males, the females predominating among the fish of mature size marked near Smith's Knoll, off the Norfolk coast, while the males are in excess in marking experiments farther south.

An important and interesting observation was made on the fish trawled for marking, and this was that fish differ as to the appearance of the eyes, which in some cases are dull and in others markedly bright. In four experiments the plaice with bright eyes were recaptured in far greater proportion than the rest, so that it appears as if the eyes afford a test of the condition of the fish. The high proportion captured in the case of the bright-eyed plaice was fully maintained in two other cases in which only fish of that kind were marked.

Vitality experiments were made on the plaice from about fifty hauls of the commercial trawl of the *Huxley*. In some of these experiments a number of fish were placed in the tanks immediately after capture, others after an hour's exposure on deck, a proceeding which

gave information as to the state of the fish after a period corresponding roughly to that which small plaice would lie on the decks of a trawler before being returned to the sea. It also enabled a comparison to be made between the proportion surviving under these conditions and the proportion which would survive if they were returned to the sea at once.

The measuring of fish was carried out systematically, the total catches being measured on nearly all occasions. Enormous numbers of fish were dealt with, the total for the years 1902-9 being 610,139, of which 179,763 were plaice, 50,658 haddock, and 379,718 other sorts.

Transplantation experiments were conducted on a considerable scale. Thirteen of these experiments, dealing with 3942 fish, consisted in the transference of plaice from the coastal grounds of the North Sea to the southern parts of the Dogger. The experiments began in 1904, and by the end of June 1909 nearly 1000 of the plaice had been returned. The two most noteworthy features of the growth in length of these recovered fishes were the undoubted growth which was found to have occurred on the Dogger during the winter months, and the full confirmation of the high estimates of a year's growth which had been derived from the first experiments. This growth was found to be never less than twice, and frequently from two and a half to three times, that prevailing on the coastal grounds from which the plaice were taken. The condition of the transplanted plaice showed a steady improvement until August, a slackening in September, and a marked increase in October, these relations existing in both the first and second years of liberty. The weight of the plaice

retaken after a year had increased to from 4.5 to 5.75 times that which was possessed on liberation; this increase being, in round terms, rather more than three and a half times the growth which would probably have taken place in the same period on the coastal grounds.

The report of the Council of the Association points out that since the value of plaice increases with their size, the increase in value of the transplanted plaice is yet more remarkable. If the most detailed statement of the prices of plaice of different lengths, those drawn up by Johansen for plaice of the Kattegat, be accepted as accurate for the North Sea, it appears that these plaice when transplanted had a value of £4; within a year £7 worth had been recovered, while those presumably at liberty were of £4.2 value. Had the plaice remained on the coastal ground, on the same calculation, their total value at the end of the year, assuming that none were retaken during the year, so that all enjoyed a year's growth, would be but £18. The estimated increase in value in two years, though based on more meagre data, yet indicates that the value of the plaice retaken within that period was nearly three and a half times that of all the plaice liberated, while the probable worth of those still at liberty was still greater.

The *Huxley's* far-reaching work included important investigations which added greatly to existing knowledge of the eggs of many fishes. The eggs occurring in the greatest quantities were those of the mackerel, sprat, horse-mackerel, and solenette, and a particular cruise of the vessel in June 1909 resulted in getting much additional information as to the spawning of these species of fishes in the Flemish Bight. June was found

to be a period of intense spawning. Great catches of eggs were made with the Petersen young-fish trawl and Todds trawl, and almost every stage of development was represented.

Another interesting feature of the work conducted by the Association is reported for February 1910. In co-operation with Mr. G. P. Bidder drift bottles were put out along a line stretching east-north-east from Spurn. One hundred bottom drifters and 266 surface drifters were put overboard, the first at 5 miles and the last at 88 miles from land. This experiment took place in an area which was previously untouched in similar investigations, but was known to be a plaice spawning-ground, and results of great interest were yielded. Messrs. Wilson, of Hull, gave all facilities for the work, and Captain French, of the s.s. *Zero*, contributed valuable help during the voyage in which the bottles were put out. A curious circumstance was noted—that the proportions of bottom-drift bottles returned from fishing-vessels approximated to the percentages of recoveries which were met with during a year amongst the selected bright-eyed plaice to which reference has been made.

Grimsby trawlers assisted in the Association's work, and a report of the fishermen's records gives a detailed analysis of 13,246 hauls made by the skippers of these vessels during the period 1904-7. These hauls were allotted to twenty-three different areas in the central and southern parts of the North Sea. Examinations were made of the catches of seven species of food fishes—plaice, soles, turbot, brill, cod, haddock, and whiting, and as far as possible the seasonal and yearly fluctuations of

each of these species were determined for each area. The comparative distribution of each species was estimated, and investigation was made of the spawning periods and regions. The final results gave a striking contrast in the seasonal and geographical distribution of the round and flat fishes. Plaice, soles, turbot, and brill were found in their greatest numbers on the eastern grounds and in the adjacent areas. Cod and haddock were very scarce in these areas, but these species seemed to be very abundant on the Dogger and on the grounds north and north-east of it, where the prime fish are very rarely found and plaice are comparatively scarce. The round fish appeared on the inshore and southern grounds in the autumn and winter only, when the flat fish are present in very small numbers, and they are almost completely absent from these grounds in the late spring and summer, when soles and turbot are numerous. The yearly fluctuations varied, but, on the whole, showed a decline throughout the period for most of the species. These fluctuations in some areas were complementary to those in others. Compared with records of catches of fish taken ten and twenty-five years before these, they showed a very considerable diminution.

The travels and movements of marked fishes and other marine animals have been in many cases accurately recorded, and some surprising results have been achieved. A large marked plaice was found to have travelled 136 miles from the point of liberation to the spot where it was caught, and many other instances of long journeys are recorded. In the southern part of the North Sea a definite southward migration of large plaice in the winter months was demonstrated. The fish congregated

in the region immediately north of the Straits of Dover and spawned there. After spawning they migrated northward again to their spring and summer feeding-grounds.

Scientific investigation into the sea-fisheries continues to be made by the Scotch Fishery Board, under the superintendence of Dr. T. Wemyss Fulton. Most of the research work is done at the Marine Laboratory, Bay of Nigg, Aberdeen, where requests for plaice fry were received from fishermen on various parts of the coast. A considerable improvement in the plaice-fishing on the Aberdeenshire coast has been reported by fishermen, who attribute this to the liberation of many millions of fry during the last nine years. During that period nearly 193,000,000 plaice fry from the Hatchery were liberated off Aberdeenshire, 45,000,000 being deposited in the Fraserburgh neighbourhood. The number of food fishes marked and liberated during that period was 2328, of which 1915 were plaice. Of the marked and liberated fishes 503 were afterwards caught and returned, 500 being plaice, of which 26 per cent. were recaptured. The attempts to mark haddock were unsuccessful, owing to the great tenderness of that fish, but, in the hope that information may be secured, special care is being taken and a special mark employed.

There are many fishermen who make a study of some of the fishes that are captured. The vast majority of the animals naturally go unnoticed, the only interest in them being of a temporary nature and confined to a swift calculation of their probable market value. Anything exceptional, however, will claim long and earnest consideration, for to fishermen the uncommon is what a

good murder mystery or a serious political squabble is to the townsman. I found in conversation with a fisherman that he made something of a hobby of the ray species. "Ray-fish suckle their young," he said, "and fishermen often enough, judging that they are with young, will cut the females open and throw the young into the sea, where, if it's calm, you can see 'em darting about; but they don't live, because they haven't their mothers to nourish 'em. Dogfish suckle their young, too, and sometimes the female dogfish will be hauled up with the young hanging on. Sometimes, when caught and cut open, the young will be born. This is called by some fishermen 'shooting their young.' Some fishes suffer from awful diseases, and I know enough about skates to keep me from ever touching 'em as food. In some parts fishermen call 'em——" But I had better not repeat the word. What this informant told me was in remarkably close agreement with what several eminent naturalists have written concerning the ray tribe.

North Sea fishermen have their own peculiar and quaint convictions with regard to right and wrong. Like the children of Israel, they glory in overcoming an opponent in a bargain. They have also original ideas concerning property, especially that which may be looked upon as national. Money is given by a public department for recovering marked fishes and marine animals, and some of the sons of the North Sea have distinguished themselves by achievements which are not, and will not be, recorded in official reports as to the growth and welfare of the food supplies for market. On the coast, at a place where crabs and coblemen abound, a duly appointed investigator engaged a couple of men and

their coble, at an inclusive charge of £6 weekly, to assist him in his work of marking and releasing crabs. The pay was good, the work easy and pleasant, and the scientific work proceeded smoothly. Crabs were caught and marked and then set free, so that in due course some at least of them might be recovered and bear witness to their travels. The North Sea man has a habit of letting matters settle in his mind, and the coblemen, regarding the scientific experiments with disfavour and suspicion, designed to keep their chief and employer ashore. That was not a hard matter. They took him out one day in shabby weather, whereupon he discovered that he could, with the greatest ease and comfort, conduct his operations from the safety and solidity of the land. For a considerable period the new arrangement lasted, then it was abruptly terminated, and the coblemen resumed the gentle art of crab-potting, for the official had discovered that the men, holding it to be a crime and an unheard-of thing to give back to the sea that which had been wrested from it, had removed the marks and then sold the crabs in the ordinary and legitimate way of commerce.

CHAPTER XIV

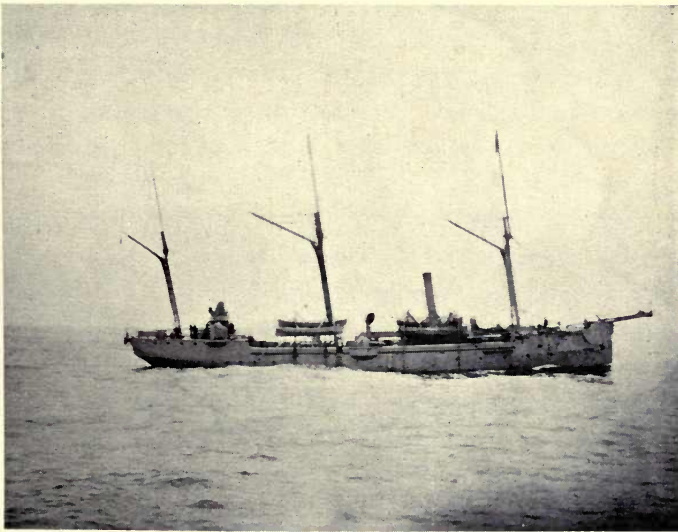
FISHERIES PROTECTION

WITH such vast wealth in the North Sea to be had for the trouble of catching with nets and lines of various sorts, it became essential that measures should be taken to control the fisheries and protect them. To this end legislation came in, with the result that there is an international agreement regulating the North Sea fisheries. The countries which are parties to the arrangement are Great Britain, Germany, Belgium, Denmark, France, and Holland.

The fishermen of each of these countries enjoy the exclusive right of fishery within the distance of three geographical miles from low-water mark along the whole extent of the coasts of their respective countries, as well as of the dependent islands and banks. The territorial limits in Norway and Sweden are four miles. The Sea Fisheries Act, 1883, and the corresponding legislation of the other countries concerned, came into operation while the fishing was still mostly done by sailing vessels. Up to that period skippers had done pretty much as they liked; but with the coming of steam there was organised a complete system of policing the fisheries in the North Sea outside territorial waters, and now the master of a North Sea trawler looks upon fisheries



SCOTCH HERRING-BOATS.



H.M.S. *THRUSH*, FORMERLY COMMANDED BY KING GEORGE,
ON NORTH SEA FISHERIES PROTECTION DUTIES.



protection cruisers much in the same light as the citizen ashore regards the policeman. If he does wrong, he must do it by stealth. He frequently succeeds. Yet policing North Sea fishermen has grown into a fatherly care of these brave toilers by the naval officers who command the little warships that are spoken of by smacksmen as "Government boats." It is largely due to the officers' ceaseless vigilance that the *cooper* has been driven off the Dogger and other banks, and that law rules the North Sea pretty much as it reigns ashore. The commander of a gunboat on fisheries protection is the stipendiary magistrate of the North Sea. He is there to administer the law, and to give advice and help; and he does it all with prompt and sailor-like efficiency.

The ships of the Royal Navy which are detailed for work amongst the trawlers are not ideal craft for deep-sea work; but probably a special sort of ship would need to be evolved that is capable of giving ordinary comfort on the torn waters which are ruled by the wild winds that sweep down from somewhere near the North Pole. You may pass on the North Sea an effete hooker, flying the white ensign, which is inferior in every way to many a vessel that has been scrapped; yet she is considered good enough to ride the fiercest waters in the world. You may see some such forlorn craft as the *Thrush*, smart enough in her day to be commanded by a sailor who is now the King, wallowing in the swell, and you know that she would doubtless fail to catch a wrong-doing powerful modern trawler even if she almost burst her boilers in the chase. Yet she is good enough for fisheries protection. A new ship, however, the *Watchful*, has been detailed for this particular duty,

and she will doubtless be the pioneer of a number of specially built craft for North Sea work.

The type of ship with which smacksmen have become most familiar in connection with policing the fishing-grounds is the torpedo-gunboat. There were originally sixteen of these sister first-class torpedo-gunboats, which, with a speed of twenty knots, were designed to run down and destroy torpedo craft, till they in turn, and very quickly, became useless for their purpose through the advent of destroyers. These gunboats had a displacement of 735 tons, with a length of 230 ft., a breadth of 27, a complement of 85 men, and a 4.7 quick-firing gun as the heaviest ordnance. In bad or even moderate weather they were what a North Sea man would call a "washer," and service in them was neither comfortable nor exhilarating.

No clearer, finer first-hand picture of the work done by His Majesty's ships on fisheries protection has been given than that by Commander E. Hamilton Currey, R.N., in two articles "On the North Sea Fishery," which he contributed to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. He has been kind enough to let me quote from these papers.

"A thousand drifters are out to-night, and as each has shot nets varying in length from a mile to a mile and a quarter, this particular portion of the sea craves wary navigation. Outside the outermost the gunboat crawls slowly up and down till dawn. With their hinged foremasts lowered, their riding-lights burning, and just steadied by a rag of a mizzen, the drifters ride at their nets. But now a flush comes over the rim of the eastern horizon, and the long spell of immobility is at

an end. The warps come in as the windlass heaves, and the fishermen, in yellow canvas aprons, claw their nets over the sides; the fish gleam like bars of silver in the rising sun as they are shaken from the net and lie in shining heaps upon the deck. Another hour and the sea is red and black with their sails. A fresh breeze comes piping up from the northward, and a great Scotch drifter passes the loitering gunboat. The huge red lugsail is eased a trifle, and as the sheet tugs on its groaning cleat the splendid boat lays over and tears landward like a racing cutter. . . .

“‘Whither away now, sir?’ asks the sub.

“‘Oh, we’ll have a turn on the Broad Fourteens,’ answers his captain, ‘and pick up some fresh soles for breakfast to-morrow out of the trawlers.’

“So they seek the haunt of the flat fish and the trawler, which is the middle of the North Sea, and find the boats hard at work, headed by their ‘Admiral,’ who flies a red flag and directs the fleet, and is generally the oldest and the wisest of these splendid fishermen from Yarmouth and Lowestoft. They fill up with fresh water, loiter again through the night, and in the morning the wind drops. A big Lowestoft trawler hails as they pass.

“‘Got no water aboard, sir; will you give us a “pluck” into Ymuiden?’

“So the end of the trawl-warp is passed aboard and the grateful skipper is left within a mile of his market and his destination, while the gunboat streaks across, as the sun dips, to shepherd the drifters once again.”

It is shepherding, indeed, with these harvesters of the Dogger; but sometimes a black member of the flock

careers at large and resists all efforts at capture or reformation. He knows that heavy punishment is the result of being caught trawling in forbidden waters, yet stolen fish is sweet, and he will often shoot his net within the three miles' limit and risk all consequences. Big fines, confiscation of gear, even arrest of the vessel herself, may be the penalty for poaching; but the fisher takes the risk of all. Sometimes he is caught in the very commission of his sin. A gunboat sees him, and swings up at her top speed just in time to land him—or at least, if she is a warship of his own nation, to warn him in bluff sailor-speech to begone. It may be that a British naval officer, being at heart a sportsman himself, and knowing something of the hardships of those who win a living from the sullen North Sea, may range alongside in time to learn of some felonious act. Very well—but even a Tory squire ashore will occasionally give a poacher the benefit of a doubt, or go so far as to say that a prisoner may not be guilty, but he must not do it again.

Little or no mercy, however, is shown by foreign Powers towards British fishermen arrested in their territorial waters, and this is particularly the case with Germany. A British master was charged with fishing in German waters, and his advocate reported that the Appeal Court at Leipzig had pronounced the presence of a foreign fishing-boat in German waters with the intention of fishing to be an offence equivalent to that of actual fishing, and that consequently British fishing-boats, when, for any reason whatever, within the territorial limits of Germany, should be most careful to avoid everything which could raise any suspicion of their

intending to fish. The Board of Trade issued a notice calling attention to this advice and the importance of being guided by it, and reminding British fishermen of the severity of the penalties incurred by an infraction of the German law.

The notorious case of the Moray Firth has been the cause of much unnecessary work by cruisers, and of great injustice to British fishermen. The Moray Firth is an arm of the North Sea, in the north-east of Scotland, 78 miles broad, and running south-west for nearly 24 miles. It gives abundant and excellent fish, yet the waters have been closed to British fishermen, although foreigners have been and are at liberty to get what they can catch. They have done so and taken their cargoes to Aberdeen and other markets and sold them. Such a state of things would make far less renowned fighters than North Sea men break laws, and they have used every artifice to evade the regulation.

Strong feeling against foreign trawlers has naturally arisen; but not even heavy punishments can stop the efforts of British fishermen to reap some of the advantage which is so freely and unjustly given to foreign rivals. At the end of May 1911 the master of a Hull trawler pleaded guilty at the Wick Sheriff Court to trawling within the Moray Firth limit. He was fined £100, with the option of sixty days' imprisonment, and that severe sentence is typical of the heavy penalties that are constantly imposed on British fishermen for doing what is done with safety and impunity by foreigners.

What the following up of reports and rumours of

illegal trawling means in winter has been described by Commander Currey.

“ ‘Manœuvres’ are over, and back again at fishery protection is the torpedo-gunboat. Week by week she glides out of Harwich Harbour, and each succeeding week finds the weather worse than the one which went before. Pessimism prevails in the ward-room, and the Sub-Lieutenant has become a professed cynic, and receives the gibes of his messmates with a dark and gloomy scorn. Forward, the mess-deck under the top-gallant fore-castle leaks like a sieve; twice in a month has the sea gone clean through the cook’s galley, putting out the fire and ruining, once the men’s dinner, a second time filling their allotted breakfast cocoa with North Sea brine. Waterproof sou’-westers and blasphemy fill the lower deck. They ride out a gale in Corton Roads, another in the Wash, and escape a third by the skin of their teeth by darting back into Harwich Harbour, and still fishery protection has to be attended to and the North Sea patrolled. . . .

“ ‘ ‘Ands unmoor ship.’ ‘W’y, w’ere the ’ell can we be agoin’ to now?’

“ ‘It’s like this,’ said the Captain to his Navigator, as they cleared the mouth of the Humber, ‘there’s been illegal trawling taking place at Stornoway, and I’m ordered to inquire into it.’

“The Sub opened his mouth to answer, but she had shipped a sea, green, over the fore-castle, and about half a pint of the Humber estuary flew straight down his throat and rendered him incapable of speech for at least five minutes. Slowly they fought their way northwards;



THE NEW GENERATION OF NORTH SEA MAN.



THE GENERATION THAT HAS PASSED.



the grey combers struck them pitilessly on the starboard bow, and the spindrift, torn from their crests by the bitter wind, seemed to scorch their hands and faces. Night came, but with it no alleviation, and the crash of the seas and the twanging sound of the gale rushing through the rigging seemed to belong to an order of things which had lasted since the beginning of time. They anchored in the Firth of Forth, and for twenty-four hours with red-hot stoves and boiling cocoa they thawed the marrow in their bones. . . . Tolsta was reached, and inquiry begun, the local fisherman interrogated.

“‘You say illegal trawling has taken place in the bay; can you give me the date and the name of the vessel?’

“‘Mayhap it was ten days or forbye a fortnight that she heard a trawler in the bay.’

“‘Did you *see* her?’

“‘She did not.’

“‘And you don’t know her name?’

“‘She does not.’

“‘And that is all the evidence of illegal trawling you have got to give me after coming five hundred miles to find out?’

“‘She knows no more than she has said.’

“‘And this,’ remarked the Captain to his companion, the coastguard officer, as he lighted his pipe, ‘is what I’ve got to write a dispatch about to the Admiralty!’”

The torpedo-gunboat was back on the Broad Fourteens, in black, bitter December, and a winter snowstorm was raging. The sea water froze as it came

aboard, boats, gun, and torpedo-tube were deep in snow, and the lee-side of the bridge was a veritable drift. The Captain and the Sub were on the bridge, making a night of it.

“They could see nothing. Hour after hour they clung to the bridge rail, striving to pierce with ineffectual vision the wreaths and wreaths of snow. The wind howled and whistled, the ship rolled heavily, the siren sent up its mournful note. Ever and anon the Captain’s servant struggled up the steep bridge-ladder with boiling cocoa, which kept the life in them. Neither spoke, and all sensation had long ceased in their hands and feet.

“From out of the unseen came a yell: ‘Hard a starboard, for the love of God!’

“It was the voice of the look-out man. The port telegraph clanged to ‘Stop.’

“‘Over with her, Quartermaster,’ said the Captain quietly, his hand on the lever of the telegraph. The steam wheel rattled furiously.

“‘Right your helm, sir, and she’ll clear,’ came the voice of the Sub to starboard.

“Again the wheel spun. The Captain dashed across the bridge, and there, sliding by, close enough for a man to have put out his hand and touched her, was a ship.

“‘Sailing ship not ringing her bell; close shave,’ was the only comment. ‘Put her on her course, Quartermaster.’”

That is a fine word-picture of fisheries protection

work in winter on the North Sea. Such is the danger and discomfort on board one of His Majesty's ships of war; such is the weather in which the gallant little steam-tractors battle continuously, and in which, in the old sailing days, smacks were forced to work to keep the markets supplied with fish, and on board of which sometimes there was no fire and no dry sleeping-place for a whole voyage of eight or more weeks.

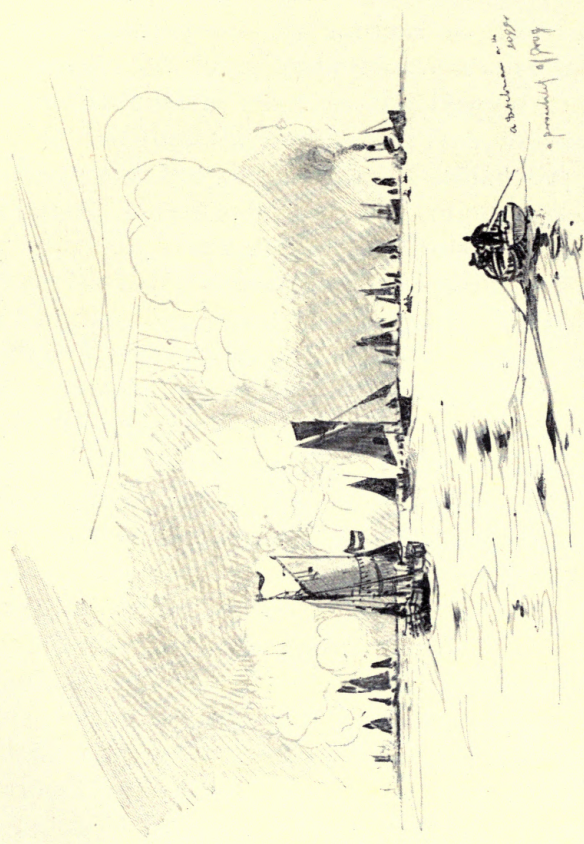
During 1910 H.M.S. *Ringdove* was the only naval vessel available for marine superintendence around the Scottish coasts. Throughout the great summer herring-fishery she was employed mostly in preserving order in the Shetland harbours, and for the rest of the year she was engaged largely in connection with the foreign trawlers in the Moray Firth. The routine work done in the course of the year by the Board's own cruisers—5 in number—was considerable, one of them being 269 days at sea and steaming 21,559 knots, and another detaining 407 boats in connection with various Regulations. The fines imposed amounted to £2005, the maximum penalty for illegal trawling—£100—having been inflicted in 12 cases. Of that sum £543, 16s. 8d. was paid, 18 of the accused went to prison, and 2 absconded. The prosecutions for illegal trawling undertaken by the Scottish Fishery Board from 1886 to 1910 was 694, and in no fewer than 628 a conviction was obtained. The amount of the fines imposed was £29,995, of which £13,191 was paid.

CHAPTER XV

A HUMANISING AGENCY

Just as steam has revolutionised North Sea fishing and North Sea life, so the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen has brought about a wondrous change in smacksmen. All life at sea, until a recent period, was rough and hard, and mostly cruel. The savage discipline of the old Navy, when the lash was used to flog men into obedience, was reflected in the North Sea smacks, and the unhappy little fellows who were sent to the fleets from the workhouse, or packed off by a magistrate in preference to sending them to gaol, were entirely at the mercy of men some of whom did not show mercy or kindness because they had never known it in their own lives of brutal sordid toil.

There were in the old sailing days, when foul deeds could be so easily concealed, many dreadful crimes committed for which no punishment could be inflicted, because the perpetrators were not known ; but occasionally there would come to light some wrong of exceptional character which would be dealt with by a judge and jury, and give the public an insight into the lives of deep-sea toilers who were more of outcasts from their fellow-creatures ashore than the heathen in far countries. Such an instance was afforded by the murder on the



a balance of
a pencil of 1899

A COPER IN A SAILING FLEET.



North Sea of an apprentice, by Otto Brand, the skipper of a smack. The lad was done to death in the most cruel fashion, and Brand was deservedly hanged at Armley Gaol, Leeds, on 23rd May 1882.

It was at this period—the autumn of 1881—that the idea originated of doing something for the men and boys whose lives were spent on the Dogger and other banks. At that time the largest and most famous of the fishing fleets was the Short Blue, of which the owners were Messrs. Hewett & Co., the organisers of the fleeting system. The curse of the fleets was the *cooper*, craft which for half a century had sold drink and tobacco to the English smacksmen. Originally these vessels sailed from Dutch ports and sold articles of clothing and gear to the fishermen; but experience quickly taught the Dutchman that it was far more profitable to barter the tobacco and spirits for fish. The evil of bartering grew so much that in the worst days of the *cooper* an established system of wrong-doing existed, and it sometimes happened that a skipper, in order to satisfy his craving for drink, would dispose of all his gear and even, in extreme cases, the smack herself.

To get the tobacco cheaply it was necessary to visit the *cooper*, whose skipper sold it at less than half the price which had to be paid in England, because from the Continent he obtained the article at practically cost price, whereas in England a heavy duty was imposed.

The *coopers* were not all foreigners; one or two sailed from English ports. Mr. E. J. Mather, who founded the Mission, related that one of these English craft was the *Annie*, sailing from the Humber, and others were the *Dora* and the *Angelina*, of Yarmouth. A man who

served three years in the *Angelina* told him that they left Yarmouth with their gear aboard, like an ordinary trawler, and made straight for Nieudiep, in Holland, where they took in £500 worth of grog and tobacco. She then joined her fleet, and in one voyage alone the cargo would be sold and a profit made of £500—100 per cent., and that in two months. A bottle of rum was sold for 1s. 6d., raw brandy at 2s., aniseed brandy—dangerous and insidious spirit, and a great favourite with the smacksmen—2s. 3d., and gin at 1s.

Such a profit as that—at the rate of 600 per cent. yearly—was infinitely more than could be made out of the most successful trawling; but the system of copering, so far as English vessels were concerned, was not to become established or permanent. The danger was recognised in time, and crushed out. The insurance clubs at home made it clear that these smacks were not wanted in the societies, there was opposition from one or two powerful owners, and there was always the peril of falling into the hands of the law and being severely dealt with. The English *copers*, therefore, ceased to ply their trade in the fleets, and one at least resumed her honest work of fishing.

First of all, there went to the Dogger, as the pioneer Mission ship, the little *Ensign*, a 56-ton yawl-rigged craft which had been working with the Short Blue Fleet. She was altered so as to accommodate a missionary and men who cared to go aboard for worship; and she was provided with a small dispensary, equipped with a medicine-chest.

The *Ensign* left Yarmouth to the accompaniment of

scornful criticisms and jeers from the very smacksmen whom she was designed to help; yet within a short period she proved her worth, and less than a year after her first cruise Messrs. Hewett wrote voluntarily to say that their men had been completely revolutionised and that great good had been done. They sent a donation and became annual subscribers. That was recognition by practical men of a practical undertaking—for the Mission exists “as well for the body as the soul.”

The *Ensign* was bought in 1882, and in 1883–84 three more vessels were acquired—the *Salem* (afterwards the *Temple Tate*), the *Cholmondeley*, the *Edward Auriol* (afterwards the *Chulow*), the *Ashton*, and the *Euston*. There was a further vessel, the *Edward Birkbeck*; and the *Ensign* was renamed the *Thomas Gray*, in recognition of the deep interest in the Mission of the late head of the Marine Department of the Board of Trade. There followed two splendid craft, the *Queen Victoria* and the *Albert*, of 150 tons each, thoroughly well equipped in every way, and provided not only with a dispensary, but also with a hospital and accommodation for a resident doctor, because it was recognised that to be completely effective the vessels must carry a skilled surgeon, to deal with the many accidents and ailments that are inseparable from North Sea fishing.

The trawling trade, as carried out by sail, had reached its zenith; yet there were only two or three far-seeing men who realised that the revolution was near, and that in future everything would give place to steam. The International Fisheries Exhibition of 1883 gave a great impetus to trawling, with the result that capital was put into many new fishing ventures for

which there was no chance of success. At Yarmouth, the headquarters of the sailing trawlers, nearly a hundred and fifty new smacks were fitted out; but, so far from proving successful, they were failures, and many of them were soon laid up in harbour, others were working at a loss, and large numbers of skippers and men were thrown out of employment. It was calculated that in 1886 there was a loss of more than £30,000 on the Yarmouth smacks, and other fishing towns suffered proportionately.

Meanwhile, the Mission smacks had entered upon that splendid work which has been maintained continuously for thirty years, and has now reached a magnitude unthought of at the outset, and yet which is not proportionate to the needs of the trawling fleets. The *cooper* was fought with his own weapons, to a large extent. Tobacco was consigned to Ostend—3 tons of it—and was put on board a Mission smack there, to escape the payment of duty. The smack went round the fleets, after leaving Ostend, and disposed of her 3 tons of tobacco at the actual cost price, 1s. per lb., against the 1s. 6d. charged by the *cooper*. Soon after this the great firm of Messrs. W. D. & H. O. Wills offered to supply tobacco for sale in the fleets, at approximately cost price, and they regularly sent large consignments of cut and cake tobacco, the cut in pound packets and the cake in “pocket-pieces.”

A singular feature in connection with the coins received in payment for tobacco in the fleets was that before the money was finally paid into the bank it had to be thoroughly washed in boiling water—a proceeding which will be readily understood when it is remembered that, in the days of sail, smacksmen went to sea for eight



A NORTH SEA SKIPPER IN HIS "DOPPER," OR BLANKET OVERALL.



or ten weeks or more, and returned to port without having washed once. Sometimes a Mission ship would take during a voyage as much as £100. That sum would be mostly in silver and copper, and would represent the sale of more than three-quarters of a ton of tobacco. At that particular time, after my first visit to a North Sea fleet, I was ferried from my smack to the attendant Mission ship—the *Thomas Gray*—and bought, for 8s., half a stone of tobacco as a present for the crew who had shown me so much kindness after leaving Grimsby. It was the only way in which I could venture to make a gift.

The *copers* were doomed, although they made a brave attempt to hang on to the fleets. At one time three *copers* were cruising with one fleet; but they dispersed and disappeared, especially as an International Conference was held at the Hague in June 1886, for the purpose of regulating the *cooper* traffic. As a result of that conference the *copers* were abolished, and now they are only a memory. I saw one of the last of them. She was cruising forlornly on the outskirts of our fleet, with nothing to distinguish her at a distance from an ordinary sailing smack, except her flag, although close inspection showed that she was not equipped with gear for honest fishing purposes. If only because it has driven the grog-shop off the North Sea banks—and it has achieved that—the Mission has justified its existence and done a marvellous work.

The *cooper's* liquors, as I have said, maddened the smacksman, and it was no very rare occurrence for a man to jump overboard, or for smacks to be lost through the drunkenness of crews.

One of the worst cases of this nature was that of a man who, on returning from the *cooper*, fell stupefied on the deck of his vessel. His drunken comrades tried to rouse him, but failed. Then they poured a quantity of "turps" over his clothing and set fire to the inflammable liquid. Their object was to awaken him, but the man was burnt to death, and it was only by speedy help from a neighbouring smack that the vessel was saved from destruction.

Until the Mission vessels began to run, the *cooper* found in the English trawler an ever-ready customer for his liquors and obscene prints and letterpress. On the sale of his wares he prospered, and the smacksman's work suffered in proportion, while his employers' belongings followed his own money—for the stranger did not refuse payment in kind. It was hopeless to think of defeating the enemy until it was possible to sell tobacco, without which smacksmen as a body cannot live, at the same price as he. The Mission entered upon a hard, long fight, and won a famous victory. It fought with the *cooper* on equal terms, owing to official aid and generous help from men of business, and to-day on board any of the Mission vessels excellent cut tobacco can be purchased, duty free, at 1s. 2d. per lb., and cake tobacco at 10d., as against the *cooper's* 1s. 6d. and 1s. ; and the smacksman is kept from the temptation to drink, which was ever present on board the foreigner.

As a practical undertaking the Mission was directed to keep pace with the changing order of things. It was useless to station a sailing vessel with a fleet of steamboats ; craft were needed that could follow the admiral just as swiftly as any vessel under his control, and heavy

though the undertaking was, yet the responsible committee were able to place an order for a steam Mission ship at a cost of about £12,000, through the generosity of an anonymous donor who paid the full expense of building and equipping the vessel. This was the *Alpha*, built at Leith in 1900, a steel vessel of 275 gross tonnage and 70 horse-power nominal. She was followed in 1902 by the *Queen Alexandra* and the *Joseph and Sarah Miles*, both built at Leith also, and provided with everything that can minister to the comfort and recreation of the men whose lives are spent on the North Sea. The three steamboats represent an original capital outlay of more than £34,000, and need a sum of £3000 yearly—£1000 each—to maintain them, although they are equipped with fishing-gear and send their fish to market like the rest of the fleeters.

The great difference between a Mission ship and an ordinary trawler, in connection with fishing, is that she does not fish on Sundays, whereas very many of the steam-trawlers do. This Sunday labour, apart from any sentiment relating to the Sabbath, tells severely on men who are almost incessantly at work throughout the week and are deprived of needed change and rest. There is no such thing for the North Sea man as a half-day on Saturday and a whole day on Sunday—a complete rest and holiday to end the week. Perhaps the time is near when he shall have his day of rest, by law, like other and far less hard workers ashore.

At present the Mission can station vessels with three only of the four steam fleets that are fishing the North Sea grounds. A fourth steamer is urgently needed, and steps are being taken to raise the money to provide her.

I am concerned solely with the North Sea work of the society, which has extended its area of operations enormously, and aims at covering every phase of the British fishing industry, afloat and ashore, without clashing in any way whatever with other marine agencies. There is the great and wonderful work which Dr. Grenfell is carrying on in Labrador—work in which the King has shown a marked personal interest—and the lesser branches round the coasts ; but the main adventure is on the North Sea, amongst the fleeters. Dr. Grenfell laboured zealously to put that North Sea undertaking on a firm basis before he devoted his untiring energy to Labrador, and I well remember talking with him on the east coast in the early Nineties and listening to his enthusiastic prophecies as to the future. I do not think that even “Grenfell of Labrador” dared to hope for such a wonderful result as that which has attended his efforts, yet doubtless now he is on the verge of far greater things, for he has won the earnest co-operation of energetic and resourceful men of business in America.

It is with the North Sea man that so many zealous workers are connected, notable amongst them being Sir Frederick Treves, Bart. Sir Frederick has been associated with the work, especially at the London Hospital, from the beginning, and he has lived to see wonderful changes in the system of handling injured and sick smacksmen.

Before the coming of the Mission death and suffering were inseparable from the toil of the banks ; death and suffering there are to-day, but death has been robbed of something of its gloom and terror, and suffering has been vastly alleviated by the surgeons who attend to cases out



THE MATE OF A NORTH SEA STEAM-TRAWLER.

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at sea and forward them, when necessary, for treatment at the London Hospital.

While writing this chapter I heard a North Sea skipper tell how, when he first went to the Dogger, as a lad, he severely injured his arm. For sixteen weeks he remained at sea, with no opportunity of getting the wound treated, except in the roughest fashion; there was not time when he came ashore to cure it, and he had to go back to the fleet, a helpless youngster, and let chance do the healing. That is merely one—and not a lurid—instance of the neglect and suffering of old, in the days when a mixture of turpentine and treacle was reckoned an efficient medicine, and when fine lads and splendid men who had been cruelly wounded in their calling had to endure inexpressible torture in a rolling, wallowing storm-hammered smack or carrier before harbour could be reached—and then the flag at half-mast would tell the sorry tale of too late.

Words can hardly give an understanding of the sufferings and discomforts of the old days that are mercifully gone; the imagination can scarcely picture the avoidable privations of the toilers who had been seriously or fatally injured. To-day there are, and must be, the terrible accidents that are inseparable from deep-sea trawling—the havoc done to life and limb by smashing seas, or charging heavy trunks of fish, and the ghastly limb-lopping or body-cutting that occur in a moment when a wire rope tautens, snaps, and slashes through the air like a colossal knife. But side by side with these grim happenings there are the means of curing some of the results and of lessening or mastering pain.

Figures are fallacies, in many cases; but, in relation to this Mission work on the North Sea, they at least convey some idea of the magnitude of the tasks attempted and the ends achieved. During the year 1910 more than 15,000 patients were medically and surgically treated.

The *Queen Victoria*, the *Albert*, the *Alice Fisher*, and the *Clulow* were the sailing vessels which carried a surgeon, and on board of which cases of a serious nature could be treated; but if the doctor was satisfied that there was no hope for a patient, a run was made for port, unless the sufferer was sent home in his own vessel or the steam-carrier. There were ten berths in the large airy hospital of the *Queen Victoria*, including two swing cots, most valuable in cases of fracture. The "nurse" was a smacksman himself, and therefore one of the kindest and most willing of attendants on smacksmen who were sick or injured. The dispensary was excellently equipped, and a large number of out-patients could be attended with comfort at one and the same time.

In cases of serious accident there was an ingenious and admirable contrivance in the form of a stretcher, by which the sufferer could be brought on board, and the pain consequent on the transference from one ship to another reduced to a minimum. The introduction of this stretcher alone prevents an incalculable amount of suffering. It makes unnecessary the seizing of a patient by his clothing or limbs when being lifted from the boat to the hospital ship or carrier; for the weather may be such that one moment the boat is high above the vessel's deck and the next deep in the trough of the sea.

Before the days of stretchers a dozen strong arms

were put swiftly forth at the critical second, and a dozen strong hands grasped firmly anyhow and anywhere, regardless, of necessity, of the pain which was caused, and with the knowledge that a slip meant either that the sufferer would be crushed or beaten to death, or miserably drowned. To-day a patient is strapped in the ambulance, and if the sea runs high he can be hoisted on board by means of tackle.

Once a falling spar on a smack broke a man's leg. He was put into the boat to be taken to the carrier, so that he might receive attention on shore. A heavy sea was running, and it was impossible to get the boat alongside the steamer. A rope was accordingly thrown, which was fastened round the man's body, and by this means he was hauled through the water to the carrier, "the broken limb," wrote an eye-witness, "being bent about in all directions by the waves." Such scenes as these are witnessed no longer where a Mission ship is stationed.

One of the earlier of the Mission surgeons gave examples of some of the remedies which were used by smacksmen before the Mission began its operations on the North Sea. "A pill consisting of Stockholm tar and flour was thought much of," he wrote, "and is the only pill I have heard of. If sea-boils and cracks were not left entirely alone, they were treated with an ointment—'salve' or 'oils' are the correct terms—composed of sugar and soft-oap, or perhaps paraffin and treacle. I have heard of a man taking a good pull at a bottle of 'turps' to act on the kidneys. He went 'raving mad,' but did not die—your North Sea fisherman dies hard. Should a finger be cut,

go on working and let it bleed well; then get a 'chummie' to tie some tobacco round it. A burn should always be held before the stove to draw the fire out of it. A fracture was always left alone, and the unfortunate transferred as soon as possible to the cutter, which would take two days to get to London, being 250 miles distant. Imagine that happening with plenty of wind, and a hard bunk—no mattress—to lie in. What strikes every one is the remarkable stoicism displayed by these men. They work away as hard as ever with great sea-boils on their wrists, painful cracks between the fingers, nasty poisoned fingers, and even after severe injuries to head and limbs. 'How can you go on like this?' 'Well, sir, it's either work or go home. If you can't work you're a nuisance, and if you go home you mayn't get work for weeks. And what are the wife and children to do then?' Of course, the advantage of spare hands is very evident, and an important point in the Mission work. . . .

"I had amongst my patients an ex-private of the 3rd Light Dragoons, who had fought in the Soudan campaigns. He was interesting from the fact that he received an arrow through his wrist, a bullet-wound over the biceps of the right arm, and another in the fleshy part of the back; further, he had broken both his legs; he was a year and a half in a hospital for rheumatism; and he was in the smack *Beaver* when she was hove down and had her decks swept clean, both masts being broken and he himself swept overboard, but no lives were lost. At present sea-boils are his affliction."



A NORTH SEA BOAT COMING ALONGSIDE.

70 1941
1941-1942

I have had long talks with some of the *cooper's* former friends, and have received proof enough of the havoc which was wrought in the dark days of old. But the *cooper* has disappeared from the fleets, and where he in former years spread corruption and misery, the "Bethel-ship"—the Dutchman pronounces it "battle-sheep," and the name is more appropriate than he imagines—now attends to every spiritual and physical want in the trawler.

A Mission ship is one of the most interesting vessels afloat. She is a cruising hospital, a place of worship, a tobacco shop, a clothing establishment, a free library, a club-room, an hotel, and a recreation ground. If a smacksman is sick or injured, he will be fetched on board and receive skilled attention until he is better; if he wants to attend service and hoists a signal to indicate his wish, the Mission boat will call for him; tobacco he can obtain at cost price; warm woollen "helmets," mufflers, stockings, and mittens he is able to buy for next to nothing; if he longs for something to read, he can have magazines and papers for the asking; if he has a craving to converse with fellow-men, he can satisfy it on board the "Bethel-ship." If, again, he desires to escape for an hour from the surroundings of his own vessel, he can pace a clean, attractive deck and almost forget the smell of fish. With the exception of the woollen articles—for which the Mission makes a small charge, as it has no intention of pauperising in any way—and the tobacco, everything is free, and there is plenty of it.

I have before me the manuscript of a description of a lady's visit to the Short Blue Fleet when it was

still composed of sailing vessels, with steam-carriers to keep up communication with Billingsgate. The account is simple and charming, and, as it was written when women rarely went out to the fleets, I will quote from it, as a feminine impression of the men of the North Sea. The visitor's husband had suggested that she should accompany him in one of the Mission smacks. "Now, I must confess that this idea did not appeal to me in the slightest degree," she said, "but after a great deal of persuasion I overcame my scruples and agreed to go. At five o'clock one Saturday morning in the first week of May we were towed out of Gorleston for a week's cruise.

"My friends had bidden me a tearful farewell. Such an unheard-of trip as this they could not understand, and apparently they did not expect to set eyes on me again. I am afraid I shared their misgivings when they made anxious inquiries as to my wishes concerning the disposal of my personal effects. If I had been starting on a voyage in search of the North Pole I could not have left amid more gloomy prophecies than those of my friends on sailing for the Short Blue Fleet.

"The *Queen Victoria*, in which we sailed, was the flagship of the Mission fleet. She was a floating hospital, and visited the fleets with the object of doctoring sick and injured smacksmen while out at sea. As a rule, she went out for six or eight weeks at a time, as did also the smacks, with a skipper and crew of seven or eight, a doctor, and occasionally a lady, who was expected to minister spiritually to the fleet. Sometimes these occasional ladies did what was expected of them; but, alas! it was

more often a case of the spirit being willing, but the flesh weak, the lady spending most of her time in her bunk, engaged in earnest prayers on her own behalf.

“On this particular trip there was no doctor, and the ‘occasional’ lady was myself. I am afraid that I did not come up to expectations in many ways, but I gave my services where I could, and the smacksmen kindly made the best of them.

“For three days after leaving Gorleston we sailed along in a vain endeavour to find the fleet. We had expected to come up with it in about twenty-four hours, but were doomed to disappointment. During those three days I was astonished to notice how few ships of any description we passed. It seemed as if our own little craft was the solitary occupant of that great sea, and it gave me somewhat of a feeling of desolation. Once we came across a smack, the crew of which hailed us, and on coming near we were informed that the skipper had fallen down the hatchway and broken a rib. The man was hoisted on board and his hurt attended to by our skipper, who was something of a doctor, and was then pressed to stay in hospital to be nursed until better, but he absolutely refused to remain, and rejoined his smack.

“We also passed a smack which was searching, as were we, for the Short Blues, and for some time we kept together. A fog gathered, however, and after it had dispersed we found that we had lost our companion. With the exception of that night of fog, the weather all the week was fine and clear, but there was a swell, and consequently we rolled a good deal.

Fortunately I was not sea-sick, being a fairly good sailor, but the hours passed very slowly, and it seemed a very long time before we discovered the fleet. My husband enjoyed every inch of the way, being an enthusiastic seaman, and he would sit on the grating at the stern of the boat in company with the skipper and crew, and talk 'shop' by the hour together.

"I spent my time reading on deck and listening to the conversation around me, or down in the steward's little kitchen watching with much interest his cooking operations, or else in our own cabin trying to sew. We had meals in this same cabin, and I was much taken with the crockery which was used. It was of thick, white earthenware, each piece being adorned with a blue flag, and on the flag the letters M.D.S.F. Everything else belonging to the ship was marked in the same way.

"When we reached the fleet, which was eventually discovered off the coast of Holland, things brightened up considerably. The fleet consisted of some 150 smacks, and was a lovely sight when first we came across it. The moon shone on the smacks as they fished on that silver sea; and it seemed impossible to realise how different sometimes was the scene when those peaceful-looking waves were lashed into fury and brought death and destruction in their wake.

"Early next morning our friends the smacksmen began to pay their respects to us. When it became the good pleasure of a smack's skipper to visit us he ran up his flag and a boat from the *Queen Victoria* put out and fetched him. In all that fleet I had the honour to be the only woman, and a young one, too—I had not



THE CREW (WITH TWO VISITORS) OF A NORTH SEA MISSION SHIP.



THE HOSPITAL OF THE *J. AND S. MILES*, IN WHICH THE MEN WOUNDED IN THE RUSSIAN OUTRAGE WERE TREATED.

been long married then—and if I never caused a sensation before or since, I certainly had the satisfaction of creating one when I appeared on deck that bright morning shortly after our first boatload of visitors had arrived. Some of the men eyed me as if I had been a new specimen from the Zoo, but I didn't mind that; I thoroughly enjoyed my little triumph, and made the best of it.

“The moral effect of my presence showed itself when some of the skippers shuffled furtively below and washed themselves—a luxury unknown to the inhabitants of the smacks while out fleeting, their water-supply being only sufficient for drinking and cooking purposes—but the most amusing result was this. A skipper came on board who possessed only one eye. He did not expect to find strangers in the hospital ship, and certainly not a lady, and was much taken aback on seeing both. The next day, when he visited us again, my husband and I were considerably exercised in mind as to what had greatly altered his appearance. At last my husband discovered that not only had he washed himself vigorously, but also he had donned a glass eye!

“The real purpose of the visits to the Mission boat by the smacksmen was to hold religious meetings. These took place in the crew's cabin, and were much enjoyed and appreciated. Perhaps they would not have come quite up to the idea of an orthodox parson, and assuredly they would not have pleased an average congregation. At home we are apt to grumble if we are kept in church a minute over the hour and a half, but these meetings on board the Mission smacks always last two or three hours, and sometimes longer than that.

We were told of an instance when a service lasted for twelve hours! If members of our congregation got tired and wanted a change, they rose from their seats, and without making the slightest effort to leave quietly, clattered on deck, took a stroll round, and came back again.

“At one meeting I attended, after a deputation had waited upon me with a request that I would play the harmonium for them, I could not help being amused at the attitude of a smacksman who evidently was not considered by the others to be ‘converted.’ A fellow-skipper was praying earnestly for him by name, a fact which did not disconcert him in the least, for all through the prayer he conversed with a friend in his normal voice, evidently about the course of some vessel, for at intervals I could plainly hear such expressions as ‘nowth-east by nowth,’ and ‘lost his gear,’ showing very decidedly that the fears for his soul’s safety expressed by his seafaring brethren were not shared by him. The hymns were the great features of the meetings, the men singing them with tremendous heartiness—in fact, they sang so loudly that I could not hear the harmonium, although I was playing it!”

CHAPTER XVI

THE GREAT MARCH GALE

I DO not know—I doubt if any one can tell—how many lives the North Sea gales have claimed amongst the fishermen, nor how often it has been necessary to put on record the brief statement, “with all hands”; but time after time the storms have swept the waters and the sailing craft and steamboats have paid tribute. By a gale on 3rd December 1863 nearly a hundred children in Yarmouth alone were made orphans, and the loss of life from Hull and Grimsby was as heavy. Twenty-four smacks were lost on the North Sea, with all hands—144 men and boys, leaving 84 widows and 192 children. From one family alone two brothers, two brothers-in-law, and two cousins perished. Catastrophes like these are scattered through the century. Every gale that lashes the North Sea into fury takes its toll of human life; but not so mercilessly as in the old days of sail. Canvas has been driven out by steam, and the stout oak has given place to steel and iron. The men, however, are just the same, and the trawler of to-day is as swift to respond to the call for help as ever his predecessors were—and they never failed to risk life and limb. Every British battle brings out the stuff of which V.C. and D.S.O. men are made; every struggle on the North Sea, too, makes heroes from the

selfsame flesh and blood—only for the smacksmen there is seldom any more reward than the knowledge that they have done their duty. “It is nothing,” says the trawler, when the dangerous work is ended; and he patiently pursues his toilsome way.

One of the most appalling gales that ever swept across the Dogger raged on 6th March 1883, and caused the loss of more than 360 men and boys from east coast ports. That awful visitation destroyed families bodily; fathers and sons went down together, and widowed mothers were left penniless in ruined homes. Smacks were overwhelmed bodily and lost with all hands, and the little ships that did escape only reached port after a long, fierce fight and the exercise of wondrous skill and courage by their crews and skippers.

All the survivors of that memorable breeze are smacksmen of the old school of sail. Some of them, who were skippers, have come to their last moorings ashore, and seldom get far away from that vast grey stretch of sea of which their very lives and bodies seem to be part and parcel. Sometimes, if you know them well, they will take their memories back to the gale and tell of grim things that happened on the edge of the Dogger when many a son of the North Sea was gathered to his fathers. One of the Dogger warriors is old Ben ——; it is mostly “old” Tom, or Jack or Peter, as the case may be, when talking of North Sea men, irrespective of advanced years; but in this case Ben is really getting on in life. For one brief and famous spell he left the coast and came to London—a five days’ visit spent in some remote Eastern suburb, and including an immortal bus ride, in which the driver said many things and Ben said many more. The

locality explored was, I believe, Hoxton, on the memory of which Ben dwells fondly, calling it London. Ben said that of course I had heard of Mr. Somebody, of Hoxton, and I assured him that I had, though I was honest enough to admit that I had no personal acquaintance with the driver. It was a hot summer day when I talked with Ben, on board an old smack in harbour. Beyond us was the vast blue placid stretch of the North Sea, with the everlasting procession of steamships tramping north and south; inland were the purple moors, withering in the blazing sun. Old Ben smoked and did a bit of rough joinery; and when his mind could be taken from the lurid lights of Hoxton and the wild, odd things that the bus-driver had said, he would glance towards the Dogger and jerk out fragments of the story of the great March gale. I had many talks with him; and put together and told, not in his own way, which would not be understandable in print, but in the ordinary tongue, his tale was this—

“During my life as a North Sea smacksman I saw as much wind and weather on the Dogger as most men; but I never saw anything so savage as the great March gale. I’ve known other breezes as bad in some ways, but never one that brought up such a deadly sea as that, and in such a short time did so much mischief and caused such heavy loss of life.

“I remember the great winter gale of 1861, when the Whitby lifeboat was lost with all hands in trying to save some sailors, and the coast hereabouts was strewn with battered wrecks and dotted with drowned men. There was a famous disaster within a few hundred yards of us, and out at sea smacks went down bodily, and those that escaped only came home to report loss of life or show how badly they’d

been hammered by the cruel seas. But even that dreadful gale was not so destructive as the great March gale of 1883.

“When a smacksman talks about a gale he means that something phenomenal took place. In the ordinary way bad weather means to him a breeze; if it's a real smashing snorter he'll let himself go a bit and call it a smart breeze or a hard blow, with a big lump of sea; but the weather has to be something of a hurricane before he'll call it a gale. Before you can understand what that real smart breeze meant you must get into your mind some clear idea of what the Dogger is. People hear so much about it and understand it so little. The Bank is an immense stretch of sand, rising up from the middle of the North Sea, and forming a sort of tableland. In some places there is a depth of only a few fathoms, and at the most it is very shallow. You can go from thirty fathoms to nine in three minutes. The northerly or north-westerly edge is very dangerous, for, when a gale is blowing from that quarter, the full force of the waves is driven up against the edge of the Dogger and makes a deadly smother. The Dogger itself is a fatal place just because of this uncommon shallowness. The waves have no depth to swing and roll in, and, having struck the Bank, they break into an immense cauldron which is more like a whirlpool than anything else. Give any real sailor or smacksman plenty of room and depth, with a true sea running, and he'll be comfortable in his mind; but he gets uneasy when he's caught in broken water. In a true, swinging sea he knows what to expect, but he can never tell when he's going to be knocked down when the water comes from all points at once.



A NORTH SEA PORT.



“To the North Sea smacksman every part of the Dogger has a particular name, but the most gruesome of all is ‘The Cemetery,’ and that’s what we call the ‘edge’ of the Bank, because so many ships and men have been lost there. Even to-day, when scarcely anything fishes on the Dogger except powerful, well-appointed steamboats, no skipper is happy if he gets caught on The Cemetery. Like most other men, he wants to spend as little time as possible in such a melancholy place. If he has his gear down and a breeze springs up, he’s only content when he hauls his trawl and cuts and runs for it. With steam that’s an easy enough thing to do, but in the old days things were vastly different, because the sailing vessels either had to ride out a gale or founder. The smacks were out for six, seven, eight, or ten weeks at a time, and only ran home to re-fit and re-provision and then got back to the fishing-grounds. This meant that year in and year out the smacksman had to spend his life on the stormy waters of the Dogger and face all its dangers. He might be two or three hundred miles away from port, so that there was no chance of seeking shelter. I shouldn’t have cared to show my nose in port and have to say that I had run home because I was scared of a breeze. I shouldn’t have gone back to sea again in that particular smack nor in any other. The man who gets upset because of wind and weather isn’t the man to make a living on the Dogger. He carries his life in his hands, and always expects them to be emptied suddenly.

“Well, I sailed from Scarborough as skipper of a fine little ketch of fifty-one tons which was called the *Uncle Tom*. We were single-boating and I wanted to get as far

out on to the Dogger as I could, because it was on the Bank that the best fish was to be caught. We got away finely and nothing happened to bother us till we were as far as The Cemetery and had shot our gear and were towing it at two or three knots an hour. Then I got uneasy, for there was something queer and uncanny in the weather, something that I couldn't account for and didn't understand at all. North Sea smacksmen work mostly by instinct and the lead. There are barometers and chronometers and such-like fantastic gear for the big liners, but the old school of fishermen were brought up to use their wits, and to understand the weather became part of their nature. As a rule, the smacksmen didn't own a chart. Give him the lead and a lump of tallow and let him heave it overboard, and he could tell you exactly, from the stuff he brought up, which part of the Dogger he was on, just as you know which street you're in by looking at the name of it on a lamp-post or a wall.

"In winter-time you expect bad weather on the Dogger, and you get it; for that matter, you sometimes get it all the year round, and I've known a snowstorm out there even in summer-time.

"It was the beginning of March, and there was a strange dulness both in the sky and on the water while we were trawling. There was something mysterious about it all, and I grew more uneasy when I noticed what a wonderful lot of sea was rolling up to the edge of the Bank, and how little wind there was with it. That absence of wind and the immense height and fierceness of the sea will always remain in my memory as the chief features of the great March gale.

“The breeze had been prophesied by weather experts, but it came sooner than any of us expected. I was hoping to get out to the Dogger and back home before the weather grew too bad for fishing. There had been three or four days of calm, and when I got to the north-west edge of the Bank, on The Cemetery side, it was still pretty calm, with only just a nice fishing breeze.

“The gear had been shot at about eleven o’clock at night. Then the wind freshened, but didn’t grow into anything like a smart breeze. At the same time the sea got up in the most amazing way. There were a good many other smacks about, and in the blackness of that awful night they were fair napped.

“We had been trawling for two or three hours, and I should think we had a fair lot of fish in the net. When I saw how bad the weather was likely to be I gave the order to haul the trawl, but I’d scarcely spoken the words when the *Uncle Tom* gave a heavy lurch and the thick trawl-warp was snapped just like a piece of thread. This meant that the whole of the gear, worth about thirty pounds, was gone; and that’s a heavy loss for poor smacksmen. When you lose your gear in the North Sea you don’t get it back unless, as sometimes happens, another trawler hauls it up; but even then it’s scarcely worth bothering about. It’s best to say good-bye to your property.

“There was only one thing to do. The gale had broken on us, and even in the darkness I could see the waves tearing towards us like mad things. I took the tiller and headed for home, and did all I could to make a run for it. In the *Uncle Tom* the companion was well forrard, and not aft, as you see it in the old yawls that

are lying near us, and this, I dare say, meant the salvation of both the smack and ourselves.

“Time after time, as we ran before the wind and sea in the darkness, we were swept by a big wave, and I expected every moment that we should be carried overboard, or that some immense mass of water would fall on us and crush us like matchwood. But an old North Sea smack was the stiffest and handiest vessel in the world, and I managed to keep the *Uncle Tom* up to it as she ran away from The Cemetery.

“I could only carry a bit of storm canvas, but the smack hardly needed any sail at all to keep her going in such a breeze as that. She plunged and rolled and pitched in the most awful manner, but I stuck to the tiller and never let it go except once or twice when the mate relieved me for a few minutes. Even a North Sea smacksman isn't made of iron and has to snatch a bit of rest when he gets the chance. We were all sodden to the skin, in spite of our oilskins and thick clothing—but then I've known us be out for eight and ten weeks at a time, and never dry for a minute, day or night.

“When the morning came it showed a scaring sight, for the shallow waters of the Dogger were just one roaring, foaming plain. I never saw a snarlier sea, and it was the more uncanny, because the wind was out of all proportion to the size and fury of the waves. It was more like some wonderful phenomenon than an ordinary North Sea gale, even in winter. I looked around and saw that the smacks, which had been working peacefully, with their gear down, were either running for it, or had disappeared entirely.

“At such a time as that, with the freezing wind driving

cruelly against your face, it's hard to do more than try and see just ahead of you, but from time to time I looked about me, and occasionally saw just a little dark speck of a smack trying to fight her way off the Dogger and get into deeper and safer water. It was pitiful to see the poor little things struggling for very life, and to know that whatever happened you could do nothing. You were thankful if you kept yourself afloat and the life in your own battered body.

“Not very far away from me there was a Hullman, which had been working on the Bank. She was making a grand fight for it, but it was awful to see the way the seas were hammering her.

“I looked again and the Hullman seemed to be falling into the trough of an enormous wave. You know what it is, I dare say, to be out on the Dogger and to look at another smack not far away which has rushed down the crest of a wave and gone right into the hollow. Often enough she sinks so deep and the seas rise up so enormously between you, that you lose sight of her altogether.

“I lost sight of the Hullman. I looked again towards the spot where I had last seen her, but not a sign of her was left. She'd been smashed bodily by a huge wave, and must have been one of the first of the smacks that foundered. It was no use being scared by such a sight as that. I stuck to the tiller, and all that day we tore towards Hull. We got just a bite or sup now and again to keep us going, but there was no chance of anything like a hot meal—and hot food and drink at such times may mean all the difference between winning and losing your fight. We were swept and smothered by the seas,

and everything below was awash or adrift. Immense bodies of water smashed on board; but we managed to dodge them. We had to hang on for life, but, when there was a chance of doing it, the men jumped below till the seas passed. The man at the tiller had to stick there and take his chance, because, if he'd let go, the smack would have been lost.

"Time after time the breaking seas filled the deck to the rail, but still the *Uncle Tom* staggered on and kept afloat. It is the custom of North Sea smacksmen, when a big sea is sweeping on, to shout, 'Water's coming,' and drop below. On board many a smack that day the seas crushed and killed or maimed the poor fellows who had no chance of escape. Decks were swept as clean as if they had been cut with an enormous knife. Dandy winks were wrenched from the decks, although they were secured by iron bolts, just as you might pluck some little ornament away which has been glued on to a toy. Masts and rigging were carried away, and in lots of cases the smacks were almost smashed to bits before they sank. It seemed as if no ship built by human hands could stand up against the awful force of those Dogger breakers, and how the *Uncle Tom* ever got through it is a marvel even now.

"The man who makes his living on the Dogger sees some strange, odd things. I've known a man to be swept overboard and brought up afterwards, dead, in a trawl belonging to another smack. In this great gale a man was swept away from the deck of his smack and carried by an enormous sea straight on to the deck of another smack not far off, where he was saved by the crew, who clutched him before he could be hurled back.

“In many cases the huge quantities of water which had tumbled on board burst the companions and got below, filling the smacks and sinking them. That happened mostly when the companions were right away aft, just by the tiller-head, and I think it would have been the fate of the *Uncle Tom* if it had not been that the companion was built more for’ard.

“Most of the smacks which were lost were knocked down on the edge of the Dogger, where they were caught in the broken water and had no chance of escape. In some cases they were smashed to pieces, and the crews were either killed or drowned.

“I remember seeing a smack which had had one side of the bulwarks carried away by a heavy sea, and yet the other side was undamaged. The most extraordinary mischief was done, and although I’d spent all my life at sea I could hardly believe some of the sights I saw. The seas came from everywhere at once.

“I’ll tell you of a thing I saw not long before this famous breeze, and what happened then happened time after time in that deadly March. There was a fine smack sailing out of Grimsby, which was built as strong as good wood and honest labour could make her. She had a flagged floor, which served as good ballast and also as a nice cool place for the trunks of fish. The smack had been out on the Dogger and had got a good catch, and was running home to market when a heavy gale knocked her down. She must have been turned almost completely over by one sea and then turned back by another, enough, at any rate, for her to keep afloat till she could stagger into harbour. When I saw the smack her ballast had burst up and all the flags and the

fish had been thrown about in the most wonderful way. She was smashed and hammered terribly, and how she escaped was a mystery. That will give you some idea of the way the old smacks were punished in a North Sea breeze.

“Well, we kept the *Uncle Tom* with her nose pointed towards the coast. It was perishingly cold and we were sodden to the skin. All the food we could lay hands on—it wasn’t much—was soaked by salt water.

“At last I saw ahead the cliffs down by Flamborough Head and knew that the most dangerous part of the business had to be got through. Ever since we started I’d kept my head and nerve and strength. I wasn’t scared in any way—I dare say I was kept fit by remembering that if I lost my nerve we were done for. Besides, a North Sea smacksman isn’t supposed to be upset by any breeze that blows.

“The only chance of safety was in getting the smack into the shelter of Bridlington Bay; but with such a tremendous run of sea the chances were equal that in rounding the Head she would be capsized. I got the *Uncle Tom* down off the Head; then I saw that it would be almost suicide to try and run her round. There was only one thing to do, and that was to wait for the turn of the tide, when the water would be a bit smoother and there would be a chance of slipping into the Bay. But even when I got into the slack water I didn’t feel that it would be safe to try and run the *Uncle Tom* into the Bay, so there was nothing for it but to dodge about and wait for my chance to come.

“I let that tide go past, and the second, the third, and the fourth; and for two perishing days and nights the

Uncle Tom wallowed about just off the Head, until suddenly I saw my chance of getting into the Bay—and I took it like a starving dog snaps a bone. I ran out of the bad weather into the fairly smooth water of Bridlington Bay, sheltered by the Head, and saw all around a great fleet of ships, many of them crippled. At night they looked like a town lit up.

“Many a fine smack was by that time lying on the bed of the Dogger, with her crew, mostly in The Cemetery. Even in the sheltered Bay a lot of the vessels dragged their anchors and went ashore.

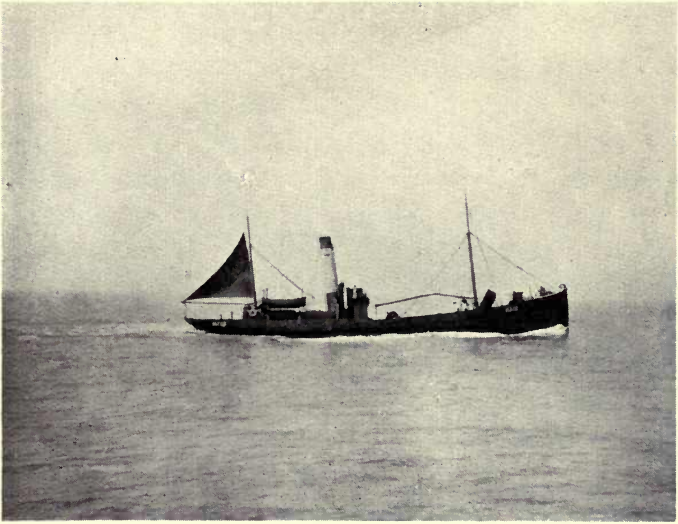
“There have been many dreadful gales on the North Sea within living memory; but that March breeze is always spoken of as being the worst as far as smacksmen are concerned. The heaviest loss fell on Hull and Grimsby, and when on that sorry Sunday I got the *Uncle Tom* safely into Hull, I went to see the crippled smacks which had managed, like myself, to run back to safety, I found that they entirely filled four docks, and some of them were so badly beaten and damaged that it was wonderful that they had escaped at all. It was pitiful to see the battered craft—but even that was easier to look on than to go into streets where nearly every house had orphans and a widow. You can patch ships up well enough, and make them as strong as ever they were—sometimes stronger; but you can't do much with broken hearts—and there were plenty of 'em after that big breeze in March.

“As for the *Uncle Tom*, she got into port without so much as a scratch. Many men had lost their lives; a few had lost their nerve—and that is something, I can tell you, for a North Sea smacksmen.

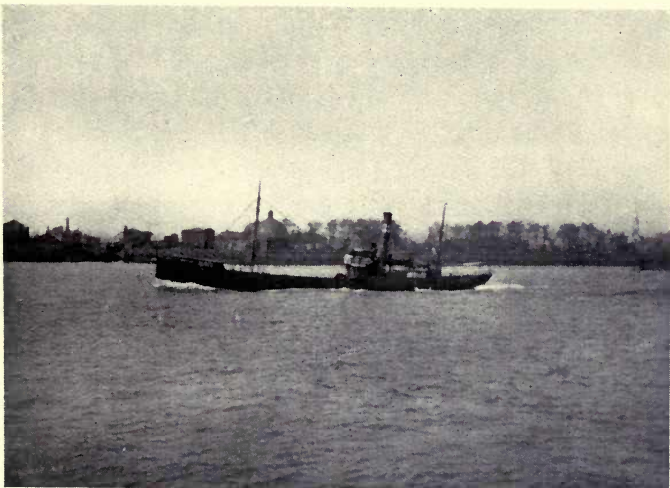
"I remember one young fellow who, as soon as he got into port, said, 'Look here, skipper, let's have my money. I've had enough o' the Dogger to last me a lifetime.'"

"He was paid off, and from that time he never went out again to the Bank.

"I and my crew had come safely through it all with the *Uncle Tom*; but during the whole of the breeze it was touch and go with us—all the time it was 'just as near as mak's nae matter.'"



A CARRIER LOOKING FOR HER FLEET.



A CARRIER FOR BILLINGSGATE, PASSING GREENWICH.

CHAPTER XVII

CARRIERS

IF I were asked to name the finest craft making regular trips and the most hardy of all captains running on established routes, I should not hesitate to answer, "Carriers and their skippers."

There are many men who tramp the North Sea persistently, and in small craft of a few hundred tons; but their lives are romantic and luxurious compared with those of carriers' skippers, and their vessels are as different from the carriers as is the *Mauretania* from the well-found tramp. The trading steamboat's captain spends much of his time very pleasantly in port, and, as a rule, his table is well found and his cabin a most comfortable home. The skipper of the carrier, however, is in port just long enough to unload his fish, take on board ice, fresh boxes, re-coal and replenish stores. His life afloat is that of the ordinary trawler, except that he has more anxiety and responsibility. He is ceaselessly on the rack, either looking for his fleet or hurrying to catch the market with his perishable goods. He is the hustler of the North Sea.

Only those who know what trawling is, and what bitter winter weather on the water means, can realise the hardships of the men who tramp the Thames and

the seas that lie between Billingsgate and the fishing-grounds. From day to day, week to week, month to month, and year to year, ceaselessly, monotonously, the carriers ply their calling and the skippers and their crews fulfil their destiny as surely as did Vanderdecken and his spectral band.

Just as steadily as Scotch expresses keep up their communication between the north and Euston, St. Pancras and King's Cross, so the valiant little carriers form an ever-running link between the London market and the toiling fleets that scour the banks; but while in the one case there are well-laid, firm, costly, and ceaselessly inspected tracks, in the other there is nothing but the turgid, troubled sea. The "Flying Scotchman" has his permanent way, his signals, his stopping-places, his every detail scheduled out for him. The driver steps upon the footplate, his fireman with him, and he knows that, God and accidents permitting, he will reach York, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, Inverness, or other distant destination safely and on time.

Not so the carrier's skipper. If he is bound for London River he is serene of mind, for he knows that he will find London River and Billingsgate where he left them, barring cataclysms and perhaps fires and alien risings. Gales may blow and seas may crash on board; oversea boats may wallow and heave to in the roaring smother; liners may hesitate and slow down; coasters may shelter and anchor, or not put to sea at all—but the carrier neither slackens speed nor falters.

Who ever heard of a North Sea carrier taking count of weather—even North Sea weather? What is she built for but to drive through gales? Why is her

skipper on the bridge, unless it is to thrash her through them? But he does not call them gales or storms. He speaks of breezes—and if the breeze is very bad—a hurricane—he reluctantly admits that it is a “smart” one. Beyond that he declines to go. His vessel may be an ancient foundry, a “washer,” which means that all that may be seen of her in a “breeze” is her bridge and funnel, but he will hang on to the shivering rails, keep a footing on the deluged quivering boards that threaten to fall to pieces under him, peer into the thick malignant weather ahead—and do his best to follow his own advice to any doubtful Thomas who is in his company—“Don’t look aft.” It is better for the doubting Thomas’s peace of mind that he should not do so, that, indeed, he should look neither aft nor forward nor amidships, for in a North Sea breeze there is little to behold from a deeply laden carrier’s bridge except the water.

As I write I call to mind the little, sturdy, brown-faced, oil-skinned master of the carrier in which I made my first run from north to south, from Heligoland to the Thames. At the last moment I had leaned over the end of the bridge with him as he said to a couple of men who had laboriously ferried their fish to us, “We can’t take your offal, we’ve got no more ice. But you can let’s have your prime. We’ll take that.” So the prime was taken, the painter was let go, and we started.

“Full speed ahead.”

The order was given to the engineer and the run to Billingsgate began, against a head-wind and sea. She was heavily laden, and her progress was not so rapid as

usual. By night the wind had strengthened and the sea had grown ; still the telegraph pointed to "Full speed ahead," and the carrier drove along with the water roaring down her deck and the spray dashing heavily across the bridge and glittering in the moonlight like an icy shroud.

"You're driving her !" I shouted to the skipper, as we dodged behind the weather-cloth.

"Yes, we're bound to catch the market." He turned to bawl to the engine-room, "Shove her along, boys !" and, obedient to the order, the fires were fed and black smoke belched from the funnel, going straight astern, while the vessel plunged through the head seas harder than ever and the water surged and thundered down the deck. "We start full speed ahead," he continued, "and never stop till London's reached, no matter what the weather's like. These cutters are splendid boats and will weather any breeze. They're the hardest-driven steamboats afloat. Sometimes she's nearly buried, and I've seen heavy spray dash right over the mast-head. Not long since she had the front of the bridge—it's a dozen feet above the deck—washed away, and the wheel was smashed to pieces. But that's nothing, of course. We *must* catch the market. That's a standing order ; and if we don't obey it, well, other men will. You see, if we're a few hours late the cargo depreciates, and that doesn't suit either the seller or the buyer."

I wonder what has happened to my cheerful, friendly, brown-faced skipper and his giant mate, who, later, wrote and said that since I left them they had had nothing but bad weather and ill-luck. Do they still drive out beyond the Nore and the Maplin and into the black

depths of the North Sea nights, looking for the fleet? And does my Barking skipper still survive, my rugged, grim philosopher who squatted on his bridge and pemmicaned his ethics in the phrase, "Don't look aft," while incidentally expressing his disbelief in missionaries and alluding warmly to them, especially their eyes? His aged craft—she had been running for a quarter of a century—collapsed in the Thames, and was promptly sold—to foreigners. Strangely enough, the carrier by which I was to have left the fleet, instead of that by which I actually travelled, foundered on the next trip out, giving her crew just time enough to escape.

The work of finding a fleet is often enough difficult and exasperating even in clear fine weather; but it is a hard task indeed when a dense fog hangs over the North Sea, for then nothing can be seen through the clammy and depressing atmosphere. Occasionally a wandering carrier or trawler will loom up and there is the mutual dismal hail—"Seen anything o' the fleet?" The negative reply is usually accompanied by ferocious criticisms of the North Sea and life in general, with occasional oblique compliments to the admiral's intelligence. It is opined that if he were really fit to fill his post he would have remained on his ground until at any rate the particular seekers had joined him. From time to time a baffled skipper will fire a gun-rocket, in the hope of an answering signal from the hidden fleet. The rocket is fixed to the steamboat's rail, a space is cleared around it, because a rocket, especially a gun-rocket, has an unfriendly habit of damaging onlookers, and with a red-hot poker the skipper will discharge his firework. There is a deafening report, then a deep silence in which

the skipper listens earnestly for a reply. Occasionally a hopeful sound will be heard, and the fleet will be found, but more often the rocket has been vainly fired and the steamboat continues her prowling on the waters. It has happened, but comparatively seldom, that a carrier has burnt all her coal, as well as her empty trunks, in searching for her fleet, and that at the end of her tribulations she has had to return to port and start afresh; and that a steam-trawler has wandered for many days, with the same distressing consequence.

"An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light;
And with no language but a cry"

might well express the attitude of carrier skippers who are seeking fleets. A carrier goes towards the spot where a fleet has been working; but the admiral may have given the signal to change ground, and the fleet may have steamed a hundred miles or more from the locality where the carrier left it. There is no help for the skipper. He has to "seek" just as industriously as an old-time tug from Tees or Tyne goes on the same mission. He must hail in and out of season, and his parrot-cry will be, "Seen anything o' the Gamecocks?" or whatever the missing fleet may be. This is the old-time cry and way, and there will be no change and no saving either in pocket or temper until wireless telegraphy or the most up-to-date method of communication is adopted.

When the carrier reaches her fleet she will, if she has time to spare, shoot her gear, for she is equipped with trawling apparatus, and she will make one or more hauls

for the profit of her owners and her crew. Having taken her turn on the station and loaded up, she runs to market, slackening at Gravesend to take a pilot on board. As soon as she is alongside at Billingsgate, either next to the quay or abreast of another carrier, gangways are placed, and up and down them processions of head-protected, clogged, and white-smocked men are hurrying. Long before daybreak the work begins, in winter, and from London Bridge, looking down the dark river, you can see the figures flitting in the garish light of the electric lamps, one stream trotting on board, and one hastening ashore, each stream keeping to its own gangway, so that there shall be no collision, no confusion. Leaving London Bridge and taking your stand opposite the entrance to the market from the street, you see a little regiment of men, some carrying on their heads loads of fish that need almost a giant's strength to bear.

It is a strange and fiercely busy sight. The narrow streets are glutted with the great carts of railway companies and dealers, and away in shadows, watching for their time to come, are the costers with their barrows—as if noble game must have their feed before the small fry take the leavings. Boxes by the thousand are brought forth from the dank, dark maws of the carriers and either put straightway into the vehicles or sent into the adjacent shops and warehouses of dealers for more deliberate dispatch. To protect his clothing the fish-porter wears the smock and overalls, and to save his head from damage he assumes a padded hat with a sort of pug-garree, to keep the slime at bay. Thick clogs or heavy boots are worn, and the clank of this gear rings sharply out even in the din of human voices, the rattle of hoofs,

and the thundering of ponderous waggons over granite roads.

This is the roar and rush and bustle to which the carrier comes direct from the fishing-grounds. She exchanges one scene of toil for another, and that is the only variety she gets. There is no romance, little picturesqueness, small comfort, and ever-present peril; but to all these things the skipper and his crew become accustomed. They can at least look forward to the summer weather and the sunshine and to the days when they will rest from their labour.

At Billingsgate there is always to be seen a striking contrast with the most modern type of fishing-craft. This is afforded by the Dutch eel-boats, of which two are constantly moored just off the market—typical bluff sailers from the other side of the North Sea, comfortable craft which bring their cargoes irrespective of weather and seldom come to grief. The last stage of their journey, that up the Thames, is usually done with the help of steam, in the form of a tow. When Yarrell wrote of these craft, he said that the London market was principally supplied with eels by Dutch fishermen. "There are two companies in Holland, having five vessels each; their vessels are built with a capacious well, in which large quantities of eels are preserved alive till wanted. One or more of these vessels may be constantly seen lying off Billingsgate; the others go to Holland for fresh supplies, each bringing a cargo of 15,000 to 20,000 pounds' weight of live eels, for which the Dutch merchant pays a duty of £13 per cargo for permission to sell. Eels and salmon are the only fish sold by the pound weight in the London market."



TAKING THE AIR.
A DUTCH BOY AS FIGUREHEAD.



DUTCH EEL-BOATS AT BILLINGSGATE.

For a very long period these Dutch eel-boats have visited the Thames—one writer stating that they have had moorings in the river since the days of Queen Elizabeth—and it is said of them that they enjoy the right to occupy their position for so long as they keep at least one vessel stationed there. Certainly the Dutch have had the right of mooring three of these vessels off Billingsgate Market since the reign of Charles I. That monarch granted the privilege to the Dutch in recognition of their "straightforward dealings with us." Apparently there are always two at least of the craft in position. In the numberless journeys I have made up and down London River, I have never seen fewer; and, what is perhaps as strange a circumstance, I have never seen one of the eel-boats either coming to or going from Billingsgate.

CHAPTER XVIII

COLLIERS

FOR many centuries great fleets of sailing ships and steamboats have passed in constant procession up and down and across the North Sea, bearing coal, just as for countless generations craft have plied with fish. Only the imagination can adequately estimate the wealth that is represented in the total by these two great essentials of life. Millions sterling to a bewildering aggregate stand for the value of the coal alone, and vast sums indicate the worth of the food which has been taken from the teeming waters.

It is significant that two of the hardest and most perilous callings in existence—coal-mining and deep-sea fishing—are closely associated with the North Sea ; and of all the craft which navigate that stretch of ocean none are harder driven than the colliers and the trawlers.

In the olden days Newcastle and Sunderland were the two northern ports from which most of the coal was shipped to London, and at times as many as a hundred vessels were lumbering on their way together to the Thames. For example, it is recorded that in September 1675 a hundred "loaden colliers" passed through Yarmouth Roads for London River ; and to-day you may not look from any part of the coast between the Thames



OLD COLLIER BRIGS



and the Tyne, in clear weather, without seeing a craft of some sort bearing coal, mostly for the London market, but also for ports in every part of the world. There still remain some, but not many, of the old-time collier-brigs, the "Geordies," which were almost as notorious as they were celebrated.

The coal-carrying trade has been one of the most famous features of the North Sea for several centuries. The quaint craft of the earliest days conveyed the coal from the northern ports to London, dependent not only on wind and weather, but also on the friendly disposition of neighbouring nations. It was one thing for a vessel to clear the departure port and quite another for her to reach London River safely, for there might be prowling privateers or ships of war ready to swoop down on the helpless craft and take the precious cargo as a prize and the wretched crew as prisoners of war.

To-day the trade is done with railway regularity and almost railway security by specially built and equipped steam-colliers. Several of these have been constructed so that they may navigate the Thames as far as Battersea and the Wandle, and it is a somewhat odd sight to watch a sea-going craft proceeding past Chelsea, or moored snugly in a dock below Chelsea Bridge. These particular steamers are fitted, of course, with lowering masts and funnels, to enable them to pass under the numerous low bridges between the Tower and the Wandle.

Twenty per cent. of the total coal product of the United Kingdom comes from the north-east coast. In the counties of Durham and Northumberland the output of coal exceeds 55,000,000 tons, and of that quantity about

20,000,000 tons is shipped on the Tyne. Writing in *The Times* on 16th May 1911, a special correspondent stated that the North-Eastern Railway Company provided accommodation for about 15,000,000 tons, and the shipments both by river and railway are conducted in the most up-to-date and efficient manner. At the Tyne Dock the work goes on night and day, without extra charge, and so perfect and complete are the arrangements that it is not uncommon to unload at the rate of 600 tons an hour. Mr. Wilcock, of the North-Eastern Railway, told the correspondent of a quick record in which 4000 tons of cargo coal and bunkers were loaded in ten hours and fifty minutes. The ship was in port only thirteen hours.

The coal-carrying trade of the North Sea is indeed one of the most striking features of that waterway, and in many cases the commodity is almost as frequently handled as is fish before it reaches the consumer ; while in the same way the price to the user increases with every fresh handling. It is a common enough experience for the London householder to pay for coal twice or thrice the price at which it can be bought by the resident in the north, and that is one of the solemn truths which are amongst the first to be known by the northerner who settles in the capital.

With so many handlings it is inevitable that there should be an ultimate heavy cost to the consumer, and what that cost must be can be fully realised only by those who study the methods by which the coal is dealt with from the time it leaves the pit-brow to the time when it is shot into the householder's cellar or carried or hoisted to some aerial flat which has accommodation

only for half a ton—a final elevation which puts the last financial straw upon the burden-bearer's back.

A journey down the Thames towards the sea will give an opportunity of seeing many of the gigantic iron and steel structures that have been specially erected for the prompt discharge of sea-borne coal; and in most of the continental ports on the North Sea borders the same description of mechanical appliance may be noticed. Vast fleets of lighters are constantly employed in dealing with this branch of trade alone.

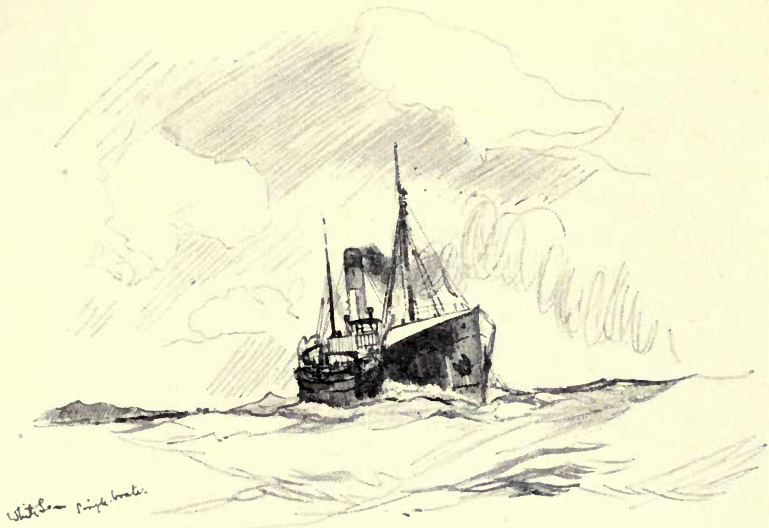
When Plimsoll waged his noble war against rotten and overladen ships—and that was less than fifty years ago—he described the North Sea colliers. They were then mostly screw-steamers, though there were still many of the old class, and were generally to be found lying between Blackwall and Woolwich. They were of small size—from 150 to 600 tons—and were built as brigs, sloops, or schooners. Most of them, however, were brigs.

A visit to two or three of them, said Plimsoll, showed a state of things which was common to all. A collier brig was generally worked by a captain and a mate, who lived in a small dirty cabin, and by four men and a boy, who lived and slept in the most miserable of forecastles. This fore-castle was very small, and so low that no person of ordinary stature could stand upright in it. It was dark, and the only approach was by a very small hatch-way. The fore-castle generally contained a quantity of old ropes, some rusty chains, a large tub of grease, and some damp canvas. These things, together with three or four dirty hammocks, took up the whole space, and it was only from sickness and the most urgent

necessity that the sailor remained there for any length of time.

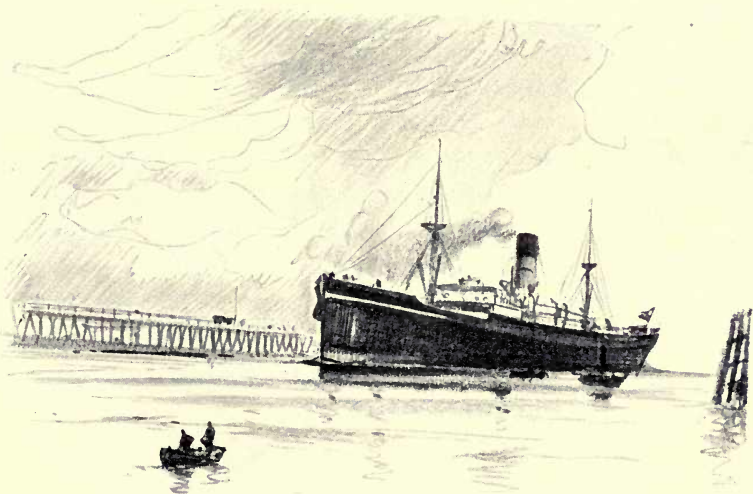
“So old and ill-constructed are some of these colliers, that in rough weather the forecastle is deluged with water. This condition of things is made much worse by the negligence of the sailor himself, for it seems to be a rule that the cook, instead of throwing over the side of the ship the refuse of material used for food, as dirty water, potato parings, etc., deposits these with great care in some corner of the forecastle. No attention is paid by the captain to the sanitary state of the ship; during the voyage, which is often a rough one, he is engaged in working the vessel, and while she is in harbour he is on shore waiting upon the owners of the vessel, or transacting their business in the Coal Exchange. . . . The provisions supplied in this class of ships vary both in quality and quantity; the supply, though, is very deficient, and there is an almost universal complaint among the men and boys that they have not sufficient to eat. Although coasting voyages last not longer than three or four days, and the ship is very seldom far away from land, the men scarcely ever get fresh meat; the supply always consists of salt beef—the coarsest parts of the animal. To this I may add that the biscuits are of the worst description, very hard, and are masticated with the greatest difficulty. The quality of provisions depends entirely upon the liberality of the captain, who not unfrequently has a share in the ship, and whose interest is consequently concerned in keeping down all expenses; the comfort of the men seems to be made subservient to pecuniary advantages.”

Very different indeed is the state of things which



White Sea single boiler.

A SINGLE-BOILER.



A NORTH SEA COLLIER.

UNIV. OF
COLUMBIA

exists to-day in the coal-carrying trade of the North Sea. Some remarkably fine well-found craft are engaged in that traffic, and, so far as they are concerned, there is no cause for complaint as to either the quality or the quantity of the food supplied. Crews nowadays generally "find" themselves. The voyages are made with great regularity, and both masters and men have plenty of opportunity of getting spells of enjoyment ashore while the vessel is taking in or discharging her cargo. That improvement has been largely due to the strenuous labours of Mr. Plimsoll in the interests of all seafaring men.

There is in the South Kensington Museum a remarkably interesting whole model of the brig *Brotherly Love*. She was built of wood in 1764, and in 1876 was said to be still employed as a coasting collier. She was of 214 tons gross register, with a length of 86.5 ft., a breadth of 24 ft., and a depth at the side of 27 ft. There is another model of the brig *Liberty and Property*, with a tonnage of 274, a length of 120 ft., a breadth of 28 ft., and a depth at the side of 20 ft. This vessel was built of wood at Whitby in 1754, and was employed in the Shields and London coasting trade. Apparently, judging from her ports and other details shown in the model, she was intended for use as a ship of war if necessary. There is another rigged model of the brig *Antelope*, built of wood at Sunderland in 1766. Her tonnage was 195, length 80 ft., breadth 24 ft., and depth at side 20 ft. The model shows her with topsail, courses, foretopmast staysail, and jib set.

CHAPTER XIX

NORTH SEA TRAMPS

HARD by the Tower Bridge is always a fleet of grimy little steamers, many of them black-hulled, black-funnelled, and blue-boated, and named after birds. You marvel at their number, and wonder whence they come and where they go. They are a fleet in themselves, yet these are merely the ships that have come in from neighbouring waters, making ready for sea again, discharging or taking in cargo from wharf and lighter.

These are the tramps of the North Sea, the small, stout vessels which are for ever running between the Thames and foreign ports, and some of which occasionally distinguish themselves by taking as long to cross the North Sea as a slow liner takes to bridge the Western Ocean. They spend much of their lives, which are long, laborious, unromantic existences for the most part, in Hamburg, Antwerp, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, and the ports on the borders of the Biscay and the Mediterranean. Sometimes they are invested with an air of dignity and importance. That is when they are conveying Royal furniture for use during a Royal sojourn abroad.

If you look the steamers up in Lloyd's you will find their official tonnage and horse-power, and will get an

entirely wrong impression of their size and might, because here, as elsewhere, the official differs so greatly from the actual. Theoretically, a craft of 700 tons net register and 120 horse-power is not the sort of thing to which the traveller spoiled and nerve-softened by floating palaces would trust his life; but in practice the carrying power is raised to 1300 tons and the machinery will develop a nine-knot speed. In theory, too, the tramps come and go, weather permitting; as a matter of fact they run in defiance of wind and water, and keep their appointed times as well, at any rate, as many suburban railway trains.

The typical tramp of the North Sea is a craft of mellow years, and like a seasoned voyager she bears her journeys calmly. Winds may roar and seas may crash, but she knows them of old time, and while the new-fangled boat may clutter, jib, and curvet, as if afraid or startled, the veteran thumps evenly along and "punches into it."

A towering, crumbling sea may threaten to strike and swamp her. What of it? She has had such blows before, and wards them off with her bluff bows; or if a sea has crashed broadside on, or has been shipped in a heavy roll, she shakes it out of her spacious scuppers, and drives along with gushing sides. If the propeller whirrs in air and the squat of the counter on the sea as the stern falls down to watery burial threatens to snap the shaft or turn the engine-room into a useless foundry, what of that? For has not this same steamboat tramped a full quarter of a century without ceasing, except for repairs, and has not the brave old heart of her, which is called a compound engine, survived many a worse shock?

If one's spirits sink at times when imagination pictures what might happen if the only boiler collapses, what of that again; for has not this very single boiler driven the tramp for twenty-five years, and wet or fine, rain or snow, fog or sunshine, heavy sea or oily calm, brought her safely home again to London River?

Hire your wherry at some weeping stairs by Tower Bridge and go on board as the only passenger. The Blue Peter is flying on the foremast, signal of departure. The last lighter is alongside, with a cargo varying from empty fruit baskets to sultanas, drums of oil, barrels of petroleum, and iron water-tanks. The Customs officer is present, seeing that the laws of his Department are obeyed; and the pilot, blue-coated, somewhat brass-bound, is ready to take the bridge when the landsman-looking person who navigates as far as Gravesend has been dropped, for the blue-coated man is foreign, and pilots the ship across the North Sea, where another foreigner relieves him. It is a costly but necessary business.

The captain is at large, with watchful eye, and the steward is stowing his stores in secret corners and mysterious underground holes. Let him be blessed, here and now, with a hearty blessing, for he is a good steward, an honest steward, and the kind, strong face of him assures you that he will not fail in case of need to administer the simple curative methods of the tramp, the chief of which is that you should be laid on a shelf and left to Nature and a large bottle of cholera mixture.

The steward arranges and contracts to maintain you,

at sea and in port, at an inclusive charge of 3s. a day, and modestly hopes that it is not too much; and for 2d. he will give you better and more lager than you can buy in the West End or in a mail-boat or on board a railway train for 1s. At the end of your round trip you will get your bill, which is in reality a tally, a very *chevaux-de-frise* of strokes, which stand for bottles; but emotionally you bless him again, for you have swum in lager at the price of a West End lunch. He is a married steward, and sometimes vaguely mentions his wife and family, after the way of a man who alludes to his bank balance when he is not quite sure that he has one.

Your home is in the little cabin aft, with old-time maple and mahogany fittings, primitive oil lamps, and faultlessly polished brass everywhere, even to the chimney of the stove. There is the transom, almost broad enough for bunks, the transom-lockers, where the beer comes from, and the crimson-covered sofa, wide and soft enough to sleep on. There are two wondrous state-rooms, jutting out from each side, opening into the cabin, just as they did in the old days of steamboats, and there is a table which will seat six people.

If you are humorous and agile you can step out of your bunk in your pyjamas, take breakfast, regain your shelf, and go to sleep again, probably amid rounds of applause. If you do not win the sleep you woo, it is not for want of soothing music, because there is the ceaseless vibration of the screw beneath your very head, nor for want of snoring breezes from North or South or East or West.

Your shipmates are the men who have done things and bring you into touch with the whole world. Their eyes have seen most that the earth can offer in the shape of good and evil. Take one of them at random. He is a quiet man, young and slight of build, but every inch of him bone and muscle. Look at his face, the brownness of it, the clearness of the skin, the squareness of the jaw, the firmness of the mouth, the eyes that do not falter.

There is a wondrous humour in the smile, and a joyous ring in his careless laughter as you jest. Then the face hardens as the keen eyes peer over the weather-cloth of the narrow bucking bridge—hardens because there may be passing through the mind the picture of a sailing-ship in which he was more than six months getting from China to America, never touching, seldom seeing, land; twice rescued from starvation by passing vessels, and once from death from thirst by catching rain in sail-troughs; or a vision of a cholera-stricken steamer in which he ran down the Indian coast, with midnight stoppages of engines for the moment needed to cast the corpses overboard; or the bullfight he has recently beheld in Spain, or he may be wondering whether, when he gets ashore, he will remain in the old packet or be drafted to another tramp. So young, and yet he has seen and done so much!

You leave the bridge and go below with the chief engineer, overlook the engines, enter the stokehold, where the solitary fireman feeds the furnaces, then away through the shaft-tunnel, blaze-lamp in hand, crouching in the slush and water and whirr and groans and complaints of it all, groping towards the stern, preceded

by the scurrying rats which love nothing so much as to come and eat the engine-tallow and drink the engine-oil. And how could you suppose, if you did not know, that the cheery, friendly engineer was in a steamer, one of five which entered the Bay of Biscay from Gibraltar within twelve hours of each other, and the only survivor of the five? The four foundered with all hands in a terrific gale in the Bay, and the chief's big tramp, grain-laden, listing heavily, swept and smashed by seas, pulled through it only by a miracle.

Every engine-room in every tramp sings its own peculiar story. You can make the story what you like. In one ship the ceaseless song was, "Don't forget the oil-feeders!" until the brain reeled with the reiteration of it; in another the clanking, thudding, panting, squeaking, straining stood for "Don't care a jigger if I *never* get home!"

And the skipper and his stories! His humour, his mimicry of the foreigner and his ways, and the belief, unexpressed, but none the less clearly indicated, that God made only the Britisher, and that somehow the rest of men were evolved. He tells the wildest stories in the soberest way, as, for instance, that when Nelson fought the Danes and put the telescope to his blind eye he declared—

"Copenhagen shall be tagen—
Yah, Yah, Yah!—"

which he interprets for you by explaining that "yah"—which he spells—is foreign for "yes." He carries his humour even unto those who will not, cannot see it, as, for example, when he points to the metal badge which

the dignified German pilot carries suspended from his waistcoat, and asks him if it is his bus-driver's ticket!

Meanwhile the steward, with whom last night you were drinking lager at St. Pauli, in turn at his expense—this being the etiquette of little tramps—is cheerily cleaning your boots.

CHAPTER XX

WINTER AT AN OLD-WORLD HARBOUR

ONE winter's day, early in the New Year, I looked out of my window and saw that the snow was falling thickly and that the wind was blowing in from the sea. I raised the sash and listened and heard the roar of the rising tide on the beach. It was the boom of the growing gale—the call to arms. I got into my heaviest clothing and hurried down the Valley to the foreshore. It was somewhat like going down a colossal megaphone and getting to the enormous mouth and meeting the collected forces of the salted breeze. Wind and wave were driving landward with united voices, and there was a vast dull and growing roar. In such a wild commotion it is better to be alone; there is neither wish nor breath for talk. All one's strength is needed to keep a footing and struggle on. Occasionally one is picked up and carried bodily into the air until a friendly obstruction stops the journey.

I have seen a north-east gale pick up a heavy fisherman and hurl him against a post on a pier, breaking his leg. I have seen a Yorkshire coast town stripped of slates and bereft of chimney-pots by the same fierce agency. No very old or modern shoddy work can stand against the charges of the bitter wind that comes

with hurricane ferocity straight from the Polar regions. I have seen the coast strewn with wrecks and the uplands by the cliffs covered with enormous trees that have been uprooted and flung down.

Recollections such as these returned as I looked eastward and saw the tumbling yellow seas and ghostly steamboats which were waiting till the tide served, so that they might seek the shelter of the harbour. The air was thick—like fog—with snow and spray, and already, three hours before high water, there were signs of what the seas would be like at the top of the flood. Waves were rushing and swirling round the end of the east pier, and the great mass of stonework was from time to time smothered in the breaking waters. The combers were thundering on the beach, and the surf was whipped from the crests and carried townward in a vast grey cloud. Above was the leaden, sullen sky, ahead was the gloomy Castle Hill, alongside was the long procession of the seas, under foot was the slushy snow, and all around me was the swiftly growing storm. From the chimneys of the old town, rising on the hillside, the smoke was caught by the levelling wind and mingled with the ocean's spray.

I fought my way along the foreshore, and as I passed the lifeboat-house the doors were flung wide open, oil-skinned men were putting on their life-belts, and the crew were standing by in readiness to meet a call. The first of the steam-tractors, a battered paddle vessel, was making for the harbour, although the tide-ball had not been hoisted. I pressed forward, almost doubled up as I leaned against the wind, and struggled down the Lighthouse Pier, and there I learned once

more what a winter gale from the North Sea is like and what it means to those in charge of the old-time harbour.

Harbour-master, deputy harbour-master, and staff were clothed in oil-frocks, sou'-westers, and heavy top-boots—clothing which you would think would defy the weather of the Horn itself; and yet there was not one who was not soaked to the skin. Rain and snow and deluge of sea beat through their garments, and the glistening figures floundered at their duty in the depth of discomfort.

On the Lighthouse Pier there was thud of sea, groan of machinery, clank of paddle, howl of wind, and roar of human voice. At the harbour mouth there was disorder and confusion, for the London boat, an ugly lump of a coaster, had got athwart the entrance and there was not water enough to float her. She was a danger to herself and the incoming, rushing steamboats, and frantic was the effort that was made to berth her, so that she should be secure and taken from the track of the traffic. While men on board and ashore were getting her away the trawlers were running home. They rode in on the swell of the seas, lost to view time after time in the snow and spray-filled air. They came, now wallowing in the trough, now rising on some huge crest; at times caught broadside and swept towards the harbour with appalling force. You held your breath as they chunked gallantly in. You saw the great waves crumble at the end of the East Pier, noticed the swirl of the tide, and saw dimly, as through a mist, that fatal shore on which so many ships and men have perished. Over the bay, in the welter, you discerned the Spa, and wondered if that

storm-beaten spot could ever be the chosen haunt of much that is fairest and brightest in the country.

“’Ere she comes!”

“’Old her up, skipper!”

“Now she does it!”

“No, she doesn’t!”

“She’ll miss it!”

“No, she won’t!”

You are standing under the lee of the waterhouse, sheltering with a group of fishermen, and you hear their excited comments as the brave old weather-beaten trawlers—the like of which you will not find elsewhere than off the Tyne and Scarborough—rush round the pier-head, with their paddles thumping and their oil-clad crews at their stations, on the sea-swept deck. There is heaving of ropes, bawling of orders, twirling of steering-wheels—and the ancient craft steam calmly into the harbour and up to their buoys.

They have fought another fight, and it is still well with them.

The sea is growing mightily, and a little screw-boat—she is a Hullman—with a freeboard of something like three feet, comes through the smother of the gale and is swept onward like a shell. Three men are in her wheelhouse, and they rush her around as no one but North Sea smacksmen can rush a trawler round the race of Castle Hill. Still all is bustle, for the boats keep coming in. Then, as the evening closes, harbour-master, deputy, and staff sigh with relief, for the worst is over for the present; their time of greatest anxiety has passed, and they can seek temporary refuge from the storm.



A BEAM-TRAWLER AT SEA.



A STEAM-TRAWLER ENTERING HARBOUR IN WINTER.



I had long since sought shelter in the office at the base of the lighthouse. Time after time the seas swept in almost solid sheets against the rounded side, and the little window by the desk was deluged. At intervals there came a sea which smashed upon and over the East Pier, with a force so terrific that the lighthouse positively bumped. The shock came through the structure by way of the booms connecting the outer breakwater with the head of the Lighthouse Pier. Once upon a time—not many years ago—there came a mass of water so tremendous in its power that it cracked the head of the immense mass of masonry on which the lighthouse stands.

The door opened and in came the harbour-master and the deputy. They were drenched with the sea and the soft snow, and were numb with their exposure. They would want, they said, “a dry shift from clew to earring,” and one proceeded to remove his “soul-and-body-lashing,” as he termed it—in other words, a rope which he had passed round his waist to keep his oil-frock secure.

I accompanied the deputy to the lantern, to light the flashing apparatus. There I felt the lighthouse tremble with the shocks of the charging seas. I looked through the windows, too, towards the whitening hills. The other panes were thick with snow and ice—and there I beheld a spectacle such as few residents had witnessed.

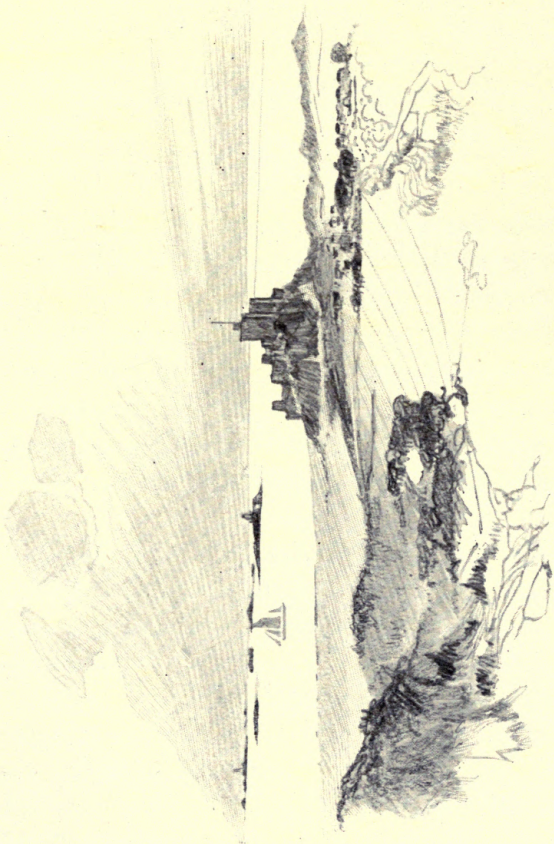
The gale had reached its height, and it was the top of the flood. The panorama was appalling in its grandeur. Billow charged on billow, in one wild whirl, and with resistless fury crashed against the massive breakwater. There was the collision, the spouting high in the air of the torn sea, and the sweeping over the two harbours

of spray so thick that it looked like an enormous cloud of steam. Vessels at their moorings were smothered in it, and the water roared down the inner side of the pier like a gigantic cataract.

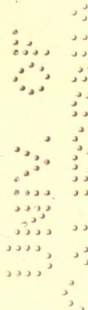
Warily we struggled out of the little door of the lighthouse lantern, and looked at the advancing seas. Even at that height above the water the spray was carried far over our heads; it was impossible to face the fury of the storm, and the stoutest heart might well have quailed at that plain of raging waters.

I clambered back with my friend into the lantern, down the worn stone steps, and back into the office, and thence on to the pier. Before I left I wrested from the heads of the harbour the admission that the gale was a hard one; and that the wind was blowing at something like ninety miles an hour. As I struggled homeward the old house-fronts were white to the eaves with snow, and the ruthless wind was wrenching out the weakest bricks and slates.

It was a wild, uncompromising night—the sort of weather to make you raise your hat to the harbour-master and his staff and the oil-skinned figures who tugged at wheel and tiller, and kept their craft up in the race that runs round Castle Hill when the gale comes in from east or north.



THE FARNE ISLANDS AND BAMBURGH.



CHAPTER XXI

WRECKS AND RESCUES

THE most popular heroine of the old generation that is passing, and has nearly gone, won her renown on the North Sea. She was Grace Darling. More than sixty years after she made the world ring with praise of her achievement, one of the most appalling of maritime disasters occurred on the North Sea. That was the loss of the *Elbe*, a North-German Lloyd's express mail steamer—soon to be followed by the terrible loss of the *Berlin*.

Grace Darling, a true daughter of the North Sea, helped to row a coble through a heavy sea, to save the survivors of the steamer *Forfarshire*, on 6th September 1838; and Skipper Wright, a North Sea smacksman, and his crew, in the *Wildflower*, rescued the handful of people who escaped from the sinking *Elbe*. Both events are memorable because of the courage and endurance that were shown in the work of salvation. The story of Grace Darling has been made known by many writers; that of the *Elbe* was told to me, on a bright day in a sunny south coast watering-place, by the only woman who was saved from the liner, Miss Anna Böcker.

The *Forfarshire*, a small steamer engaged in the

coasting trade, sailed from Hull for Dundee on the evening of 5th September 1838. She carried sixty-three passengers and crew, as well as a considerable quantity of cargo. Steamships of those days were crude and imperfect craft, especially in their boilers and machinery, and shortly after the Humber had been left it was found that the boilers of the *Forfarshire* were leaking. The weather, too, was bad.

A strong wind was blowing, there was a nasty sea, and, worse than all, the air was thick. All the elements of danger were present, even to the proximity of a deadly coast. Throughout the day after sailing, however, the steamer managed to forge laboriously ahead. She struggled past the Farne Islands, or Staples, off the coast of Northumberland, north-east of Bamborough Castle, and separated from the mainland by the Fairway Channel. The leakage in the boilers increased so rapidly that when the *Forfarshire* was off Berwick the water was up to the furnaces and putting out the fires. Still the master held on, but when St. Abb's Head was abeam the engineer reported that the machinery was useless and could not be worked any longer. Some sail was accordingly set, and the *Forfarshire* was got round and began to run south, before the wind, in the hope of reaching shelter—a hard thing on that inhospitable coast, which, then as now, is unprovided with harbours of refuge.

The steamer surged and blundered down as far as the dangerous Fairway, and the captain tried to steer her through the channel. It was a forlorn hope in that black night, and in a heavy gale. She was swept repeatedly by savage seas, she refused to obey her helm,

and was completely at the mercy of the waves and weather.

The dreadful and inevitable end was not long delayed, for the ship was hurled against a jagged rock and her bows were crushed in. Almost instantly a big sea lifted the *Forfarshire* high up, then dropped her on the rock with such tremendous force that she broke in two. The entire upper part was carried away, and with it the chief cabin, in which the agonised passengers were huddled together. Every soul from that part perished.

Immediately after the vessel struck, a boat was launched, and eight of the crew and a passenger managed to get into it. The fore part of the steamer held fast to the rock—which the *Forfarshire* would have avoided if she had been a few yards farther to the southwest.

A mile away from the rock was the Fern Lighthouse, the keeper of which was named Darling, with whom lived his wife and his daughter Grace. Of the disaster itself they saw nothing and knew nothing till the wild night had given place to morning, then, at about seven o'clock, the wreck was noticed. There was little likelihood of any of her people being alive, and it seemed impossible for any boat to live in the sea that was running; but Grace implored her father to try and reach the wreck, and vowed that she herself would take an oar and help to pull the boat. What man, so impelled, could answer "No"? Not Darling—and he got his coble afloat, his wife and daughter helping with the launch. The two managed to fight their way across the stretch of sea that was like a whirlpool, and if they had needed any reward for their labour they had it in the sight of

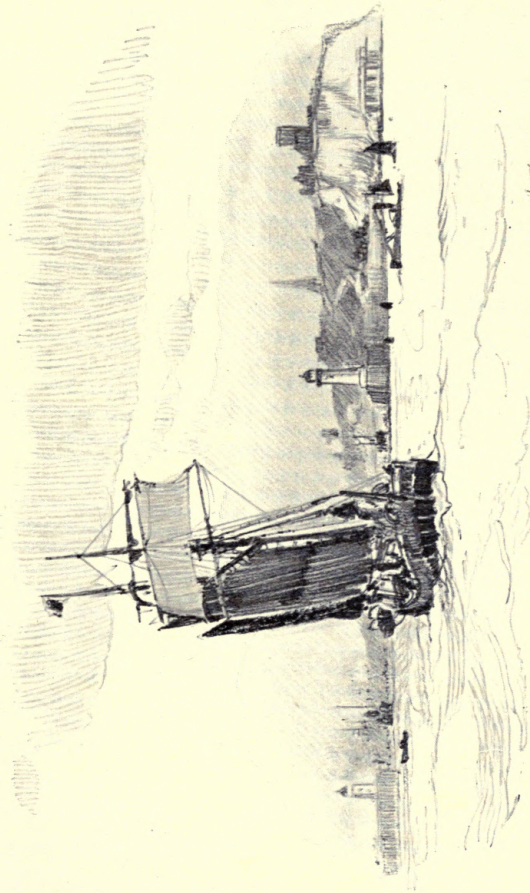
nine survivors of the wreck who were almost perishing—amongst them a woman who had witnessed the drowning of her two only children and heard their last despairing cry for help above the howl of wind and roar of ruthless breakers.

After strenuous efforts Darling and his daughter managed to help the survivors into the boat, and to row them safely back to the lighthouse, where food and drink and fire restored them, and whence, in a little while, they were transferred to the mainland.

The courage of the enterprise, and the youth and sex of one of the rescuers, thrilled the country as it had not been moved by any deed of recent years. Public praise and money rewards were given to Grace Darling, who lived just long enough to learn fully what the world had to say and do. She died, a delicate girl, not long after the rescue of the survivors of the *Forfarshire*.

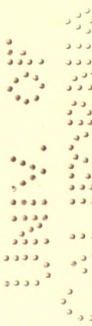
The loss of the *Elbe*, in itself one of the most terrible of disasters to Atlantic liners, was relieved from total horror by the skill and courage of North Sea smacksmen who rescued the survivors. The accident occurred in the winter of 1895, which was one of the most severe of modern times. The Medway was frozen over, and skaters swarmed on the ornamental waters of the London parks. On the more exposed railway tracks in England trains were snowed up, and there were many calls on the east coast for the lifeboats.

Wild weather raged on the North Sea, and such fishing-craft as were out were covered with ice. There were on the banks, of course, the fleeters, for there is no running home on their part to escape bad weather; and there were also afloat a few adventurous single-boaters,



*View from
Gravelly Point, Newcastle*

THE MOUTH OF THE TYNE.



sail and steam. Amongst the smacks was the *Wild-flower*, whose skipper was William Wright.

When the *Elbe* left Bremen for New York, calling at Southampton, the German rivers were frozen and the weather was intensely cold. She sailed from Bremen on the afternoon of 30th January, and began her trip to America. There were, all told, 352 people on board, the passengers including a number of women and children. She carried two pilots, one German and one English, and her captain was a brave and experienced officer.

All went well until five o'clock on the following morning, when the liner was run into by a small steamer named the *Crathie* and so badly damaged that within twenty minutes she foundered.

The *Crathie* herself could do but little—she was a cargo craft with a crew of twelve, bound from Rotterdam to Aberdeen; and the tackle of the liner's boats was frozen, so that axes had to be used to lower them. When the boats were at last freed and lowered they capsized, with one exception. All those on the star-board side, filled with terrified passengers and crew, were either smashed or swamped before they touched the sea, and the occupants were drowned or killed. A boat on the port side, into which Miss Böcker made her way, capsized as soon as it touched the water, and all who were in it, with the exception of herself, were drowned. She could swim, and managed to seize and hold on to the boat's mast, which was afloat. Within a few minutes she was picked up by another small boat, one which, though meant to carry only fifteen people, already had nineteen packed together. In the bitter darkness

she was seen and seized and hauled into the boat and left, almost senseless, in the freezing water in the bottom. She saw the liner, which was burning lights and firing rockets, sink stern first, and then almost abandoned hope, for it seemed as if the boat could not live in such weather and that no help could come. Yet one or two sail were seen.

The survivors were too far off to notice signals of distress; then a lonely smack was seen, and the little craft, almost simultaneously, saw the boat upon the water.

The vessel was the trawler *Wildflower*. She had her gear down, for the weather had fined enough to enable the trawl to be shot. Instantly the hard work of getting up the gear began; it went on for half an hour, then the smack bore down, and by strong North Sea hands which were stretched over her bulwarks the survivors were plucked up one by one and taken on board. The boat, badly damaged, was sent adrift, and the smack headed for Lowestoft, forty miles away.

The rescued people were crowded into her little stifling cabin, and had food and drink—but so great was the call on the smack's stores that when she reached port, the first to take the tidings of the disaster, there was not so much as a biscuit left. The last of them was given to and eaten by Miss Böcker. The *Wildflower* reached Lowestoft about twelve hours after the *Elbe* foundered. The boat was cast ashore at Walton-on-the-Naze. The whole of the *Elbe's* people, with the exception of the rescued score, were lost. Miss Böcker was bidden to Osborne to tell the story to Queen Victoria and the Empress Frederick. The disaster made a deep

impression in this country and Germany. Steps were taken to recognise the heroism of Skipper Wright, and his reward took the practical shape of a smack. The blame for the collision was, by an Admiralty Court at Bremerhaven, attributed to the *Crathie*; but it was considered that the *Elbe* was not free from reproach for not getting out of the way of the *Crathie* and failing to attract that vessel's attention by signalling on her whistle.

The recognition of Skipper Wright's bravery is amongst the comparatively few cases in which the courageous acts of North Sea men have been rewarded. These acts are so numerous, and smacksmen are so little given to speaking of them—and there are no halfpenny illustrated and other journals on the North Sea. Yet it sometimes happens that an unusual deed will be brought to public notice, and such was the case not long ago, with the result that the Stanhope Gold Medal for the bravest deed of the year 1910 was awarded to a North Sea man, and eventually presented to him by the King at Buckingham Palace.

Many of these acts of heroism on the North Sea go unrecorded in the Press—indeed, few of them are known outside small circles, and even then they are taken as matters of course; but sometimes a North Sea man is brought unwillingly to the front, and is compelled to accept public attention and receive recognition of his conduct. The Stanhope Gold Medal and £5, awarded by the Royal Humane Society for the bravest deed of the year, were presented on 14th February 1911 to Frank Fraser, chief engineer of the steam-trawler *Donside*, of Aberdeen. The *Donside*, a steel vessel of 59

tons and 50 horse-power, built in 1900, and owned by Mr. G. Fyfe, of Aberdeen, was on the Viking Bank, some 225 miles north-east by east of Aberdeen, at 12.30 a.m. on 27th August 1910. Although it was a pitch-dark night and blowing hard, with a heavy sea running, the skipper decided to shoot his trawl. When he thought that all was clear he shouted to let go, but unfortunately John Fraser, a deck hand, was standing on a part of the net, and was carried into the sea. Hearing the cry "Man overboard!" the chief engineer rushed up from below and instantly jumped into the water after the deck hand, who was his brother. He managed to reach him and they both drifted astern. A light in the after rigging enabled the men to be faintly seen, and a rope was thrown which the engineer succeeded in grasping. His hands, however, were greasy with oil from the engine-room, and he had the utmost difficulty in retaining his hold. It was only after fifteen minutes' strenuous exertion that they were got on board.

That is the bald official record of the bravest deed of 1910; but the reader will have no difficulty in fitting the trimmings to the tale, if they are wanted. The presentation was made at the annual meeting of the Royal Humane Society, by Admiral the Hon. Sir Edmund R. Fremantle, K.C.B., C.M.G., A.D.C., himself one of the five living naval officers to whom the medal has been given in the past. The medal was founded in memory of the late Captain Chandos Scudamore Stanhope, R.N. It has been given for many gallant deeds in many parts of the world; but it has never been awarded for a finer or more dramatic performance than that of the chief engineer of the little *Donside* on the

Viking Bank. This bank is much frequented by Scotch steam-tractlers, especially those from Aberdeen, and lying as it does, almost midway between the Shetland Islands and the coast of Norway, some very bad and bitter weather is often experienced even in the height of summer.

It was upon the Outer Dowsing Sands that the destroyer *Cobra* was lost in September 1901. The *Cobra* was designed and built at Armstrong's works at Elswick, and after an exhaustive survey by the Admiralty officials she was bought by the Government. The vessel being reported ready for delivery, a navigating party was sent to Newcastle and left that port with her at 5 p.m. on the 17th for Portsmouth. The *Cobra* was commanded by Lieutenant Bosworth Smith, who had served some time on fisheries protection duty and was well acquainted with the North Sea. She carried two officers and forty-eight warrant officers and men. On the voyage down the North Sea she met with bad weather, and, at 7.30 on the morning of the 18th, broke her back near the Outer Dowsing Lightship, and was lost with most of her crew, the only survivors being Chief Engineer Percey and eleven petty officers and men. A singular feature of the disaster was that one of these survivors, a second-class domestic who had volunteered to go with the navigating party, had never before been to sea. The survivors were picked up from the dinghy by a P. & O. cargo boat. The court-martial, which was held on board H.M.S. *Victory*, found that the *Cobra* "did not touch the ground nor meet with any obstruction, nor was her loss due to any error of navigation; but is attributed to the structural weakness of the

ship." A special pension of £100 a year was granted to the widow of Lieutenant Bosworth Smith, and pensions were given to the widows of the seamen and firemen who lost their lives in the *Cobra*. About £4000 was subscribed in Portsmouth for the relief of the dependants of those who perished. The *Cobra* was a turbine-driven destroyer, and it is remembered as a strange fact that the *Viper*, a sister ship, was lost a few weeks earlier in the Channel.

The lifeboat of to-day had its origin in a North Sea port—South Shields. Disastrous autumnal gales in 1789 resulted in the offer of a prize for the best craft capable of being launched from the shore and sent to vessels in distress. The prize was won by Henry Greathead, of South Shields, who was also rewarded in other ways for his invention, which proved so successful that in a dozen years three hundred lives were saved off Tyne-mouth alone by means of boats built according to his plans. These boats were in use for more than half a century, then, in December 1849, a score of the ablest pilots of the Tyne were drowned by the upsetting of one of the Greathead type of boats. She capsized and the pilots were drowned inside her, because she was so deep in the water as to leave them no space to breathe. This calamity and the miserably inadequate rewards given to men who went off to vessels in distress—in the spring of 1850 lifeboatmen off Holy Island were considered well enough paid at one-and-eightpence each for risking their lives—caused further steps to be taken to evolve a new type of boat. After competition the model of James Beeching, of Great Yarmouth, was chosen. Three accidents happening quickly to the



A SMACK TURNED INTO A COASTER.



AN OLD YAWL GETTING TO SEA.



Beeching type of boat, with serious loss of life, other measures were adopted to secure a better type, and to-day every place on the east coast where a lifeboat is needed has such a craft, adapted to the special needs of the locality and usually commanding the entire confidence of the volunteer crews by whom they are manned.

The North Sea has given to lifeboat history not only some of the bravest deeds that have been recorded since the lifeboat was invented, but also some of the most serious accidents. The greatest disaster to a lifeboat was that on 9th December 1886, when the Southport and St. Anne's lifeboats capsized and failed to right themselves, the result being that twenty-seven of the crews perished. But for aggregate loss in life the North Sea stands unrivalled, for it has three famous disasters to its cruel record. These are: the loss of the Whitby lifeboat on 9th February 1861, when a dozen men out of thirteen were drowned within a few yards of the shore; the Scarborough lifeboat, less than a year later, when there was almost a repetition of that accident; and the Caister lifeboat disaster, an event which at the time thrilled the world because of the courage of the crew and the saying—"Caister men never turn back." It is in connection with the North Sea, too, that there is on record what is considered to be the finest lifeboat rescue that was ever effected—that of the survivors of the *Indian Chief* by the *Bradford*.

The story of the loss of the Whitby lifeboat may be briefly told. Following some comparatively mild weather, an exceptionally severe storm burst over the North Sea. At that time, fifty years ago, enormous

numbers of sailing vessels were employed as coasters and in oversea work. Many of these craft, caught by the storm, were hurled ashore, and in a very short space of time no fewer than seven vessels were wrecked on half a mile of the coast at Whitby. The harbour there is dangerous to make in bad weather, and at such a time as this there was no chance of the ships running into shelter between the piers. The only hope of salvation for the crews rested in the coming of the lifeboat and the courage of the fishermen who formed her crew.

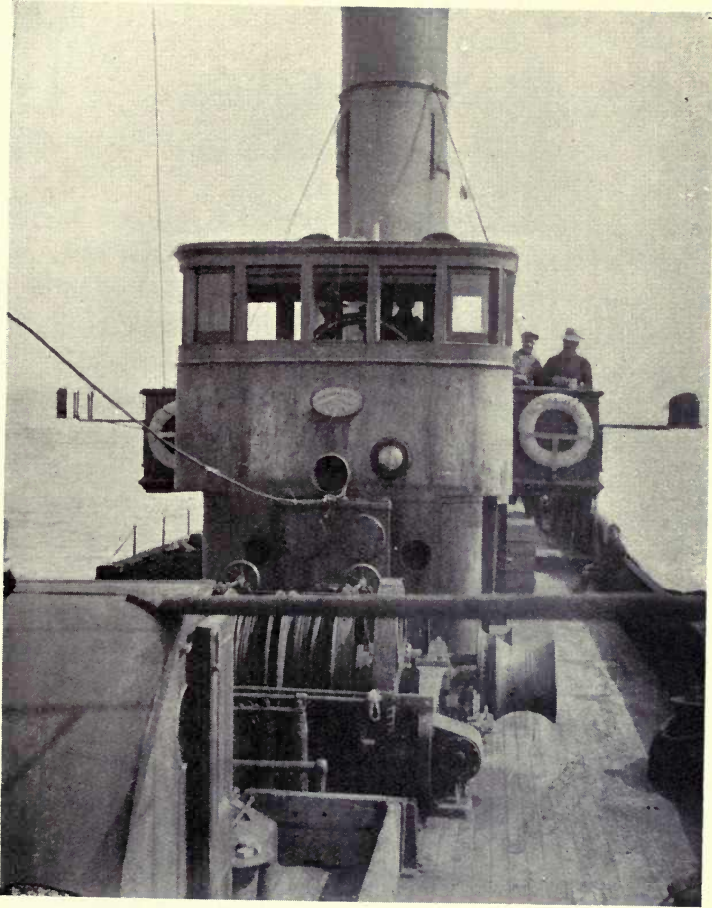
The lifeboat was a new craft 30 ft. long, 7 ft. 9 in. broad, 3 ft. 6 in. deep, and with a foot and a half sheer of gunwale. She had been launched only a few months previously and was manned by thirteen of the bravest and most skilful men of Whitby. She went out, to begin with, and rescued the crew of one vessel and brought them ashore, and for the fifth time she was pulled into the fierce seas and returned with crews saved from vessels which were being smashed to matchwood on the rocks and beach.

By this time the men were utterly exhausted; they had had nothing to eat since breakfast and had only been able in some cases to drink a glass of grog in the intervals between two or three of the valiant rescues. Not all the men took even this refreshment; some of them had nothing whatever in the shape of food or drink. A sixth ship was driven in by the furious wind and overwhelming sea behind the pier. Exhausted though they were, the men fought the lifeboat out again in expectation of bringing safely ashore the crew of the latest wreck. Yard by yard they struggled out, thousands of people watching their fight from the piers and

the cliffs. Amongst the crowd were the wives and children of the lifeboat men, who, with two exceptions, were all married, and of these two one was a widower. By the most tremendous exertions on the part of the enfeebled crew the lifeboat was got fifty yards away from the pier and was in the very midst of the wild welter of waters. Suddenly and unexpectedly she was caught by a huge snarling cross-sea and instantly capsized and either hurled her men into the sea or buried them under her. So swiftly did the accident occur that the watchers ashore scarcely realised what had happened. It was three o'clock in the afternoon, too, and the short winter's day was drawing to a close. The coastguard had the rocket apparatus ready, and when it was seen that the lifeboat had capsized, a rocket was fired; but the line broke and blew away to leeward. There was no hope for the men, twelve of whom perished almost immediately, although they were furnished with life-belts. The only man who was saved by being thrown ashore was wearing a cork jacket, which had been sent to Whitby as a pattern. This survivor was Henry Freeman, who, after a long and splendid career as coxswain of a later Whitby lifeboat, died on 13th December 1904. Ten women were made widows and forty-six children were orphaned by the disaster.

The Scarborough lifeboat disaster was attended by circumstances which have made it memorable in local history. In November 1861 a heavy gale was blowing. The *Coupland*, a schooner, tried unsuccessfully to make the harbour, but she was swept towards the Spa, in front of which she struck. So heavy was the sea that

the great stones of the Spa wall were dislodged and hurled about—just as I saw them shattered a few years ago—and the South Bay became a cauldron. The lifeboat was manned and got near the Spa, so near that the crew could hear the shouts from the spectators who were watching the operations. In such a sea and at such a place even a lifeboat was helpless. The tremendous and torn waters got her, and the oars having been wrenched out of the men's hands, she was hurled against the Spa wall. She took the ground to the south of the Spa and her crew at once jumped out and struggled to get ashore. In the wild rush of the sea this was a difficult and dangerous task, and some of the onlookers courageously rushed down the incline to help them. Amongst these people was Lord Charles Beauclerk. Suddenly an immense breaker roared in, caught up the lifeboat, hurled her against the massive wall, then receded and dropped the heavy craft. In a moment or two a number of people had been crushed to death, amongst them Lord Charles, whose body was taken to an adjacent music hall. The crew of the *Coupland* were rescued by the rocket apparatus. In that disastrous gale fourteen Scarborough fishermen perished, twenty men were lost at Yarmouth, and many more were drowned in the North Sea.



A DECK VIEW OF THE HOSPITAL STEAMER *J. AND S. MILES*.



CHAPTER XXII

THE RUSSIAN OUTRAGE

MIDNIGHT on the Dogger, three days before full moon, late in October; the weather hazy, with Scotch mist at times, but nothing to prevent ships' lights being seen at a considerable distance. On the ground 200 miles east-by-north of Spurn, in 23 fathoms of water, thirty steam-tractlers of the Gamecock Fleet, with about a dozen steamboats belonging to Messrs. Leyman & Company, were fishing peacefully. For ten years the Gamecock vessels had trawled on the same ground, which for a quarter of a century had been a rendezvous for fishing-craft. With or near the fleet were two of the hospital steamers of the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen and three carriers, all engaged in trawling, with their gear down and steaming at about two and a half knots an hour. Without exception the mizzen was set, and in some cases the mainsail also. The regulation lights were burning and other lights were showing, for many of the crews were gutting and boxing the fish in readiness to ferry to the homeward-bound carrier in the morning. The fishing numbers and the letters indicating the ports of registry were visible, and there was no mistaking the nature of the little busy fleet of steam-tractlers, industriously employed. They were working

in the neighbourhood of an old smack which, anchored, served as a mark-boat. Ordinarily the admiral would have been in command, but he was ashore for a brief spell, and in his absence the vice-admiral controlled the fleet, flying his flag in the *Ruff*. From the little unromantic flagship and the mark-boat rockets had been fired, to direct the fishing.

There was nothing whatever in that region of water in the form of a ship of war until the Russian Baltic Fleet appeared on the horizon, commanded by Admiral Rozhdestvensky. The fleet, which had been solemnly blessed by the Czar, had sailed from Libau on 15th October 1904; shortly before midnight on Friday, the 22nd, it bore down, in two sections, on the Gamecock Fleet. One section passed without doing more than direct searchlights on the trawlers and show coloured lights.

The fishermen looked with interest at the warships, some of them pausing in their work. Toil on the Dogger is monotonous, and it is not every day or night that battle squadrons pass. Some of the men laughed and joked and enjoyed the spectacle of the searchlights and coloured lights as they might have relished an entertainment ashore.

The first squadron of the Baltic Fleet steamed in-offensively through and beyond the fishing-vessels. The second squadron, consisting of four battleships, steamed just across the head of the trawlers, plying their searchlights. Then a bugle rang out in the night, and instantly guns and machine-guns rapped and rattled, and upon the helpless fishing-craft a hail of missiles fell. Some accounts put the duration of the cannonade at twenty minutes; certainly for ten the broadsides blazed

frantically. If the gunners had been cool and taken aim there could not have been a steamboat left upon the ground ; but they were frenzied with fright, paralysed with terror of the unseen but suspected, for reports had been current that the Baltic Fleet was to be waylaid and destroyed in the North Sea by Japanese torpedo-craft.

For a few startled seconds the fishermen believed that the ships of war had suddenly opened a sham fight ; then cries of terror and amazement mingled with the din of the discharges, and hoarse voices gave the order to get the gear up or let it go, while engine-room telegraphs rang wildly for "Full speed ahead." Anything and anyhow to get away from a neighbourhood which had swiftly become an area of destruction and death. As well might harnessed hares have tried to run from greyhounds. The trawlers were held in place by their heavy unwieldy gear, which cannot be easily hauled or cut away. In the old days a few blows with a hatchet or jack-knife would have cut the trawl-warp and set the smack free ; but steel ropes are far different and tougher matters, and the steamboats of the Gamecock Fleet were literally held prisoners while the blundering battleships steamed past them and kept up a monstrous bombardment.

Some fifty peaceful little trawling vessels, an industrious fleet spread over an area of seven or eight miles, utterly defenceless, unable even to run away—and at the mercy of giant warships that bristled with guns, great and small. How much ammunition was expended is not known, but for fully ten minutes the sea was pitted with the hail of missiles and the neighbouring steamboats were riddled. From the bridges and decks

of the warships, only two or three hundred yards away from their defenceless targets, officers, petty officers, and men must have seen the nature of the craft that formed the fleet. There were the regulation lights burning, and the decks were illuminated with powerful lamps which gave light enough for the men to see their work of gutting and packing their latest catches. The human figures were clearly visible, even the heaps of fish in the pounds could have been seen, yet so blindly panic-stricken were the men-of-war's men that they did not for a moment stop their murderous cannonading.

Not a shot was fired in answer; the Russians heard the startled cries of inoffensive men; they must have heard the screams of some of the wounded; they could not fail to see the discharge of green rockets from the vice-admiral's vessel and other trawlers; still they held to their mad business and blazed away until they had steamed through the fishing-area and saw nothing around them but the open waters, and no ship of any kind except the creations of their own imaginations.

The Czar-blessed Baltic battleships lumbered on their way towards the Straits of Dover, never stopping to inquire into the havoc they had wrought. There is no reason why, in their senseless fright, the responsible officers should not have wiped out the fishing-fleet completely and left one or two survivors to make their way to land or be picked up, to tell the amazing story. They had done enormous mischief; yet little compared with what might have been caused under proper fire discipline.

Shot and shell and rifle calibre bullets had put the entire Gamecock Fleet out of action in a few minutes. The great and complicated work of trawling had been

paralysed and one of the nation's important food sources had been stopped.

Two men were lying dead, others were seriously injured ; many were suffering from shock ; yet on board the attacking warships not an individual had been so much as scratched by hostile fire. No one can tell, however, what were the feelings of the admiral who was responsible for the outrage, and who must have known before he left the fishing-area how terribly he had blundered.

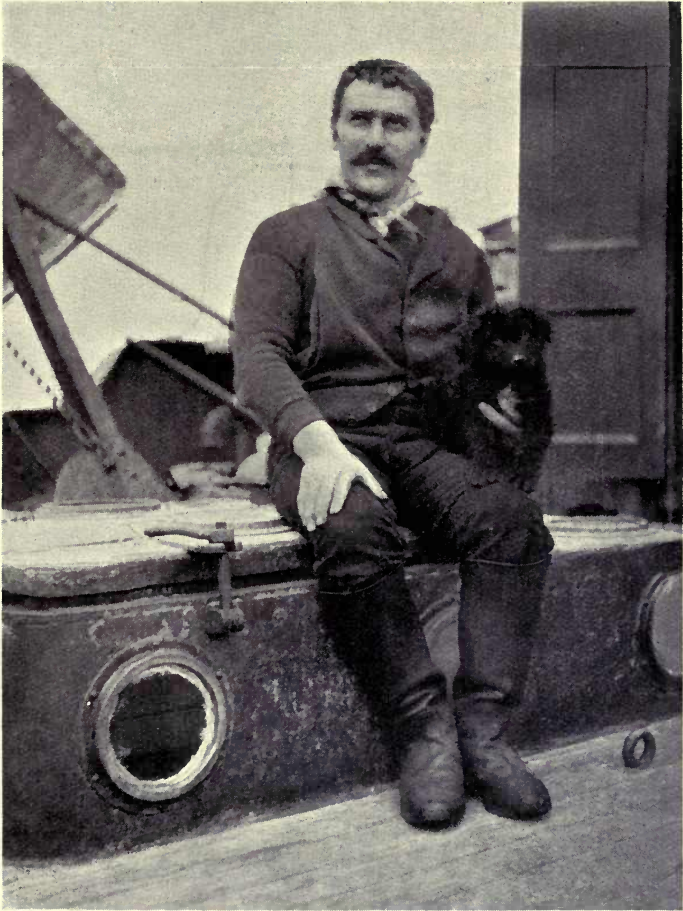
One trawler, the *Crane*, was sunk ; her skipper, Henry Smith, and her boatswain, William Arthur Leggett, were slain ; six men, William Smith, John Nixon, Harry Hoggart, Arthur Rea, Albert A. Almond, and John Ryder, were wounded, Hoggart being permanently incapacitated. Skipper Whelpton, of the trawler *Mino*, was so severely shaken that he died six months later. Five trawlers, the *Mino*, the *Moulmein*, the *Gull*, the *Snipe*, and the *Majestic*, were damaged by shot, while other vessels were damaged by the explosion of shells close to them. In several cases trawling-gear was lost or damaged.

These were the bare and startling facts that were made known at Hull on the Sunday afternoon following the outrage. The shot-riddled *Mino* reached the port, bearing the bodies of the two men who had been killed in the *Crane* before she foundered. Other crippled trawlers came in from the Dogger, bringing the wounded with them ; but the uninjured craft remained at sea and, as soon as they could do so, resumed their ceaseless work.

The cannonading, amazing and incredible, gave an opportunity for the display of that unostentatious heroism which is inseparable from North Sea fishing.

Many acts of bravery were put on record, and none were more valiant than those which were chronicled in connection with the *Crane*. Hers was a pitiful tragedy, yet the gloom was relieved by the courage and resource of her own survivors and the fishermen who boarded her when she was foundering. Amongst those who escaped injury was the skipper's son, Joseph Alfred Smith, whose arm was grazed by one of the Russian shots. The boy had gone to sea for the first time. Few North Sea men have had a sterner baptism than his.

One of the very first stories of the outrage was told by the mate of the *Crane*, when he was still on the Dogger, and speaking to Skipper J. W. White, of the Mission steamer *Joseph and Sarah Miles*, to which the wounded were taken. "We had just hauled and shot away again," he said, "and were in the fish-pound cleaning the fish and passing jokes about the war vessels, which we could see quite plain, and heard their fringing, when suddenly something hit us. The third hand said, 'Skipper, our fish-boxes are on fire; I'm going below out of this,' and walked forward, the skipper, who was on the bridge, laughing at him for being frightened. We were hit again forward, and some one called out and said, 'The bosun is shot.' I went forward to look, and found the boatswain bleeding and a hole through our bulwarks, and the fore companionway knocked away. I went to tell the skipper. Before I got aft a shot went through the engine-casing, and I began to feel frightened. I could see that the skipper was not on the bridge. I went aft, passed the chief, who was bleeding, gave him my neckcloth to stop the blood, went right aft and saw the skipper lying on the grating. I said, 'Oh, my God,



SKIPPER WHITE, WHO COMMANDED THE *J. AND S. MILES*
AT THE TIME OF THE RUSSIAN OUTRAGE.

he is shot!' I picked him up and saw that his head was battered to pieces. I dropped him, rushed down the forecastle, and saw the boatswain lying on the floor, with his head battered in.

"Another shot came and hit us, I didn't know where. All hands were shouting out they were shot. I jumped on the bridge to blow the whistle, but that and the steampipe were knocked away. I tried to alter the wheel, but the wheel-gear was smashed. I then found we were sinking. I went to the boat, cut the grips, plugged her up, and put the painter on the winch to heave her aft, but found some of the winch smashed. Then something hit me on the back. I saw the *Gull* launch her boat. I dragged the skipper forward and got the third hand up on deck and went for the chief. He was unconscious. By this time the *Gull's* boat came alongside and we put in the skipper and bosun, and got in ourselves—how, I don't know.

"When the boy came to me and said, 'Where is my father?' that was a pill I could not swallow. For the life of me I could not tell the boy what had happened to his father.

"The searchlights made everything like day. The fireman, while he was in the engine-room, saw the warship that was firing on us—saw her through the hole they made in the ship's side. They made a target of us. They meant doing for us. They needed no lights to see what we were. The searchlights told them plain enough."

The Mission surgeon, Dr. Anklesaria, who was on board the *Joseph and Sarah Miles*, said that the damaged trawlers were naturally on the look out for their own

Mission ship, the *Alpha*, but before they could find her they sighted the *Miles*, and steamed up and shouted for help, saying that some of the wounded were bleeding to death. "We hauled up our gear at once and launched our boat," he wrote, and soon, with two of the Mission crew, he was on board the *Gull*, to which the dead and wounded had been taken. "I have never witnessed such a gory sight. Two men lay on deck with their heads nearly blown to pieces. In the cabin the scene was more heartrending still, when I saw six men stretched about anyhow, bleeding and groaning with the agony of their wounds. Under the circumstances, I had them all removed on board our ship. With all these wounded men on board, our floating hospital looked like a veritable battlefield. Indeed, it presented a most pathetic sight. It kept me busy with knife and needle the whole of that day, and it was not until late in the night that I had the satisfaction of seeing them all safe and snug in their cots, as far as circumstances allowed."

When it was seen that the *Crane* was sinking, Charles Beer, mate, Harry Smirk, chief engineer, and Edwin Costello, boatswain of the *Gull*, went off in a boat to rescue the survivors. When they got on board the *Crane* they found the living members of the crew lying about injured. The vessel was in total darkness, and it was known that at any moment she might founder; yet Costello went into the horrible little forecabin to bring up Leggett's dead body. This he succeeded in doing, and was going below again to see how much damage had been done by shot and shell, when his comrades shouted to him to come back instantly, as the trawler was sinking. She went down almost immediately.

Beer, Smirk, Arthur Rea, engineer of the *Crane*, Smith, the mate, and Costello received the Albert Medal for gallantry. With the exception of Costello, who was prevented by illness from visiting London, the men attended Buckingham Palace on the morning of Saturday, 13th May 1905, and the decoration was conferred upon them by Edward VII., who had been deeply interested in the outrage. Smith, who took charge of the *Crane* when the skipper was killed, refused to leave her till every man had been taken off. Rea showed unyielding courage when, in spite of the fact that the little ship was actually foundering, he groped back to the engine-room, which was in total darkness, and tried to put the engines on to full speed ahead. The stokehole was flooded with water, and Rea could do nothing. He went on deck, where the skipper was lying dead, and all the survivors were wounded except the boy.

Such, told briefly, is the story of the Dogger Bank outrage—an event which became officially known as the “North Sea Incident.” It was alleged, on the part of the Russians, that there was reason to suppose that Japanese destroyers were lurking in the North Sea—Russia and Japan were then at war—but there was nothing whatever to justify the supposition, still less to mistake peaceful fishing-vessels for ships of war of any sort.

The news of the occurrence threw the whole country into a state of dangerous excitement. The King telegraphed to the Mayor of Hull, speaking of the “unwarrantable” action of the Russians; “urgent representations” were at once made by the Foreign Office to the Russian Government, and such was the general clamour that the Czar sent a message expressing regret and

promising "complete satisfaction, as soon as the circumstances were cleared up."

Meanwhile, the important question as to damage done by the outrage and the compensation to be paid by the Russian Government was considered by the Board of Trade Commissioners, Admiral Sir Cyprian Bridge, G.C.B., and Mr. Butler Aspinall, K.C. Many complicated questions arose. The claims were divided by the Commissioners into classes, with the assessment they made in each case. These were as follows:—

Nature of Claim.	Amount Claimed.			Amount Assessed.		
	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Loss by death of relative	10,670	0	0	5,800	0	0
Wounds by gunfire	17,472	0	0	6,700	0	0
Personal injuries indirectly due to gunfire	310	0	0	137	0	0
Loss of clothes and other effects (including incidental expenses in one instance)	177	9	6	177	9	6
Loss of earnings and wages due to detention, absence of ship from fishing-ground for repair, etc.	362	0	0	172	6	0
Physical indisposition after exposure to unusual danger and loss of earning power due to shock	1,110	0	0	1,110	0	0
Saving life and property	2,500	0	0	650	0	0
Complete loss of vessel and consequent loss of her earnings	8,342	18	8	6,834	18	8
Examination and repair of vessels damaged by reason of the firing	10,351	10	0	9,141	0	0
Loss of fishing-gear	646	6	6	646	6	6
Demurrage whilst vessels were detained in harbour for examination, repairs, etc.	7,552	0	0	5,676	0	0
Loss of and disturbed fishing, 21st to 22nd October 1904, and following days, loss of rebate, etc.	2,458	9	8	2,202	9	8
Diminution in catch						
Loss on sales						
Loss of freight						
Loss of services of skipper killed	38,476	0	0	17,779	10	0
Increased management expenses due to unprecedented nature of the incident						
Surveyors' fees and miscellaneous expenses due to the incident	1,319	16	4	915	6	4
Costs of solicitors and accountants	101,748	10	8	57,942	6	8
	2,081	12	5	2,081	12	5
Total	103,830	3	1	60,023	19	1

The claims submitted included the following :—

Damage to the Gamecock Fleet	£58,000
Repair of Mission ship <i>Alpha</i>	5,042
J. K. Green, skipper of the <i>Gull</i> , shock	150
J. K. Green, saving lives of the crew of the <i>Crane</i>	2,000
John Nixon, chief engineer of the <i>Crane</i>	1,500
A. Rea, second engineer, <i>Crane</i>	1,000
A. E. Almond, trimmer, <i>Crane</i>	1,000
W. Whelpton, skipper of the <i>Mino</i> , shock	150
W. Whelpton, salving the <i>Mino</i>	500
Seventeen other claims	485

These claims were not settled in full, however, the total sum paid by the Russian Government being £65,000, far below the original total. The lower sum, however, as will be seen from the Commissioners' tables, was assessed by the Commissioners themselves. The mate of the *Crane* received £2000 and £18 for clothing; John Ryde, deck hand, was paid £1500, with £12 for clothing; John Nixon received £500, with clothing allowance; Arthur Rea, £400; and A. Almond, £300. The Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen suffered loss in consequence of the award. The amount given to them, £3906, was less by £79 than the actual expenditure on the *Alpha* in consequence of the incident. The receipt of these considerable sums of money by men who had not been accustomed to the control of large amounts proved far from an unmixed blessing, and in one or two cases the compensation allowances were recklessly squandered.

An International Commission of Inquiry into the "North Sea Incident" was subsequently held in Paris, at the Foreign Office, under the presidency of Admiral

Fournier, of the French Navy. The report of the Commission established the British case, declaring that there was no complicity on the part of the British trawlers, fixing the responsibility of the cannonade on Admiral Rozhdestvensky, and describing his proceeding as unjustifiable. The report plainly stated that there were no torpedo-boats present on the Dogger Bank on the night of the incident, thus discrediting entirely the positive statements of Russian officers on this important point.

Nearly two years after the cannonade a statue was unveiled at Hull in memory of the lost. It represents a fisherman, and is about 18 ft. high. The inscription is: "Erected by public subscription to the memory of George Henry Smith (skipper) and William Richard Leggett (third hand), of the steam-trawler *Crane*, who lost their lives through the action of the Russian Baltic Fleet in the North Sea, October 22, 1904, and Walter Whelpton, skipper of the trawler *Mino*, who died through shock, May 1905."



A GERMAN FOUR-MASTER MAKING FOR HAMBURG.



A FRENCH FOUR-MASTER TOWING DOWN THE NORTH SEA.



CHAPTER XXIII

THE PITILESS GOODWINS

OLD beam-trawlers still sail out to the North Sea, largely from between the Forelands, where Ramsgate lies. They go lazily or smartly, according to the wind, past the northern end of that great "shippe-swallower" which is called the Goodwin Sands, and on which so many North Sea fishers and fighters have perished.

The Goodwins stretch 10 miles from north to south, and are 4 miles broad. The nearest point to the mainland is opposite Deal, a distance of 4 miles, while the monster's head is 6 miles from Ramsgate. At high-water the Sands are covered to a depth of 16 ft.; at low tide they are to a great extent exposed, and on a hot summer's day they form a golden field on which you may ramble, cycle, or play cricket. But there are other places that are quicksands, shifting masses which long ago earned for the Goodwins the evil name of "shippe-swallower."

The shoal is, indeed, a veritable Hydra, for it has heads on every side, and no sooner is one carried away by swirling waters than another is formed. Between the Goodwins and the mainland are the famous Downs where, in westerly and easterly gales, fleets of vessels anchor for shelter. This deep channel is one of the

world's great waterways, and along it there is an everlasting procession of steam and sailing craft. In fine bright weather the buoys and lightships serve as guides to pilots, but let one of the stealthy North Sea fogs envelop the ravenous region, and there is little hope of keeping clear of danger.

On Good Friday, 1909, the steamship *Mahratta*, homeward bound from Calcutta, with a valuable cargo, and in the care of an experienced pilot, struck the South Goodwins. A fleet of tugs got hold of her and held her fast; but the pitiless Goodwins gripped tighter, and, just as a boa-constrictor will not let its victim go when once the monster's jaws have got it, so the Goodwins began to swallow the noble craft. Soon she broke her back, her steel decks arching as the fore and aft parts settled in the quicksands, and when, from Ramsgate East Pier, through the good clear telescope of Charles Fish, the famous lifeboatman, I looked at her, more than a year after the Goodwins began to swallow her, only her four masts were visible.

The *Mahratta* is the biggest ship that was ever wrecked on these fatal sands. Hers, however, is not the saddest case of loss, for probably of all the Goodwins' victims, none has become more widely known than the *Indian Chief*. Fish was coxswain of the lifeboat *Bradford* when, in a bitter winter gale, she rescued the frozen survivors of the ship and brought them safely home.

The *Indian Chief*, a vessel of 1200 tons, was bound from Middlesbrough to Yokohama. She sailed on a Sunday afternoon, with twenty-nine souls, including the north-country pilot. All the way down the grim North Sea

she had thick weather. In the blackness of the early morning of Wednesday, 5th January 1881, she struck the Long Sand, north of the Goodwins. Fish at that time was harbour-boatman at Ramsgate, as well as coxswain of the lifeboat, and it rested with him to decide whether or not the craft should be got out in answer to the signals of distress. The coxswain did not hesitate. He fired a rocket, showing that the lightship's signal had been seen; then the wild alarm was given and the volunteers rushed to the lifeboat and took their places in her—first come, first served, from a crowd of eager heroes.

The brave old *Vulcan*, predecessor of the *Aid*, which you may now see in the harbour, ever ready for the fight, took the *Bradford* in tow, and dragged her out into some of the most dangerous seas that were ever battled with, even by life-saving craft. The coxswain told me he never saw worse or more bitter weather—and he was on service 353 times, and helped to save 887 lives from the Goodwins' hungry maw.

It was one in the afternoon when the *Vulcan* and the *Bradford* left the shelter of the harbour and plunged into the furious seas. The spray froze as it flew over the crew, crouching for shelter, and hair and beards became masses of ice. There were 18 miles to cover before the wreck was reached, and even the gallant *Vulcan*, specially built for such a task, was seven hours in covering the distance. During all that time the lifeboatmen, lashed to their seats, endured the savage thrashing of the breakers and the piercing cold.

The rescue of the perishing seemed impossible, yet the coxswain determined to stand by till daylight, and

throughout the long night the lifeboat and the tug wallowed in the freezing waters.

Then the dawn came, and for the first time the *Indian Chief* was seen, gripped in the Goodwins—but not all of her. For twenty-four hours and more the seas had thrashed her, and the Sands had tumbled her, and all that the lifeboatmen could see was a solitary mast. That lonely vestige of the wreck was still three miles away, and it was not till the lifeboat had slipped her tow-rope, and got down to the Long Sand under her storm-foresail, that the pity of the tragedy was realised.

Eleven oil-skinned men were lashed in a bunch in the top of the mast—which was the mizzen—all that was left of the twenty-nine. These survivors unlashd themselves and dropped, one by one, into the lifeboat. Not all, however, came away, for the captain, though he seemed to watch the operations of rescue, was frozen dead. The second mate, when he was got into the lifeboat, was raving mad. He died as the ice-clad craft was towed back to Ramsgate Harbour, which was reached after the *Bradford* had been out for twenty-six hours in some of the worst weather known to living memory.

That famous wreck will show something of the fierce doings of the Goodwins; but no one knows how many ships and lives have been swallowed by these mysterious and treacherous Sands. They are always shifting and changing, and are full of hidden dangers even to the men who are constantly working in their neighbourhood. The Sands at low-water often bristle with the skeletons of wrecks, and the jagged ironwork or rotting timbers of lost vessels.

Deal boatmen, who should know the Goodwins as the London cabman knows his streets, have gone to the shoal and have never returned. Perhaps their boats have struck on these fatal fangs of wrecks, perhaps they have been engulfed by quicksands; at any rate, they have disappeared—and the Goodwins keep their secrets well. The Downs themselves, despite the shelter they offer to vessels during bad weather, are not perfectly secure, and frequently sailing ships drag their anchors and are lost.

In that memorable gale of 1703, when Winstanley, who had built the Eddystone Lighthouse, perished with it, no fewer than 40 ships were lost in the Downs, including 30 men-of-war. That was a November gale, and one of the most disastrous recorded in history. It is calculated that no fewer than 8000 souls perished.

Another storm in February 1807 added to the number of ships and men who have found a last home on the Goodwins. A score of ships were lost in the Downs and on the Sands. The whole of the coast was strewn with wreckage, and the event was remarkable largely because of the universal thieving that attended it, all classes looting anything on which they could lay hands. Again, in a great storm in November 1836, when 400 vessels were sheltering in the Downs, many foundered with all hands.

The origin of the Goodwins is a mystery; but they have been known and spoken of for more than eight hundred years. Ancient chronicles state that at the close of the eleventh century an appalling flood visited the south coast of England and buried an entire kingdom which existed between the Scilly Islands and

Land's End. That destructive and phenomenal tide roared up the Channel and overwhelmed the banks of the Thames and many other rivers, sweeping away towns and people and innumerable animals. It is recorded that "the lands in Kent, that sometime belonged to Duke Godwyne, Earl of Kent, were covered with sandes and drowned, which are to this day called Godwyne Sandes." The story is, at any rate, a romantic one.

Another version of the origin of the sandbank is that, in the century named, the Goodwins consisted of land which belonged to the Church, but the Abbot of Canterbury neglected to keep in repair the walls protecting the estate from the sea, which accordingly flooded and covered it, ultimately leaving the Sands. If legend is to be credited, the Sands in those far-off days were rich meadow-lands, and had their own quiet burial-grounds and churches. Since those crude times the Goodwins have become a graveyard for all races of the earth.

The Goodwins to-day are what they have been for centuries—unconquered, treacherous, ravenous. All attempts to overcome them, to the extent of putting up a permanent beacon or lighthouse, have failed. Long ago an effort was made to erect a lighthouse in which men could live, but the structure was never finished.

In 1841 the Trinity Corporation scuttled an old ship on the Sands and put more than sixty tons of ballast into her, making her a heavy-weight indeed. A mast rose from the hulk to bear a beacon, and for a time the vessel, filled to the beams, held her own; but the Goodwins would have none of her, for even she

proved quite an easy morsel for the monster to absorb. She vanished.

The "shippe-swallower" is not the place that one would choose voluntarily as a cricket-ground or cycling-track, yet adventurous spirits have pitched their wickets on the Sands, and wheelmen have taken their machines.

Cricket matches have been few and far between, and there seems to be only one record of cyclists braving the dangers of the bank. Seventy years ago, a party of young bloods from Deal set forth in a small boat to the Goodwins, played a game of cricket—more or less—drank, and were merry—and would have perished if a lugger had not been sent post-haste to save them, for the sea got up, and their little craft would have had no chance of keeping afloat.

North, south, east, and west of the shoals a lightship is stationed, and bobbing buoys, wailing syrens, and deep-throated guns and screaming rockets are always ready to raise the warning that a ship is ashore and lives are in peril.

The Sands are ever lurking for their prey, and, just as police precautions must be taken to warn peaceful wayfarers of the dangers of notoriously unsafe districts, so the lightshipmen and shoremen between the Forelands are ceaselessly alert to indicate the perils of the long and fatal bank. The shrill whistle of the constable is the alarm signal in time of stress; in the region of the Goodwins the boom of the gun and the flare of the rocket tell the tale of danger.

Take Ramsgate, for example, the best known of all the towns which face the Sands. In the watch-house at the end of the East Pier, adjoining the quay at which

the London steamers land and embark passengers, there are men on duty ceaselessly.

When it is dark, one man on watch outside is constantly looking towards the Goodwins—the man who, when the town clocks chime the hours, repeats the time, ship's fashion, on the bell near the watch-house.

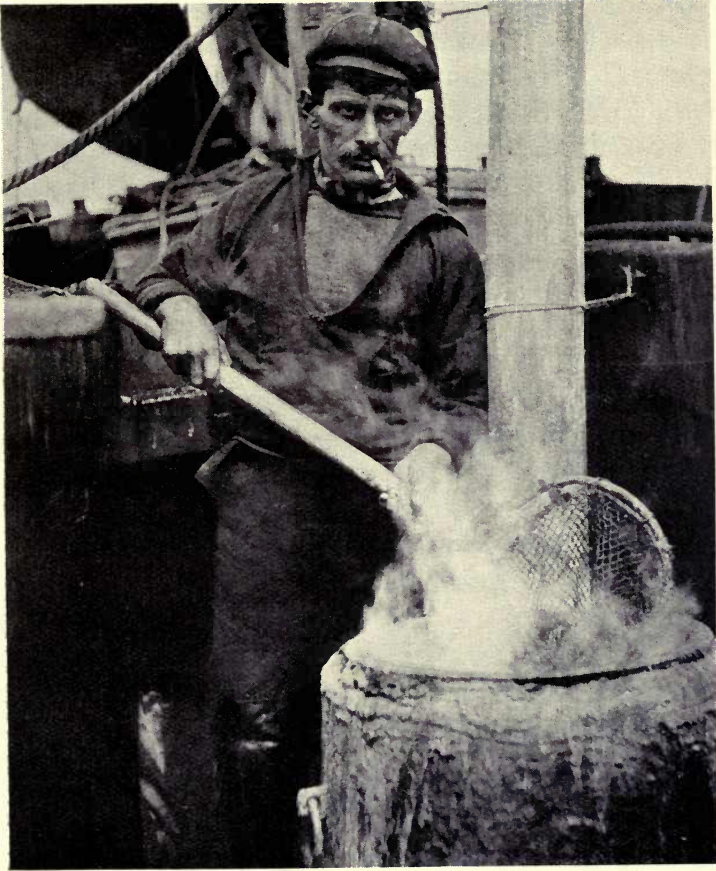
In the interior, men are awake or sleeping in their hammocks, slung high above the floor, but ready to obey a summons instantly.

In the harbour, the *Aid*, successor of the *Vulcan*, is ever ready; and near her is the lifeboat, always afloat, like the tug. One seaman and one fireman are constantly on duty on board the *Aid*, but the harbour-master has the power to order all the members of the crew to stand by in bad weather, to be ready for emergencies.

Day and night, throughout the year, steam is up on board the tug, and when the time for action comes "the fireman shakes the fires up, the deck-hand gets the lights ready, and, when everything is done, off they go." That is a watchman's way of describing to me the ceremony of departure to a wreck.

But there is in it far more than that, and much more than the public ever realises. The watchman spoke truly when he added that, during a long, dark night, the lifeboat might go out half a dozen times without the public, snugly sleeping in their beds, being aware of its dangerous expeditions.

The manning of the Ramsgate boat for service is a strange and rousing bit of work. Take a wild Goodwins night—the wind whistling and roaring, and the sea thundering and crumbling on the sandy beach near the watch-house, indicating heavier and



FROM NEAR THE GOODWINS: BOILING SHRIMPS AT SEA.

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deadlier surges on the bank six miles away. The bitter blackness is pitted with the gleams from the lightships and the lighthouses, the light-vessels' lanterns making great sweeps as the red craft roll and pitch heavily at their moorings.

You can see what sort of waves are rushing shoreward, and can picture what the breakers are like on the Goodwins, and how at times the heart of the bravest pilot must quail as he peers ahead and around him and realises what a mistake will mean to the ship and people in his charge. Well for him it is that there are so many lights and sounds to warn him of the perils of the Sands, and so many ready to succour the fishers and fighters imperilled.

There is no other shoal in the world which is more thoroughly marked than these fatal Sands, and no other region where more perfect means exist for saving life, and where braver men live. Between the North and South Forelands, a distance of ten miles, five lifeboats are stationed, and four lightships—the North Sand head, the South Goodwin, the East Goodwin, and the Gulf Stream—and year in and year out, unceasingly, hundreds of men are ready to obey the rousing cry of “Man the lifeboat!” whilst there are always crowds of brave fellows at Deal prepared to put off in their famous luggers.

The record of the old *Northumberland* lifeboat shows what such a craft can do, even when fighting an opponent like the Goodwins. From 1851 to July 1865, when she was broken up, she saved 261 lives from ships that were totally lost, and took nineteen vessels safely into harbour.

The call for help will surely come during a bitter gale by day or night. There is the boom of a gun from the Goodwins, or the flare of a rocket, or the actual call of a voice, for the Gull lightship and the watch-house at Ramsgate are connected by telephone. Instantly a rocket is fired from the capstan at the head of the pier to let the lightship know that the signal of distress has been heard, and the lifeboat crew is summoned.

A policeman, a civilian—any one may see the rocket and raise the alarm, but whatever happens a watchman must go through a certain routine. He must run to the homes of the lifeboatmen and rouse them, and he has to perform this task even though the men themselves may be, as they always are in bad weather, within reach of the craft in which they are to battle with the storm. The routine call will take twenty-five or thirty minutes, but sometimes, long before it has been made, the tug is dragging the lifeboat towards the Goodwins.

It may be a case of saving life or salvaging a vessel, and in both respects the men of Deal and Ramsgate have an unequalled record, for the Goodwins are always seizing prey in the shape of man and ship. The Lifeboat Institution pays a certain sum to each volunteer who goes on service, whether life is saved or not.

"There's no retaining fee," a storm warrior told me. "If we get a vessel off the Goodwins and into the Downs or harbour, there's so much for each of us, according to the value of the ship and her cargo. We'd rather take salvage-money than lifeboat-money; but those jobs are very rare nowadays. There's a nice bit, too, for a man who first gives the alarm of a ship in distress—no matter who or what he is. Perhaps a

policeman gets the luck. Steamboats are not as profitable as the old wind-jammers, because the steamboats can keep clear of the Sands, as a rule; but the wind-jammer hasn't much chance when the Goodwins once grip her, though at times we manage to pull her off."

A sailing vessel, even a small one, is still worth a good deal of money to the salvors. Take the case of the Italian barque *Pinin*. She stranded on the South Goodwins on Christmas night, 1904, in foggy weather while on a voyage from Buenos Ayres to Dunkirk. She struck the Sands at half-past ten, but her signals of distress were not seen for twelve hours. Then, on Boxing morning, the tug *Hibernia* discovered her, and tried to tow her off, joyfully anticipating a handsome Christmas-box. The men of the East Goodwin lightship also saw the wreck, and fired guns. The signals were repeated by the Gull and North Sand lightships, and with eager anticipation—for other men were desirous of sharing in the unexpected Christmas-box—men of Deal manned three luggers, and a lifeboat was launched. The little *Hibernia* had tried gallantly to tow the barque off the Sands, but the tide had failed, and she did not succeed.

The *Pinin* was the property of any craft that could get her, and accordingly, when at one o'clock the luggers and the lifeboat got alongside, their crews were engaged to jettison the cargo, which consisted of heavy logs of hardwood, weighing up to three tons each. It was bad weather, and the barque rolled so dangerously that her crew refused to go aloft, and the boatmen had to do their work and loose the sails. The ship's hatches had to be battened down to prevent her from filling, and one of the

luggers was taken on board to save her from swamping. It was a difficult and dangerous time, but the boatmen worked like giants, and threw eighty tons of the logs overboard.

Then the barque was pulled off by the *Hibernia*, and towed to the safety of the Downs. Two other tugs, the *Warrior* and the *Conqueror*, promising names, bore down to give help and get salvage, but fortune was against them. In making fast, the *Warrior* had her propeller fouled by a hawser, and the *Conqueror* had to tow her out of action and into shelter. The *Hibernia*, the luggers, and the lifeboatmen therefore had it all their own way, and got their reward in a court of law.

The barque was worth altogether £7384, the *Hibernia* was worth £8500; one lugger was valued at £200, and the other two at £150 each. The total crews of the tug, lifeboat, and luggers numbered fifty-eight; thirty-seven went on board the barque. Judgment was given for £700 to the *Hibernia* and £400 to the lifeboatmen and luggers, so that the stranding of the ship cost £1100 in salvage, to say nothing of other losses.

Salvage, however, is not always so profitable, nor is it invariably given with justice. In 1881 the barque *Chaudière*, from New Zealand to London, went ashore on the Goodwins. Two luggers and a tug got her off. Altogether she was worth nearly £50,000; yet it was thought that £200 was enough to pay the men who had saved her! They refused to take that sum, and eventually the Admiralty Court awarded them £400.

Tragedy has swiftly followed tragedy on the Goodwins. Most of the disasters have been inevitable, but some could have been easily avoided. Amongst these

was the case of an American skipper who was sailing through the channel under a great press of canvas, in a south-westerly gale. He was warned of his peril, and urged to take a pilot and shorten sail. He refused to do either—and shortly afterwards his clipper perished on the Goodwins, with all hands. Such, too, was the fate of a ship which passed Ramsgate in the night, and refused the offer of a pilot to take charge of her for £5. The weather was bad and foggy, and the captain was in a hurry. He blundered on to the Sands, and every soul was lost with the vessel.

Give the lifeboat crew a chance, and they will do all that mortal man can accomplish to save life and ship. In these days no obstacle is put in the way of their work, but there is a notorious case of obstruction on record in relation to the Goodwins. On New Year's Day, 1860, a German brig struck the Sands. There was a blinding gale, with snow and fog, but the signals of distress were seen at Deal. It was known that a Deal pilot was on board, and as it was impossible for the Deal boats to put off, a telegram was sent to Ramsgate, where the tug had steam up, and the lifeboat was manned, to get the craft out to the rescue.

Incredible as it seems, the harbour-master refused to let either tug or boat depart, because he did not know, "officially," that the ship was ashore. He stubbornly refused, time after time, to give permission, and it was not till three hours had passed that, having "officially" heard a gun from the South Sand lightship, he ordered the tug to get the lifeboat out. The frantic and infuriated men hurried to the wreck, to find that she had become a total loss, and that of the thirty people all had

perished except five, who had taken to the only small boat that was left. These men were picked up by the lifeboat. The pilot was numbered with the lost.

Sometimes, after a struggle which is almost super-human in its fierceness, a crew will be dragged from the very jaws of death on the Goodwins. Such an instance of salvation is on record concerning the *Providentia*, a full-rigged ship from Finland which went ashore on the Sands one bitter December night.

When the lifeboat reached the ship it was seen that she had been almost smashed to pieces, and that, of her crew of fifteen hands, only three were visible—two men and a boy, who were crouching for shelter under the lee of the deck-house. The lifeboat fought valiantly to get near the wreck, and it seemed as if she would triumph, when a tremendous sea swept upon her and injured half a dozen of her crew.

Undaunted, she continued the fight, and in the thick of it a man was seen to spring up from the shelter of the deck-house and to hurl himself into the tumult of waves, trying to reach the lifeboat.

After a fierce struggle, he gripped the gunwale and got his head through a lifebuoy; then the ruthless waters swept him away into the darkness. He was considered lost, and the lifeboat set to work to save the other three survivors.

But on the run back there happened one of the wonderful things of the sea, for in the blackness of the night a cry for help was heard, and the crew dragged on board the very man who, on the verge of safety, had been torn away by the waves. This proved to be the captain.

Later, it was known that eleven men had escaped from the wreck in a small boat and had landed at Boulogne; so that, although the *Providentia* was a total wreck, gripped by the Goodwins, every man on board had escaped.

There have been memorable disasters in recent years, ever since steam became almost universal for marine propulsion; but the most noted calamities relate to the days of sail; and of all that have been put on record there is none more terrible than the annihilation of an entire fleet of war-ships in the exceptional storm of 1703. Thirteen ships were anchored in the Downs, under the command of Rear-Admiral Basil Beaumont, who was only thirty-four years old—one of the youngest British officers who ever flew his flag. There had been protracted and exceptionally severe weather; and it grew worse until the night of 26th November 1703, when a hurricane was raging. The fleet was seen at its moorings in the evening; but when the day broke it had completely vanished. Every vessel had been torn from her anchors and totally lost either on the shore or on the Sands. Of the thirteen ships nine were either sunk or went ashore, 1200 officers and men perishing with them, while the remaining four were driven by the wind and sea towards the Goodwins—more dreaded than the land, for there at least was firm foundation if the shore was once gained.

There was no hope for the ships, which were either smashed to pieces or engulfed. Four of them, the *Stirling Castle*, of 70 guns, the *Mary*, also of 70 guns, the *Mortar*, a bomb, and the *Restoration*, broke their cables and were driven on to the Sands. Every soul in the

Mary and the *Restoration* was lost, including Beaumont. From the *Stirling Castle* and the *Mortar* seventy persons were saved.

So many ships have been lost on the Goodwins, and it has been such a matter of course to expect these disasters, that records of some of the events have not been kept. Little more than passing mention is made of the loss of the transport *Aurora* on the Goodwins in December 1805, two months after Nelson won Trafalgar, yet three hundred men perished with her; and little more than allusion to the loss in December 1814, a few months before Waterloo, of the packet *British Queen*. She left Ostend for Margate, struck on the Sands, and was lost, with all her people.

The Goodwin nearly claimed a crowd of emigrants some years ago. They were on board the *Fusilier*, bound to Australia from London. In a December gale she struck the Sands, and there seemed no hope of rescue for the panic-stricken souls, of whom nearly seventy were women and children. The long, dark night passed, and the gloomy morning came. By that time the *Fusilier* was swept incessantly by freezing seas, and bumped bodily by charging waves. There was faint moonlight and some illumination from lamps on board; and by these cheerless beams the drenched and shivering, almost perishing emigrants, saw the outline of a lifeboat nearly alongside.

Two oil-skinned fighters of the Sands had floundered on board. Instantly, in the wild night, clamorous voices were heard—prayers of men that their wives should be saved; appeals of women for their children's sake. At the same time there was a mad rush to the ship's side to

get to the lifeboat, the only refuge. Warning shouts arose that the lifeboat would carry only a score of persons, and that to crowd her in such a sea would be disastrous. She must make trip after trip, and meanwhile the Goodwins were engulfing the ship.

One merciful feature of salvation there was, and that was the presence of the *Aid*, which had towed the lifeboat out, and was now lying to leeward, so that the little craft could run down to her. Terrified women were helped, pushed, dragged, or dropped into the boat; there was a fierce run to the *Aid*, a furious fight in transferring the saved, and a dangerous trip back to the wreck. So the ruthless war went on, steam-tug and lifeboat battling with the gale, and oil-skinned warriors once more showing that even the Goodwins cannot always conquer. Three hours and more the lifeboat continued fighting; then the emigrants had been taken from the *Fusilier* to the *Aid*, and that gallant little steamer, packed with drenched and starving creatures, struggled back to Ramsgate Harbour.

In that tale of danger and escape from death one incident stands clearly out from all the rest. When the women in the *Fusilier* were being helped and forced away, blankets were rolled up and thrown into the lifeboat to give protection, if not warmth. Few words could be heard in the clamour of the gale; but a wild cry rose as a despairing husband thrust a bundle into the hands of a seaman.

“Look out, there!” roared the sailor, as he hurled the woollen mass into the lifeboat. “Catch this! It’s a blanket for the man’s missis!”

When the tug was reached an exhausted woman, who

had been helped on board and was taken below, struggled wildly to return to the lifeboat.

"It's the blanket she wants!" shouted the men near her.

The bundle was handed to the steamer and was about to be thrown on deck, when there was a startled cry of, "Gently with the bundle, boys! *There's a baby in it!*"

And so there was. A little child was lying, snug and cosy, in the warm heart of the big, rough blanket.

The Goodwins are pitiless, indeed; and will continue to claim ship and life, but they will also maintain that noble race of men who are ceaselessly warring with it, and so often prove victorious in the fight. These heroes wrest some lives at any rate from the maw of the monster whose toll will never be revealed until the sea gives up its dead.



Entrance to the Humber; Sep 19 08.

THE MOUTH OF THE HUMBER.



CHAPTER XXIV

BROOM AND WHIPLASH

MEN of the North Sea bore the burden of the bloody battles which for twenty years were fought between the Dutch and English for dominion of the ocean. No fights were fiercer than those which took place when the two countries were republics, and the leaders of the combatants on each side were men like Blake and Tromp.

On and off, throughout that long period of bitterness and hostilities, the North Sea bore the fleets of England and Holland. Some of the officers and most of the men doubtless knew little of, and cared less for, some of the causes of the war; but most of the crews were either fishermen or understood the fisheries, and as one of the great grievances of the English was that Dutch craft came and flagrantly fished in English waters and yet refused to pay to England the tax of the tenth herring which was claimed, there was no lack of motive for ferocious fighting. Only the fury of trade rivalry and business jealousy could have supported the opponents in their sufferings and privations.

The thoroughness of the prevailing hatred is shown by many of the contemporary Dutch and English accounts of the actions. At home nothing was too

malignant or belittling to be written concerning the Hollanders, and for more than a century English scribes were sure of gaining admiration and approval if they were virulent enough in describing the achievements of the enemy.

“Shocking instance of barbarity by the Dutch,” “Tyrannical conduct and cruelty of the Dutch”—these and headings like them were welcome fare for English readers, especially when served in company with such incidents as “Ludicrous terror of a Spanish captain,” “Horrible instance of French cruelty,” “English courage displayed in a gallant enterprise, and Dutch cowardice exposed,” “Independent and heroic conduct” of a British officer. If the English writers were to be credited then there was nothing in a Dutchman but monstrous inhumanity and “square-face” courage, and nothing in the British heart but valour. Yet the truth was that the Englishman found in the Dutchman a foe as brave and resourceful as himself, and just as much a son of the North Sea. May it not be well said of these fishers and fighters from both sides of the North Sea that strife was in the blood of them and had to find an outlet? There was more excitement behind the gun and pike and in slashing with the cutlass than there was in shooting and hauling nets on lonely fishing-banks, and more prospect of reward in prize-money; yet there was scarcely greater danger, for a North Sea gale, sweeping over the fishing-craft, might and often did cause as much suffering and loss as a well-contested battle with the gun and sword.

Broom and whiplash figure largely in that story of the early fights between the English and the Dutch for conquest of the Narrow Seas. Almost at the end of 1652

Blake went forth and defeated the gallant De Ruyter ; but the stern soldier of the Commonwealth was in turn surprised by the renowned Tromp, who captured some of the English ships and, it is told, swaggered through the Channel with a broom lashed to his mast-head, as a symbol of his boast to sweep the English off the seas. There is no substantial evidence that the Dutchman either made such a threat or used such a sign, nor is there proof that in retaliation Blake displayed a lash, as an indication that he would whip the Dutchman back to Holland.

The stories are picturesque, and not incredible ; they are at any rate in keeping with the crude and savage spirit of the times. No tale was too stupid or primitive for credence ; yet in the feeblest of them we find a reflection of the spirit that animated all classes on both sides of the North Sea.

There is the famous tale which tells that when Tromp passed Dover Roads without paying due honour to the British flag Blake ordered three guns to be fired, without shot, to call the Dutchman to a sense of his obligation to the mistress of the seas, and that the Hollander's reply was a whole broadside. Blake was in his cabin, drinking with his officers, and when the hostile ordnance shattered some of the glasswork he angrily declared that he took it very ill that the Dutch admiral should take his ship for a bawdy-house and break his windows. The story may not be, and probably is not, true ; but it served its purpose of keeping fanned the flame of hatred between the rival nations. History repeats itself strangely. Tromp's son lived to visit England and be made a baronet by the restored sovereign ; in the year

of the Coronation of George v. Dutchmen, who had fought long and gallantly against the English in South Africa, came to London as the guests of the King and were honoured by him in a special fashion.

A few months after he flaunted his broom, if he did so at all, Tromp died. He fell in one of the indecisive sea-fights; but his name was gallantly upheld by his son Cornelius, who, in the second Dutch war, fought bravely, especially at the battle of Solebay, or Southwold Bay, in Suffolk. In the third Dutch war with England Cornelius Tromp again distinguished himself, and he was the admiral who later came to England to be honoured by the King. The names of Tromp, De Ruyter, and Opdam stand side by side with those of Blake, Monk, Myngs, the Earl of Sandwich, the Duke of York, and Prince Rupert, and the other fighters of the fierce Dutch wars.

This long strife gave to England the bloodiest of all her naval battles, and some of the hardest struggling took place either on the open North Sea or the shores of it. Lowestoft is particularly associated with the sea-dogs of two and more centuries ago, and the old parish church contains many tablets to their memory. The Lowestoft admirals—Allen and Utber—and a Lowestoft captain—also named Utber—took part in the fight off Lowestoft on 3rd June 1665, when the English fleet consisted of 114 ships, commanded by the Duke of York, Prince Rupert, and Montague, Earl of Sandwich. The Dutch, under Admiral Opdam, had the wind against them; but they fought gallantly till they were defeated, with a loss of 18 ships and 7000 men, the English loss being only 1 ship and 700 men. The

fight became famous because of the great number of distinguished men who perished in it. Opdam's ship took fire and was lost with her 500 people, amongst whom were volunteers from the best families of Holland. On board the *Royal Charles*, which was the Duke of York's ship, the Earl of Falmouth and Lord Muskerry were killed, as well as Mr. Boyle, son of the Earl of Cork. They were all slain by one cannon-shot. Their blood and brains, Pepys recorded, flew in the Duke's face, and it was said that the Duke was struck down by the severed head of Boyle. The Earl of Marlborough, Rear-Admiral Sansum, and Captains Kirby and Ableson were numbered with the lost, as well as the valiant Sir John Lawson, who was mortally wounded by some of the flying débris of the shattered Dutch flagship.

"A greater victory never known in the world," said Pepys exultantly, on learning the first news of the fight; but later, when he had had one of the victorious captains to dine with him, he modified his views, and wrote: "He assures me we were beaten home the last June fight, and that the whole fleet was ashamed to hear of our bonfires. He says the Dutch do fight in very good order, and we in none at all. He says that in the July fight both Prince Rupert and Holmes had their belly fulls, and were fain to go aside, though, if the wind had continued, we had utterly beaten them. He do confess we be governed by a company of fools, and fears our ruin."

Opdam perished with his ship. Lawson was struck on the knee by a flying shot from the flagship when she was blown up. It was at first thought that he would recover; but the injury proved fatal. The praises of

Sir John were sung in some verses which also indicated the bitterness of the feeling between the two nations, for the poet, in recording Lawson's death, said that his

". . . valour beyond fate did go,
And still fights Opdam in the lake below."

The July fight was that of 1666, when the grim Monk and Prince Rupert fell upon the Dutch fleet under De Ruyter and Tromp, routing the enemy and killing Tromp. The fight was long and fierce, and De Ruyter had the bitterness of being deserted by some of his chief officers. Yet he maintained the struggle until he found that the seven ships which were left to him were surrounded by three times that number of the English. The English were in crescent formation, and pressed heavily upon the stubborn Dutchmen.

Monk, resolved at all costs to crush his opponent, drove hard upon De Ruyter's flagship and tried to smash him with the firing of a united broadside. It was at this apparently hopeless moment that De Ruyter despairingly exclaimed, "How wretched am I, that among so many thousand balls, not one will bring me death!" He, however, quickly recovered, and withdrew the remnant of his shattered force to Walcheren. In executing that retreat he won renown as great as victory would have given him.

Six years later, at Solebay, De Ruyter almost had his complete revenge. At the head of more than a hundred sail he surprised, on 28th May 1672, the combined English and French fleets of much larger force than his own, as they were lying at anchor. De Ruyter first fell on the French, then, as they drew out

of the engagement, on the English, who endured the burden of the battle. As a result of the affair, which was indecisive, the allied fleet was unable to take the offensive for more than a month afterwards, although they had lost only one ship and the Dutch five or six.

Meanwhile, De Ruyter had scored a triumph which even he could scarcely have considered possible—he had lumbered across the North Sea and invaded England itself, and carried off to Holland as a chief trophy the finest warship in the world—the *Royal Charles*, which, on 3rd June 1665, had carried the flag of the Duke of York.

A letter from Hull, written on 16th June 1667, sounded that note of consternation and fear which was universal in England when it was known that the Dutch had sailed boldly up the Thames, entered the Medway, defeated the English, burnt some of our finest warships, and carried off the *Royal Charles*. At Amsterdam there is to be seen the arms which decorated the stern of the *Royal Charles*, bearing an inscription stating that she was captured during the “glorious operations in the river of Rochester in the year 1667.” That relic is as much a source of pride to Holland as the remembrance of the Dutch in the Medway is a lasting national humiliation.

A profligate monarch and licentious Court had put pleasure and selfish indulgence before everything else, with the result that the Navy had been grossly and completely neglected. Ships were badly found, ordnance was imperfect, ammunition was bad, and such shot as there was available proved, often enough, either too large or too small for the guns for which it was issued.

Greatest of all scandals was the failure to pay the seamen their wages. Men were forced to serve, under conditions which to the present-day mind are appalling, yet they could not get their miserable money. In despair some of the pressed men sought to escape by jumping overboard and swimming ashore. A few found freedom that way; others were mercilessly shot as they made their attempts. Considerable numbers of good English seamen entered the Dutch service, and fought as readily against their own country as they would have bled for it if they had been treated with common and ordinary gratitude.

"Some do not stick to say things were better ordered in Cromwell's time," wrote the Hullman, "for then seamen had all their pay, and were not permitted to swear, but were clapped in the bilboes; and if the officers did they were turned out, and then God gave a blessing to them; but now all men are for making themselves great, and few mind the King and the nation's interest, but mind plays and women, and fling away much money that would serve to pay the seamen. . . . Our garrison is much out of repair; very many of our gun-carriages are very bad, and almost past using."

In every big and little port on the east coast, indeed, there was amazement and alarm. None knew better than these people on the North Sea shores how powerful and insolent the Dutch had grown, and all realised that the degrading raid on the Thames and Medway as far as Rochester would spur the men of Holland to further swoops and outrages.

Bad as the news was, it became infinitely worse when it reached remote places like Whitby and

Newcastle, for it lost nothing in the telling and repetition. People at Newcastle were declared to be at their wits' end owing to the tidings of the national disgrace, and they gave up their own city for lost; yet they set to work at once to draw the ships up the Tyne for safety, to plant guns, repair the walls, and build a fort at Tynemouth Castle. Newcastle folk had special cause for fear and panic, because, as a result of the raid, coal had risen to £6 a chaldron. It was reported that the Dutch were resolved to attack Newcastle and destroy the coal fleet.

Whitby people were "perplexed that the Dutch vapour so publicly in the Thames," the vapouring, however, being much more full of body than the corresponding performance nowadays; Bridlington, while sorry to hear the news, hoped that already the King's forces had repulsed the invaders. "Strange discourse" was caused at Lynn, in Norfolk, by the report of the burning of the English ships; and at Yarmouth and elsewhere wrath prevailed, as well as consternation. Though every one at Yarmouth talked "at a strange rate," yet there was something more than speech, for the drums beat bravely, and there and elsewhere noble lords who had been temporarily sobered into recognising the country's peril, and accordingly their own, left their debaucheries and frivolities and to martial music did their best to enrol the most willing and warlike men, and encourage them to meet the enemy. The Dutch were then credited, and rightly, with the intention of ravaging the east coast, after their success in the Thames and Medway.

It was on Wednesday, 15th June, that the Dutch

descent was made. A contemporary Dutch account described the sailing of the fleet from Holland on the 1st June—a date which might well correspond in the history of the Netherlands with our own “Glorious First” of the same month. Lieutenant-Admiral De Ruyter was in command of the ships, some of which were driven from their anchors by a strong south-south-west gale on the 4th; but were safely before London River on the 7th. The admiral held a council of war, to decide how best the Thames could be navigated by some of the lightest vessels, and whether they could take some of the King’s ships. On the 9th seventeen ships of war, four advice-boats, and four fire-ships sailed up the Thames, commanded by Lieutenant-Admiral Van Ghent, with whom went De Witt as deputy of the States General.

That evening the ships arrived before Queenborough and Gravesend; but as nothing could be done they returned to Queenborough on the 10th. Going back to Rochester, they conquered Sheppy and Queenborough and attacked the fort at Sheerness, recently built for the defence of the passage to Rochester and Chatham.

“Our cannons so stormed the place that the enemy left it. . . . Our people found there an entire royal magazine, with very heavy anchors and cables and hundreds of masts.” They took what they wanted and destroyed the rest, the damage done being estimated at more than “four tons of gold.” These statements are obviously much exaggerated, after the manner of stories told under excitement; but extensive mischief was undoubtedly done by the Dutch.

On the 12th, the wind being east-north-east, the Dutch sailed with the tide about four miles up the Medway, and made a severe attack. Before their coming the English had sunk seven fire-ships, "and enclosed the river with a thick and heavy iron chain, running on pulleys, which turned on wheels. Six of their ships, distributed in good order, lay before the chain; at the one end lay four, and at the other end two stout frigates which crossed the water. This notwithstanding, the Dutch, with more than mortal boldness, made an attack against all these dangers."

One English frigate was taken, another was burnt by means of a fire-ship, then "the other four ships were left by their comrades, the crews in confusion sprang overboard, and our people took the *Royal Charles*, fitted to bear 100 pieces of cannon, and with 32 guns on board. . . . Nothing more costly has been made in England, and it must have cost almost 100,000 dollars in the gilding alone. They also took the *Charles v.*, with two others of the largest ships, the *Matthias* and the *Castle of Honingen*, which are burnt. The chain was burst into pieces, and all within it destroyed and annihilated, . . . On land our people did not do much, for all was in commotion, and the English, with 12,000 men, came against them in arms; so the Dutch abandoned the places which they had taken, and came again, with their ships, into the Thames."

In the main the Dutch account is correct; but on the English side it was declared that the chain was easily forced, because it was merely fastened with cable-yarn, and that, although the *Royal Charles* had only

30 (the Dutch said 32) guns on board, still the ammunition supply was so short that it was soon spent. When the Dutch took her they hoisted their own flag over the English flag, and the famous painting by Van der Velde shows her being towed across the North Sea with that display of bunting—shameful and humiliating to England and shedding lustre on the Dutch. The *Royal Charles*, however, was not taken off at once. She struck the ground and kept fast till the next tide, a mere handful of Dutchmen remaining on board. The invaders also leisurely completed their task of burning the ships they had captured and could not take away.

Utter panic seized the country when the details of the invasion were known. Fierce recriminations took place concerning the state of the Navy, which had been grossly and wickedly neglected. It was believed that London would be attacked and sacked, and terrified families fled from Greenwich and Blackwall, in the expectation of those places falling before the capital. Merchants were stunned with fear, and bankers shut up their shops. "People are ready to tear their hair off their heads. We are betrayed," wrote a London correspondent despairingly, and there was indeed cause for the belief that persons high in office had acted treacherously and disloyally. The King himself, roused to fury enough to forget his own base pleasures for the time, sent a circular letter to the legal profession, speaking of the "insolent spirit of our enemies," and begging for money in considerable sums "by way of loans." The East India Company was asked for a loan of £20,000, and appeals

were made to citizens and others. There was a sudden and frantic effort to try and remedy at once the long neglect of the Navy.

Meanwhile, the triumphant Dutch fleet of 52 vessels was said to be going homewards; then came the startling news that the enemy were preparing to raid the east coast ports. They did, indeed, on 2nd July, get two or three thousand men ashore at Harwich, near Felixstowe cliffs. They covered the landing of these men, who made a bold appearance with their pikes, their guns keeping up a constant fire at the port. But the result of their attempt on Harwich was far different from their success at Rochester. They met with stubborn opposition, and were driven back to their boats and out to sea.

Many dismal hearts were cheered by this success, and the people at Harwich were greatly encouraged by the appearance of the Duke of York, who had hurried to the coast. Peace was spoken of, but prematurely, for the triumphant Dutch hovered about the eastern shore and kept the inhabitants in a state of terror. Then they were moved to try and repeat their success in the Medway, and six weeks after their victory at Rochester they reappeared off Chatham. There were several unimportant meetings between the English and the Dutch forces, but the truth was that both nations were weary of the bitter and protracted strife, and it was known that negotiations were continuing in the hope of settling terms of peace. On 26th July it was definitely announced that the two countries had come to terms, and that peace had been concluded; then it seemed as if the

English and the Dutch tried to surpass each other in expressing rapture at the termination of a costly and devastating war.

There is to be seen in the grounds of Greenwich Hospital an old gun, in a remarkably good state of preservation, which bears the following inscription:—

“This gun was found sunk in the sand in St. Mary’s Creek, below Chatham. It is of iron, believed to have been cast in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and is supposed to have formed part of the armament of the *Matthias*, a ship set on fire and sunk by the Dutch under De Ruyter when he sailed up the Medway to attack Chatham, 12th June 1667.”



PAUL JONES OFF FLAMBOROUGH HEAD



CHAPTER XXV

PAUL JONES OFF FLAMBRO'

By the light of a full harvest moon, on an autumn evening in 1779, wondering people on the Yorkshire cliffs watched one of the most stubborn naval fights in British history. That was the battle between John Paul Jones and his squadron and two British ships of war off Flamborough Head. To-day, in an enclosure at Scarborough from which the Head is visible, there is an old anchor, recovered some years ago by the paddle-trawler *Dunrobin*, which is believed to have belonged to one of the ships engaged—the *Serapis*.

The very name of Paul Jones became a bogey on the north-east coast. He was, in the estimation of many people, a renegade Scotchman, a romantic ruffian who, if the Flamborough fight had gone against him, would assuredly have found a place in Execution Dock. His name has been as much execrated in England as it has been glorified in America. That he was a bold and clever seaman there can be no question; but he was possessed by a vanity which may have been as much the cause of some of his successes as his skill and daring were. He lived to make the world ring with praise of his deeds, to be idolised for a time, and to die, almost neglected and forgotten, in Paris. More than a century

after his obscure burial his remains were removed to America, and buried with much solemnity and honour, for he is spoken of as the father of the United States Navy.

Jones, whose original name was John Paul, was born at Arbigland, in Kirkcudbrightshire, on 6th July 1747. After achieving notoriety in the days of his boyhood he took to the sea and had various adventures in slavers and other craft. A brother of his, who had gone to America, died in Virginia in 1773, leaving no will and apparently a considerable fortune. On behalf of the family John took charge of the estate and dealt with it as he did later with other possessions that were not his own. For a couple of years he kept modestly in the background, having, perhaps, a full appreciation of unwritten laws, then, in December 1775, he entered the American Navy, disguised as Paul Jones. America, at that time a British colony, had been driven to rebellion by the folly and incapacity of the administrators at home, and began that brave struggle which ended in total independence.

Jones made his name notorious on the British coasts. A contemporary writer referred to him as this "noted desperado," and harsher things were spoken by those who suffered from his depredations. There are many notable deeds to his credit; but the best remembered is his conflict with the British off the Yorkshire coast.

Jones scoured and harassed the North Sea. He showed a special liking for Scotch parts, and one of his most celebrated compositions was a bombastic ultimatum to the magistrates of Leith, which was never delivered. Through the influence of the philosopher Franklin, who

represented America in France, Jones had been furnished with a small squadron of ships, of which the largest was an old Indiaman named the *Duc de Duras*. Jones altered this name to the *Bon Homme Richard*, in compliment to a saying of Poor Richard—"If you would have your business done, come yourself—if not, send," one of Franklin's proverbs. The *Richard* carried forty guns, and, like the rest of Jones's ships, was manned by a mixed crew, including not a few renegade Englishmen. No one, however, could condemn an Englishman at that time from entering the service of any navy, provided it was not his own, for he was flogged into loyalty, and treated worse than a dog when on board ship. Jones also had the *Alliance*, a frigate of thirty-six guns, commanded by a Frenchman who showed neither courage nor obedience, and was afterwards dismissed the service on the ground of insanity; the *Pallas*, a French ship of thirty-two guns; the *Cerf*, of eighteen guns; and the *Vengeance*, a twelve-gun vessel.

At the head of this force Jones sailed from France and appeared off the Scotch coast, meaning to swoop on Leith, as he had previously descended, but with slight success, on Ireland and Whitehaven.

Styling himself "The Honourable Paul Jones, Commander-in-Chief of the American Squadron now in Europe, etc.," he prepared his momentous summons to the Leith fathers. "Savages would blush at the unmanly violation and rapacity that has marked the tracks of British tyranny in America," he wrote, "from which neither virgin innocence nor helpless age has been a plea of protection or pity. Leith and its port now lies at our mercy; and did not our humanity stay the hand

of just retaliation, I should, *without advertisement*, lay it in ashes." He, however, nobly forbore, until he had given the people of Leith a chance of paying a ransom of £200,000.

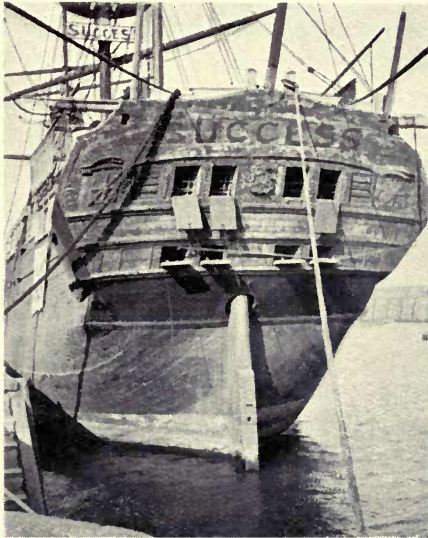
This concoction was penned when the *Richard* was at anchor in Leith Roads, on 17th September 1779; but the colonel who was detailed to deliver it did not do so, for the simple reason that a gale forced Jones to put to sea.

His audacious appearance had terrified and amazed the Scots on the coast, for so close to the shore did he sail that at one time he was not more than a mile away from Kirkcaldy, in the Firth of Forth. The 17th was a Sunday, and the good Mr. Shirra, a dissenting minister of the town, abandoned his kirk and held a service on the beach, to a congregation largely composed of screaming women and of children who raised their voices in sympathetic chorus. The minister, in impassioned dialect, prayed loudly and fervently for the defeat of the "piratical invader, Paul Jones." The story goes that the lamentations of the congregation inspired the pastor to declare that he had been long a faithful servant of the Lord, and that, unless the Lord saw fit to turn the wind about and drive the "vile piret" out to sea, he, the pastor, would not stir a foot, but would just sit down till the tide came. When the suppliant was afterwards credited with having wrought well with Providence he modestly replied, "Na, na—I prayed; but the *Lord* sent the wind!"

Jones had gone to sea, taking his ultimatum and his colonel with him. His great design had failed, but he made amends by capturing small fry that were unable



A RELIC OF PAUL JONES.



THE OLD CONVICT SHIP *SUCCESS*.

to protect themselves. He had fallen upon and seized a little collier, whose master he held captive, so that he might use his local knowledge in destroying the coal-carrying trade and in that way paralysing London. This big enterprise also he had to abandon, and he gave the master back his vessel, "on account of his attachment to America, and the faithful information and important services he rendered me by his general knowledge of the east coast of Britain," said Jones. "I had given orders to sink the old vessel, when the tears of this honest man prevailed over my intention." The explanation is as picturesque as was Paul Jones's costume when he reached France a victor. He was then attired in continental dress, crowned by a jaunty gold-braided Scotch bonnet—perhaps a graceful tribute to the land of his birth.

Most of Jones's schemes had failed, though not for want of pluck on his part. He had carefully prepared his plans, and they had been checkmated. Then chance came his way, and, taking it, he won the greatest glory of his life—the victory off the Yorkshire coast. However different opinions may be as to the morality of his performances, there is no doubt that he was a courageous and resourceful fighter. He succeeded against odds that were more than equal, and with crews who were not awed into discipline by King's officers.

Nowhere could be found a better place for witnessing a battle than the primitive and rugged part of the Yorkshire coast off which Jones and his opponent met. That stretch of bold shore to-day differs little in appearance from the aspect it presented more than a century and a quarter ago. The people themselves are almost un-

changed, for Flamborough village is nearly three miles from the nearest railway station, and that a very small one; and the North and South Landings furnish sights as odd and quaint as when Jones appeared off the grim and dangerous headland which juts far out to sea. From the Castle Hill at Scarborough, twenty miles away, the Head is clearly visible, and watchers on the ramparts of the fortress would distinguish the flashes of the guns and hear the boom of the discharges. To the south of Flamborough, on the shores of Bridlington Bay, and farther down the cliffs, were crowds of amazed and excited people.

It was known that Jones was in the neighbourhood. On 21st September he had chased two sail off Flamborough Head. One, a brigantine collier, in ballast, of Scarborough, he took, and at once sank her, as a fleet appeared to the southward. Jones could not come up with the fleet before night; but he got so near one of the ships that he drove her ashore between the Head and Spurn. A Sunderland brigantine, from Holland, then fell to him as a prize. Next morning, at daybreak, he saw a fleet approaching from Spurn, and took it to be a convoy which was expected at Leith from London. According to the story told by Jones, who did not err on the side of modesty, the fleet had not the courage to come on, although one of the ships had a pendant hoisted and seemed to be a ship of force. This vessel, however, kept to windward, very near the land, and on the edge of dangerous shoals which Jones could not approach with safety. He signalled for a pilot, and two pilot-boats went off. These, apparently containing fishermen, told Jones that the ship with a pendant was an armed merchantman, and that a King's

frigate was anchored in the Humber, not far down the coast, in readiness to convoy a number of merchantmen bound to the north.

Jones hesitated at nothing in the execution of his plans. The pilots supposed him to be an English warship and therefore made known to him the private signal which they were required to make. By using this signal Jones tried to decoy the merchantmen out of port, but the wind changed and the tide was unfavourable, so that "the deception had not the desired effect, and they wisely put back." Finding the entrance to the Humber very difficult and dangerous, and as the *Pallas* was not in sight, Jones determined not to remain off the mouth of the river and steered out again to Flamborough Head to join the *Pallas*. In the night they saw two ships and chased them until three o'clock on the following morning. Jones was then very near the ships—the *Alliance* and the *Pallas*—and made the private signal of reconnaissance, which he had given to each of his captains before sailing from Groix. Only half the signal was returned. Both sides lay to until daylight.

Matters were becoming exciting and rapidly leading up to the grand climax. The morning of the 23rd had come and Jones pursued a brigantine, following this by chasing at noon a large ship that was rounding Flamborough Head from the north. Simultaneously he manned and armed one of the pilot-boats to send after the brigantine, which seemed to be the vessel he had driven ashore.

Now it was that the fleet of merchantmen from the Baltic, forty-one sail in all, appeared off Flamborough Head, bearing north-north-east. Jones, on seeing the fleet, immediately abandoned the single ship which was then

anchored in Bridlington Bay. He recalled the pilot-boat and made the signal for a general chase. When the fleet discovered Jones's squadron bearing down, all the merchantmen crowded sail towards the shore. At the same time the two warships which were convoying the fleet steered from the land and prepared for battle. "In approaching the enemy," wrote Jones, "I crowded every possible sail, and made the signal for the line of battle, to which the *Alliance* showed no attention. Earnest as I was for action, I could not reach the commodore's ship until seven in the evening, being then within pistol-shot, when he hailed the *Bon Homme Richard*. We answered him by firing a whole broadside."

The principal interest of the battle centres in the struggle between the two chief ships—the *Richard* and the *Serapis*. There was a subsidiary conflict—that of the *Pallas* and the *Countess of Scarborough*; but it has become insignificant by being overshadowed. After two hours' hard fighting the *Countess of Scarborough*, which was much inferior in armament to her opponent, was taken by the *Pallas*.

Once the fight began it was continued with fierce resolution on both sides, and rarely has a more moving spectacle been witnessed from the shore, although there have been more terrible struggles very near the land—amongst them the Nile, Camperdown, Algiers, and Navarino.

Evening had fallen, the full moon was rising in the placid sky, and there were the twinkling lamps and candles in the cottages and houses ashore. Fisherfolk and tillers of the soil were abroad, husbands and wives were out with their children, and many a fine young fellow and

his handsome sweetheart were on the cliff-tops gazing at the battle.

Jones was a bold and skilful sailor; Captain Pearson, who commanded the *Serapis*, had won a reputation as a fine officer. Each man tried his hardest on that peaceful evening to win an advantage, but movements were slow, for there was little wind. Jones, recognising his inferior strength, sought to grapple at close quarters with his enemy, and tried to lay the *Richard* athwart the bow of the *Serapis*. Some of his braces were, however, shot away, and the manœuvre failed. The bowsprit of the *Serapis* went over the *Richard's* poop by the mizzen-mast, and instantly Jones made both ships fast, the result being that the stern of the Englishman was forced close to the American's bow. The ships lay square alongside of each other, the yards were entangled, and the muzzles of the opposing guns came in contact.

By this time it was eight o'clock and the *Richard* was leaking badly, having received a number of eighteen-pound shots below the water-line. Jones's battery of twelve-pounders, on which he had placed great reliance, and indeed chief hope, were completely silenced and abandoned. The battery of the lower gun-deck consisted of half a dozen old eighteen-pounders, but, beyond firing eight shots in all, these weapons were useless. At the very first discharge two of these guns burst and killed nearly all their crews. Already the officer commanding a party of twenty soldiers on the poop—Lieutenant-Colonel de Chamillard, who was to have delivered the ultimatum to the magistrates at Leith—had abandoned that station owing to losses amongst his men.

So furious and destructive had been the firing that

an hour after the fight began Jones had only two nine-pounders on the quarter-deck which were not silenced, and during the rest of the action not one of the heavier pieces of ordnance was discharged.

The guns on the quarter-deck were commanded by the purser, Mease, but he was wounded in the head, and Jones took his place. Rallying a few men—a hard task, for discipline was lax in Jones's squadron, and there were not a few cowards serving under him—he shifted over one of the lee-quarter-deck guns, making three of these nine-pounders brought to bear against the *Serapis*.

In one respect, however, Jones was fortunate. His tops were well manned, and from them, especially the maintop commanded by Lieutenant Stack, a killing fire was directed upon the Englishman. From one of the nine-pounders, too, double-headed shot were fired at the mainmast of the *Serapis*, grape and canister being scattered upon her decks. Under that cannonade the decks of the *Serapis* were deserted, the only place of refuge for the living being below.

Jones believed that now the Englishman was on the point of surrendering ; but an utterly unlooked-for thing occurred. "The cowardice or treachery" of his gunner, carpenter, and master-at-arms induced them to ask for quarter.

Pearson heard the cry. "Has your ship struck?" he shouted.

Jones was equal to the hail, and grasped the peril of the situation. "I haven't yet begun to fight!" he shouted back.

Instantly the battle was resumed more fiercely than before. Already the lower-deck ports of the *Serapis*

had been closed, so that the enemy could not board through them, but they were quickly beaten in by the enemy's shot.

All this time the ships were locked together so closely that when the crews were loading the guns their rammers either struck the ships' sides or entered the ports. An attempt which the English made to board was checked, nor did they win in an attempt to get clear of the *Richard* by letting an anchor go, hoping that the ships would drift apart. They were too firmly lashed together, and the sea was calm, with very little wind.

The *Serapis* had become, to all appearances, a deserted ship. Her people had been driven below, where alone they could find shelter; and now occurred a dramatic and destructive incident. More cartridges than were needed had been got up from the magazines by the powder-monkeys of the *Serapis*, and they had been laid alongside the guns on the main-deck.

A Scotchman in the crew of the *Richard* crept out to the end of the main yard-arm, carrying a bucket filled with explosives. He got over the main hatchway of the *Serapis*, and instantly dropped a hand-grenade. Some loose powder which was on the main-deck was fired; this in turn exploded cartridge after cartridge, with hideous results, for a score of men were killed, twenty were mortally wounded, and as many were burnt or otherwise injured. Some of the men were blown to pieces; yet in spite of that demoralising happening Pearson would not yield, and the fight went on. Several times the *Serapis* had been on fire; but the flames had been mastered.

For two hours and a half the bloody battle had been

waged; then the *Alliance* came up and Jones reasonably supposed that the victory was as good as won. But to his amazement that ship, instead of attacking the Englishman, fired a broadside full into the *Richard's* stern.

Furious and incredulous, Jones and his people shouted to the *Alliance* to stop firing into the *Richard*; but she passed along the offside of the ship and continued her cannonade. There could not be any mistaking the vessels, for it was full moonlight, and they were quite different in appearance and construction. The *Richard's* sides were black, while those of the *Serapis* were yellow.

Jones in desperation showed his reconnaissance signal—three lanterns, placed horizontally, one at the head, another in the middle, and the third at the stern; yet Landais, the captain of the *Alliance*, took no notice. He passed round, firing into the *Richard's* head, stern, and broadside, mortally wounding an officer and killing several men. Truly Jones was justified in declaring that his situation now was deplorable; nor can some of his officers be blamed for urging him to strike. In any case Jones was not likely to surrender. He knew what his punishment would be, in view of his nationality and piratical performances. He refused to haul down his colours, although his ship was sinking and was also on fire. To complete the apparent hopelessness of his situation, the master-at-arms released the prisoners, of whom there were on board three hundred, taken from prizes and ransomed. These men swarmed on deck, but what seemed like a very imminent peril was turned by the resourceful commander into a means of salvation. He ordered them to set to work at once on the pumps,

and driven into obedience by Lieutenant Dale and the sense of their own extremity, the captives obeyed.

At this time the *Richard* was almost a shattered wreck, for her sides were smashed in by the British fire and she had five feet of water in her hold. She was not a large ship, and at that crisis, with more than six hundred men and boys on board, the decks red with blood, and the dead and wounded everywhere, she was in very truth, as Jones had said, a deplorable thing.

The *Serapis*, however, was in worse case than her opponent, especially as the *Alliance* gave her the same attention that had been shown to the *Richard*. Continuous fire had been kept up on her mainmast, and that immense spar was tottering to its fall, soon to crash down. She had maintained a splendid fight, and, if one has regret at all, it is that Pearson did not longer wage his gallant defence. He had, however, done well; he believed that no further good could result from continuing the combat, now that the *Alliance* had joined the *Richard*, and with bitter reluctance he surrendered. How deeply he felt his humiliation was indicated by his caustic remark to Jones when, on the deck of the *Richard*, he yielded up his sword. He gave it, he said, to "a man who may be said to fight with a halter round his neck." Jones ignored the taunt, and generously replied that Captain Pearson had fought like a hero and hoped that his sovereign would reward him in the most ample manner.

Fire was raging in the *Richard*, and it was ten o'clock next morning before the flames were put out. Jones was anxious to carry his ship into port, but he could not save her. He removed his wounded, and at

ten o'clock on the night of the 25th, nearly fifty hours after the battle, she sank in the North Sea. No lives were lost in her, according to Jones—though Pearson stated afterwards that she took a number of men with her—but it was impossible to save any of the stores. Jones lost most of his clothes, books, and papers, and several of his officers lost all their clothes and effects. The *Serapis*, which had been fitted with a jury-mast, reached the Texel.

The killed in the *Serapis* numbered 61; the *Richard's* list of dead was 42; but it was believed that the total loss on each side was about the same, in killed and wounded—150; making altogether 300—a heavy butcher's bill.

This account of the battle is based chiefly on the story which Jones wrote about a fortnight after the affair and sent to Franklin. A letter written to the Admiralty by Pearson on 6th October, when he was on board the *Pallas*, in the Texel, gives other details which differ somewhat from Jones's story, although, on the whole, that is accurate and fair. Captain Pearson related how, on the 23rd, being close in with Scarborough, a boat went off at about eleven o'clock in the morning, with a letter from the Corporation bailiffs, giving information of a flying squadron of the enemy's ships being off the coast. From that moment it is clear that Pearson's great object was to save his convoy, and that he succeeded in doing so, for his ships escaped into Scarborough and other ports.

When Jones was within musket-shot of the *Serapis*, Pearson hailed and asked what ship it was. They answered, in English, "The *Princess Royal*." To the further question, "Where do you belong?" they gave

an evasive reply; whereupon Pearson declared that if they did not at once tell him he would fire into them. Instantly there was a shot from the *Richard*, followed by a broadside from the *Serapis*; then, after further broadsides, the ships were locked together. The *Richard* he found, later, to be in the "greatest distress. Her quarters and counter on the lower deck entirely drove in, and the whole of her lower deck guns dismounted." She sank "with a great number of her wounded people on board of her."

Captain Pearson spoke highly of the conduct of his officers and crew, nor was Captain Piercy, in the *Countess of Scarborough*, in the least remiss in his duty, "he having given me every assistance in his power, and as much as could be expected from such a ship, in engaging the attention of the *Pallas*, a frigate of 32 guns, during the whole action." He claimed that, in addition to "wholly oversetting" the intentions of the flying squadron, he had rescued a valuable convoy from falling into the hands of the enemy—"which must have been the case had I acted any otherwise than I did. We have been driving about the North Sea ever since the action, endeavouring to make any port we possibly could, but have not been able to get into any place until to-day we arrived in the Texel."

Pearson was duly tried by court-martial and honourably acquitted. Hull, Scarborough, and other towns made him a freeman, and he received presents of plate from merchants and a knighthood from the King—a distinction which caused Jones to declare sarcastically that next time he had the good fortune to meet the captain he would make a lord of him.

Jones was overwhelmed with praise and flattery from Franklin, Congress, and other sources. The King of France gave him a sword and made him a knight of the Order of Merit; the Danish monarch conferred a pension upon him, which, however, Jones seems to have been left to raise himself, and the Emperor of Russia decorated him with the ribbon of St. Anne. Finally Jones entered the Russian naval service and became a rear-admiral. Early in May 1790 a contemporary letter stated that the "noted Paul Jones" landed at Harwich from a packet-boat. He was dressed as a Russian admiral, and was not recognised until his name was seen on packages at the custom-house; then there was such a hostile demonstration by the people who surrounded the inn where he was staying that Jones secretly escaped from the town the same day he landed. He died in Paris in 1792, in his forty-fifth year, neglected and almost forgotten, and was buried in an obscure cemetery.

The generations passed, and Jones became known as "the Father of the American Navy." Measures were taken to identify his resting-place, and this at last was found, mostly through the exertions of General Horace Porter, United States Ambassador to France. Jones had been buried in the old St. Louis Cemetery, and his remains were exhumed on 1st April 1905, and preparations made to transfer them to America. On 6th July dense crowds witnessed the arrival in Paris of 508 American sailors and marines from four war-ships which had reached Cherbourg. They escorted the body from the American Episcopal Church, where it had lain since its discovery, to the Gare des

Invalides. At night the body was taken from Paris to Cherbourg and placed on board the flagship *Brooklyn*, which conveyed it to America. With impressive naval ceremonies the Father of the American Navy was re-interred at Annapolis, and there he rests—regarded by many as a very ordinary privateer and by many others as a man whose life was spent in fighting valiantly for the cause of liberty.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TOLL OF THE BRAVE

IN the last autumn of the eighteenth century H.M.S. *Lutine*, 32 guns, with a crew of 240, was wrecked on Vlieland, one of the islands off the coast of Holland. One man alone escaped, and he died before reaching England. To-day the *Lutine* is the best-remembered ship that has added to the toll of the brave in the North Sea, because she carried an immense amount of treasure, and strenuous efforts are being made to recover what is left of it. Considerable capital has been raised to carry on the work, and a wonderfully equipped salvage steamer goes—when she can get—to the place of wreck and pumps up huge quantities of sand; at other times she lies restfully in the harbour at Harlingen or Terschelling. The workers say that they will succeed; several Dutchmen with whom I spoke this summer, near the place where the *Lutine* is embedded in the shifting sands, declare that success is impossible, and that neither skill nor pluck will win the treasure.

The *Lutine* was a French ship which had been captured by Admiral Duncan. She carried a great quantity of money and bullion, and, being heavily insured at Lloyd's, she proved a serious loss to that

institution. The wreck was claimed by the Dutch Government, who, however, in 1801 granted one-third of the salvage to the bullion fishers. After occasional recoveries of treasure, and as the result of many negotiations, the King of the Netherlands ceded to Great Britain, for Lloyd's, half the remainder of the wreck. In August 1857 a Dutch salvage company began operations, and in two years Lloyd's had received over £22,000. In course of time rather less than £100,000 was secured, leaving more than a million sterling in the wreck. The rudder of the *Lutine* was recovered in 1859, and a chair and table were made from it for Lloyd's, where the articles, with the ship's bell, still are.

The *Lutine*, which was commanded by Captain Lancelot Skinner, was lost on 9th October 1799. She struck the sands of Vlieland, far out of her course, and went down with all hands save the sole survivor. The riches she carried were for the account of London merchants trading with Germany. The regained treasure was mostly gold and silver coinage; that which remains is chiefly bar bullion, and it has undoubtedly been driven deep down into the sand by the action of the tides. It is only in calm weather and certain winds that operations can be conducted; but at the time of writing it is claimed that powerful pumping has resulted in almost reaching the treasure itself.

That part of the North Sea which claimed the treasure-ship more than a century ago, on her voyage from England to Hamburg, has proved the graveyard of many fine British ships and many gallant crews. The most disastrous of these calamities occurred a hundred years ago, when, on 24th December 1811, the *St. George*,

of 98 guns, the *Defence*, 74, and the *Hero*, 74, were wrecked on the coast of Jutland. All the crews, numbering about 2000, with the exception of 18 men, perished, amongst the lost being Rear-Admiral Reynolds. Just before the previous Christmas the *Minotaur*, 74 guns, was wrecked on the North Haaks, Texel, with a loss of 400; and there, on 28th January 1812, the *Manilla*, 38 guns, was lost with 8 men. The *St. George* had 738 officers and men on board, of whom 731 perished; of 593 in the *Defence* 587 were lost, while every soul in the *Hero*—590—was drowned. This was one of the most terrible catastrophes that ever befell British ships of war.

The *Minotaur* afforded a remarkable instance of the perils of North Sea navigation in the days when so many British ships of war had to make their way to and from countries with which we were at war, for her officers believed that she had struck on the shores of England when, as a matter of fact, she was aground upon the North Haaks. The *Minotaur*, Captain John Barrett, had been ordered by Admiral Sir James Saumarez to protect the last Baltic Fleet, and in December 1810 she was sailing home. The weather was thick and hazy, the wind was blowing hard from the south-east, and the ship was going at the rate of four knots an hour, under close-reefed topsails and courses.

The darkness was intense, and the captain, realising the dangers of his position, ordered that hourly soundings should be taken, under the immediate direction of the pilot of the watch. On the 22nd, at midnight, the pilot desired the ship to be put on the other tack. All hands were turned up to carry out the evolution, and

Lieutenant Snell, the officer of the watch, was telling the captain what was being done, when the *Minotaur* struck with such force that it was impossible to move her.

All the officers and men were on deck, and the eager question was, "Where have we struck?"

The pilot of the watch declared that they were on some English shoal; but the other pilot was convinced that the ship was on the North Haaks, and there she proved to be. So heavily had the ground been taken that it was almost impossible to stand on the deck. The yawning timbers admitted water so swiftly that soon there was 15 ft. in the hold, and a few minutes later it had risen above the orlop deck. Masts were cut away and guns thrown overboard, and the boom of other guns gave the signal of distress. The crashing masts and the smashing seas destroyed all the boats except the launch and two yawls, and as the *Minotaur* sank more deeply in her yielding bed and the water covered the forecastle, there seemed to be no prospect of salvation for the company.

Throughout that awful night her people crowded together, while the seas roared over her, and the thunder of the unseen breakers on the shore was heard above all other sounds. At eight o'clock on the morning of the 23rd, two days before Christmas, the *Minotaur* broke her back, and the utter destruction of the ship and her company seemed certain.

The gunner, a brave man, offered to try to reach the shore in a yawl; but the captain, believing that no boat could live in such a sea, refused at first to let him try. At last he gave consent, and the gunner and thirty-one of the crew managed to get clear of the wreck and the

spars and casks of spirits and provisions which were being hurled dangerously about by the seas.

For two hours the gunner and his crew struggled with the waves, the officers and men, who were crowded on the poop and quarter-deck of the *Minotaur*, watching them with intense anxiety. Then the yawl was seen to reach the shore, and instantly the desperate survivors fought to get the launch afloat.

Time after time savage seas had surged across the wreck, and never a snarling mass of water came without carrying back into the whirling deep some despairing human being. The launch was got afloat, and, crowded with men, she reached the land in half the time that the yawl had taken.

The news of the wreck had been spread ashore, and when the boats landed Dutch and French officers and soldiers were waiting to receive them. The enemy proved as merciless as the sea had been, for the almost perishing survivors were at once made prisoners of war. Appeals were made for help to be sent to the survivors on the wreck. The launch, which was one of the smallest of the kind carried by 74-gun ships, had taken eighty-five men ashore, although one gunwale was entirely broken in and the craft had no rudder; the yawl had also safely landed—yet the Dutch held that the task of rescue was too dangerous, and the officers and men who remained on board the *Minotaur* saw that there was no chance of salvation except by hurling themselves overboard and trying to swim to the land. The second yawl had been launched, and the captain and about a hundred men tried to reach the shore; but the craft was capsized and every soul perished. Early in the afternoon the

after part of the ship, on which the survivors were crowded, turned bottom up, and the miserable remnant of a ship's fine company was drowned.

There was one strange feature of the wreck which was put on record at the time. On board the *Minotaur* was a large tame wolf which, from the time it was caught as a cub, had been the pet of both officers and men, and had become specially attached to a lieutenant named Salsford. When the ship was wrecked the wolf howled pitifully, keeping close to Salsford all the time. When at last the officer tried to reach the shore by clinging to a drifting mast, his pet was with him. They were repeatedly washed off, yet helped each other back to the mast, the wolf acting just as a big and faithful dog would have done that was trying to save his master. The mast was driven quite close to the land, and it seemed as if the strange pair would reach salvation; but both were utterly exhausted and benumbed, and Salsford, unable to support himself any longer, fell away from his only hope of safety. Simultaneously the wolf placed his paws round the drowning officer's neck, and Salsford at the same moment clasped the animal in his arms. So, locked together, they sank.

On the day before Christmas, at dawn, the survivors were marched off as prisoners of war to Valenciennes; but in a few weeks the gunner escaped, hiding and almost starving for more than a month; then, by agreeing to pay £50 to the skipper of a smuggling craft at Ostend, he escaped to England.

There was a note of tragic prophecy in the words of Captain Newman, commanding the *Hero*, when, a year after the loss of the *Minotaur*, he made ready to convoy

a homeward-bound fleet. He believed that the ships had been detained too long, "and," he added, "it is well if some of us do not share the fate of the *Minotaur*."

Within a few days the *Hero* was lost, also on the North Haaks, with every soul on board. She sailed from Wingo Sound on 18th December 1811, in company with the *Grasshopper*, a 16-gun brig, the *Prince William*, and the *Egeria*. On the 20th the stormy weather had dispersed the ships, and the *Hero* and *Grasshopper* were left with about eighteen merchantmen to convoy. That was two days before Christmas. Just before noon Captain Newman signalled to the *Grasshopper* to come within hail. He believed that they were on the Silver Pits, well towards the English coast, a repetition of the mistake made by the *Minotaur*, and directed that the course should be altered to the south-west. This course was kept till 10 p.m., then the signal was made to alter it to two points to port.

The weather was bitterly cold, with heavy squalls of snow and sleet. The *Grasshopper* was going at the rate of nine knots when, at half-past three in the morning, she was seen to be in broken water. All hands were turned up, and almost immediately the vessel struck. Suddenly she fell into three fathoms of water, and was anchored by letting the best bower go. She struck again in a few minutes, and struck repeatedly while she remained in that position.

It was at this dangerous and exciting time that the attention of the people of the brig was called to the position of the *Hero*, which was about a mile away, firing guns and burning blue lights. For half an hour these signals were made, and it was supposed that the

Hero was anchored. When the day broke, however, it was seen that both ships were inside the North Haaks, about five miles from Texel Island, and that the *Hero* was lying on her broadside, a total wreck.

The situation of the warship was hopeless and terrible. The heavy seas were sweeping over the ship's company, who were huddled on the poop and forecastle. The little *Grasshopper*, pounded and thrashed by the waves, made a gallant effort to succour her big consort; but she was helpless, and the *Hero*, as a forlorn hope, fired a gun and hoisted a flag of truce. Dutch boats put out, but the wind and tide prevented them from getting nearer than three miles to the wreck. Throughout the day the *Hero* was mercilessly hammered by the seas and bumped on the sands, then, during the night, she went to pieces, and all hands were lost.

The *Grasshopper*, as the only means of salvation, cut her cable and made for the Helder Point, where she was surrendered to the Dutch.

The loss of the *St. George* and the *Defence* was a calamity which filled the English people with horror, accustomed though they were at that period to dreadful happenings at sea. The boldest sailor shrank from navigating the treacherous and dangerous southern stretch of the North Sea in winter-time, for in thick, heavy weather even the pilots themselves were hopelessly bewildered as to their exact position. There were not, a century ago, the wonderful and complete systems of lightships, buoys, and lighthouses which we have to-day, and the appliances for ascertaining a ship's rate of progress were few and imperfect. Time after time ships had sailed from England or the Continent to cross the

North Sea and they had struck shoals and gone to pieces, men reckoning themselves lucky if they escaped by means of boats or spars or were cast ashore.

The loss of the *Minotaur* in particular had shown the perils of winter navigation of the North Sea, and the commander-in-chief of the Baltic Fleet had been ordered not to delay the departure of the last homeward-bound convoy beyond the 1st of November. Accordingly, Rear-Admiral Reynolds on that day sailed from Hano with a convoy, flying his broad pendant in the *St. George*, of which the captain was Daniel Oliver Guion. Heavy gales, however, forced the admiral to put back three times, and it was not until 12th November that he finally left his anchorage.

The flagship had begun a voyage which for suffering and loss is almost unparalleled. Several of the merchant ships foundered, unable to help themselves, and the warships incapable of giving them assistance. During the night of the 15th the wind grew to hurricane force, and all hands in the *St. George* were called to give the ship cable; but before this could be done the seas drove so heavily through the hawse-holes that everything that was not thoroughly secured was swept away and the men were unable to stand up to their duty. They were, however, still doing their best to veer away the cable when a large merchantman of the convoy was hurled against the *St. George* in the darkness. She struck the flagship on the bows and severed her cables, then she was torn away, and, to the accompaniment of an appalling chorus of cries and shouts from drowning men, she sank, and all her people perished.

Men and gear were powerless in that storm and on

such a coast ; all that pluck and skill could do was done, and the masts were being cut away when a huge sea lifted the flagship and dashed her on a sandbank, where she remained. The masts had fallen clear of her towering sides, and for that small mercy the ship's company had cause for gratitude, though there seemed little chance of saving her. Despite their peril and intense sufferings in the bitter weather, the crew fought gallantly. They were ordered to man the pumps, and they did so cheerfully. In the hurricane of wind and snow and sleet they laboured till the day broke, then they had the joy of learning that the water was not gaining on them. The ship's rudder was torn away, and she was bumped persistently upon the shoal ; but throughout that long and awful day her people fought to save her as fiercely as they had ever contended with an enemy behind his guns. There seemed no hope of rescue or salvation ; yet by ten o'clock on the morning of Sunday, the 17th, the flagship had been almost miraculously cleared of danger ; the water had fallen to the working of the pumps, jury-masts were fitted, and a rudder fixed—one had been supplied from the consort *Cressy*—and on December the battered but triumphant battleship reached Gottenberg in safety.

The undaunted admiral and officers and crew set to work to put their ship in trim for another effort to cross the wild North Sea. By 17th December the extensive damage had been partially repaired, and though the *St. George* was scarcely fit to venture forth again, yet she weighed anchor, and with the *Defence* and *Cressy* convoyed a fleet of homeward-bound merchantmen.

For nearly a week the ships struggled to get out into the open waters and away from the fatal shores ; but

very little progress was made. Two days before Christmas a heavy north-westerly gale was met off the Jutland coast, and the ships were thrown into helpless confusion.

The crippled *St. George* was again mostly skilfully and nobly handled; but it was soon evident that she would be worsted in the fight. The makeshift rudder was wrenched away, and all through the night the wounded giant was hurled about by merciless seas.

On the dark morning before Christmas Day a gun was heard from the *Defence*, which was believed to have gone ashore about two and a half miles away. It was a knell of death which might almost have heralded the flagship's doom, for almost immediately she struck, and it was known that nothing could save her this time.

There was ten feet of water in the hold, and so rapidly did the sea gain on the pumps that in thirty minutes it reached the lower deck and the people were driven to seek refuge on the main-deck. By ten o'clock in the morning the survivors had been forced from the main-deck to the poop, and there, huddled together, swept ceaselessly by bitter seas, they awaited, with what fortitude they could, the coming of the inevitable end. With the exception of a yawl, every boat had been smashed to pieces by the waves, or carried overboard. Hopeless though the effort seemed, yet a few men volunteered to try and get to land in the yawl. Permission was given to try, but it was withdrawn, as it was considered impossible that the boat could live.

Seven hundred and fifty officers and men had sailed from Gottenberg in the flagship; but of that great number many had been swept away, others drowned on

board, and some frozen to death. Throughout that unspeakable day of sorrow, gloom, and suffering, which heralded Merry Christmas at home, the survivors strove to keep the life within them.

The shattered ship was crowded with the living and the dead—but only that part of her which was still above the level of the livid sea. The dead outnumbered the living. Many of the corpses had been swept overboard; but clusters were left, amongst them that of the gallant Reynolds and the valiant Guion.

Death had levelled all distinctions, and abolished rank and pride; a body was a body in that awful remnant which had been a flagship—and a row of bodies was a rampart against the sea, just as it was proving under Wellington in the Peninsula. So it happened that survivors, who could crawl or move, put their strength together and made a rampart of corpses as a shield against the seas which surged resistlessly against and over them.

Admiral and captain helped to build that ghastly barricade. They were morticed in the fourth row of corpses which was put to windward, and against which the freezing waters swept in sinister procession.

More than five hundred officers and men had perished; two hundred wretches still remained, but not so utterly bereft of hope that they did not make a last attempt to get to shore. They got a topsail yard and a cross-jack yard, the only spars remaining, and these, with infinite labour, they lashed together and launched.

The savage seas were waiting for the sorry and imperfect structure, on which only ten men ventured, and the first wave smashed adrift the timbers. Five men

were drowned at once, five reached land, and one of them died almost as soon as he believed that he was saved.

When the toll of those brave men was known, it was found that of the whole ship's company only seven were saved, and these were rescued by courageous Danes who ventured into the welter of waters and took them from a raft on to which they had cast themselves.

The bodies of the admiral and Captain Guion were cast ashore and buried with military honours in Rinkum Church, near that of Captain Atkins, of the *Defence*.

Admiral Reynolds had known tragic experience of the terrors of a great wreck, for, in 1797, when commanding the frigate *Amazon*, which, with the *Indefatigable*, fought and conquered the French *Droits de L'Homme*, 74, he was near that ship when she was driven ashore off Ushant, with about 1800 souls on board—a crew of 700, 1050 troops, and 50 English prisoners. Most of them perished, and the *Amazon* herself was driven ashore, the ship's company, with the exception of half a dozen men who were drowned, being made prisoners.

The loss of the *Defence* was a repetition of the wreck of the *St. George*. She also had struck, and the seas swept over and killed, maimed, or carried off her people. A spare anchor was torn away from its berth, thrown on end, and sent crashing upon a crowd of men on the fore-castle, killing 30 in its fall. Out of the crew of 600 only 6 men were saved, through the courage of the Danes and their subsequent kindness.

The dead, who were washed ashore from the wrecks, were buried with military honours, and the survivors were sent to England, by the generosity of the Danish

Government, without exchanges of prisoners of war being demanded. From these two ships of the line, with their combined crews of nearly 1400, only 13 persons were saved; but altogether that Christmas of a century ago, on the coast of Jutland, claimed nearly 2000 lives. A bitter North Sea gale in winter caused a far heavier loss in ships and men to England than the battle of Trafalgar.

CHAPTER XXVII

NORTH SEA MEN AND THE NAVY

To some extent the nation is awakening to the need of allying more closely with the Royal Navy the thousands of men and boys who toil ceaselessly on the waters of the North Sea. I have tried to show that no greater social and industrial revolution has been known in recent years than that which has taken place on the Dogger and the other North Sea fishing-banks. The smack has vanished and with her has gone the venerable beam-trawl. The old-world skipper, illiterate, yet able to read his North Sea with the lead as easily as one reads type, has departed, and he has been followed by a race that has been handled but neither moulded nor spoiled by the Board School. The fishing-craft have changed completely; the men and boys are of a later and more progressive generation, but the old brave spirit dominates the fishermen, and quietly, patiently, doggedly, and with never-failing resolution, they work out their hard and gloomy lives on the turgid waters east and west of which are the world's two most powerful nations in arms—Germany and England. Simultaneous with that change has been one of the most remarkable advances known—the stepping of a continental nation from a position of no naval or maritime importance

whatsoever to a front place amongst the world's great sea-powers.

One of the most significant movements in connection with the British Navy of to-day has been the complete change of opinion with regard to the probable area of future contests for sea supremacy. Until lately it was generally believed that the struggle would be decided in the Mediterranean, and the British Fleet was distributed on that basis, the most powerful ships being allocated to the Mediterranean. Now, however, in view of the amazing and sinister growth of the naval power of Germany, our strongest units are concentrated for North Sea work.

Germany, with a foresight and sagacity that compel admiration, has been quick to realise the strategical possibilities of the North Sea. One of her great objects is to give, in time of peace, a thorough training to her naval forces on the stormy waters which they know so well. Until recently it was possible to say of most foreign navies that their training was carried out in the security of harbours or sheltered waters. Manœuvring in winter or on seas notoriously troubled was carefully avoided, and there was not anything to approach, certainly nothing to excel, the splendid work throughout the year which has made the British Navy the admiration, envy, and example of the world.

Germany is not renowned for originating changes; but she is swift to follow a lead, and never hesitates to try and improve on Great Britain's naval and maritime achievements. On rare occasions, indeed, Germany sets an example. She did so lately in connection with North Sea trawlers, for wireless telegraphy was installed in

several of these vessels, enabling the German Admiralty to keep in constant touch with that floating world on the Dogger and in the neighbourhood, of which most Englishmen are deplorably and densely ignorant. If to-day there were a repetition of the Russian outrage, the German Admiralty in all probability would know of the affair immediately; but we should have to wait until a carrier, a trawler, or a hospital steamer brought the startling tidings to shore. Admiral Rozhdestvensky's blundering squadron fired on the vessels of the Gamecock Fleet on the night between the 21st and 22nd of October 1904; but it was not until the evening of the 23rd that the shot-riddled *Mino* reported the occurrence at Hull, about forty hours having elapsed since the cannonading.

For some years the country has depended chiefly upon its fishermen to recruit the Royal Naval Reserve. Roughly speaking, 100,000 men and boys are constantly employed in the fishing industries around our coasts, and several thousands of these are in the Naval Reserve. In 1908 these 100,000 toilers won from the sea fish of the value of £10,962,757, and most of the fish represented by that great sum was caught by North Sea men. Only a quarter of a century has passed since the first paddle-boats, roughly equipped with beam-trawl apparatus, began the steam-fishing which revolutionised work on the North Sea banks. Not 500 steam-trawlers were used in 1893; now there are more than 2000 at work, the majority plying their calling on the North Sea. But although the actual means of winning fish from North Sea waters have been completely changed, still the men and boys are the same

in the main essentials, and they form a body which would prove of inestimable value in case of conflict between Great Britain and Germany.

In view of the alteration of our fighting basis from the Mediterranean to the North Sea, with a great naval base at Rosyth, the time has come for a complete working understanding between the Royal Navy and the men of the North Sea, for the establishment of what might be called a North Sea Auxiliary, the backbone of which should be the trawlers.

The North Sea fleeter spends his life practically afloat; at the outside he has not more than three full weeks ashore, so that he lives in the confined space of the little steamboat—a craft, say, 110 ft. long and 21 ft. broad—his only change coming when he ferries the fish to the carrier, or visits the Mission vessel which is stationed with his fleet. He has to ride out the bitterest and most dangerous gales and to endure hardships which are unknown to ordinary seamen and have no existence in the Royal Navy. The North Sea man, especially if he is a skipper or a mate, knows his ground thoroughly, and with the help of the lead can locate his position with unerring accuracy; and he is learned in the wisdom of the weather and the tides. He is a skilled North Sea pilot and in many cases has an intimate knowledge of many of those seaboard places which are so zealously guarded by the Germans. This special knowledge alone would make him an invaluable auxiliary to the Royal Navy; and it would well repay the country to retain his expert services for use in time of need.

A register could be formed and kept of suitable men for this branch of the North Sea Auxiliary, giving a

man's shore address and the name of his vessel, so that when afloat or at home he could be reached with ease. The modern North Sea steam-trawler has a very large coal-carrying capacity, and remains with her fleet until the coal is exhausted. Each fleet, as I have shown, is under an experienced admiral; and there is a vice-admiral. With few exceptions the admiral's signals as to trawling and changing ground are obeyed. At present a skipper or mate, if with the fleet, could be communicated with by the usual method, the carrier, but probably, at no distant date, the admiral's ship and the Mission vessels will be equipped with wireless apparatus. Such installations ought to be insisted upon and made without delay. By means of them constant communication could be maintained between the fleets and the Admiralty and prompt measures taken in case of need. If such an unfortunate thing happened as a repetition of an outrage like the firing by the Russian Baltic Fleet, British ships of war could be hurried to the scene within a few hours, or dispatched to intercept any vessels that might seek to escape.

It has been the custom for many years to detail ships of the Royal Navy for fisheries protection duty in the North Sea, and there are officers still in the service, and some on the retired list, who possess exceptional knowledge of these vitally important waters. When the Russian warships fired on the Gamecock Fleet the ship engaged on this protection duty in that locality was H.M.S. *Hearty*, later the service was performed by H.M.S. *Thrush*, but the duties fell mostly to the lot of the torpedo-gunboat type, amongst them being H.M.S. *Circe* and H.M.S. *Sheldrake*. Something much more

modern and powerful than these ships is needed to work in conjunction with North Sea fishing-fleets ; and surely the time has come when a warship of the most modern type should be detailed for fisheries protection duties. The vessel to be employed for this service should be one of the very best in the Navy, a powerful unit in which the North Sea men who joined her could become familiar with the very latest weapons and methods of warfare afloat, so that they would be able to settle down at once to service conditions and routine in case of mobilisation. It would not be necessary to carry more than a skeleton crew in such a ship, which, with her officers, and proportion of petty officers, bluejackets, and marines, would certainly, with her full complement, made up mostly from the North Sea Auxiliary, possess a body of men who would be the very pick of the seafaring population and every one an expert in North Sea ways and weather. There would be no service afloat in either large or small craft from which these men would shrink, and no danger which they would hesitate to face. The cruiser would act as a feeder for any fleet which might be called upon to operate in North Sea waters, and skilful North Sea men could be put on board every ship, of whatever description—men in whom admirals and captains could place as much confidence as the commander of a liner puts in his pilot. Such a ship as I have suggested has been built recently—H.M.S. *Newcastle*—a second-class protected cruiser of 4800 tons, with turbine-driven engines giving her a high speed. The *Newcastle* was built on the Tyne, and no more appropriate vessel could be found for use as a North Sea school and a North Sea nursery than this product of a North Sea river.

It is easily conceivable that such a cruiser, in time of sudden stress, might inflict a very serious blow upon an enemy. The North Sea is a fog-infested area of water, and under cover of a fog an invading force might seek to make a descent upon our eastern shore or southern coast; her transports, crowded with troops, might, and easily could, lose touch with their convoy, and the cruiser might have the opportunity to fall upon and destroy the transports ruthlessly. But, apart from any such dramatic possibility, she would serve her purpose well by acting as a floating school and barracks for the North Sea Auxiliary.

In connection with this North Sea Auxiliary I would advocate the inclusion, as floating hospitals, of the vessels which fly the flag of the Royal National Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen. These stout little ships would be valuable and welcome additions to the sick-bays and hospitals of the warships, and it might well be that an action could be continued or resumed by reason of the ability of an admiral commanding a fleet to get rid of his wounded by transferring them to the Mission's hospital vessels. These craft, with the help of a subsidy, could be fitted to accommodate a considerable number of cases—enough at any rate to relieve very greatly the pressure on the surgical staff of the fighting fleet. Equipped with wireless apparatus, they could be summoned promptly to the scene of action, or near it, in readiness to obey a call when given.

An undoubted prejudice exists in some quarters against the incorporation of North Sea men as a section of the Navy; and even amongst those naval officers who know fishermen well, the hostility prevails to the extent

of causing them to declare that as an adjunct to the Navy these toilers are useless. It is true that in some cases the fishermen have proved failures as Royal Naval Reservists and that officers commanding warships have been relieved to find that they would have no trouble on board because of the men, for the simple reason that they never appeared; but, on the other hand, it should be remembered that the North Sea man is a being apart from his fellows and requires a special and sympathetic understanding before the best that is in him can be extracted. It should not be forgotten, either, that the rebellious and unsuccessful cases have come from the remoter classes of the inshore fishermen and not from the constant workers on the deep sea.

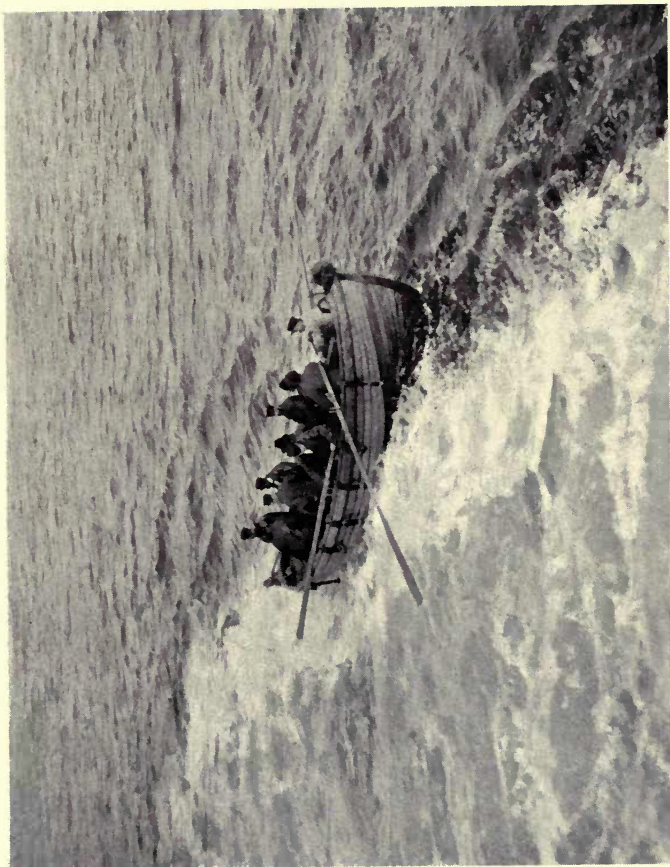
In the scheme which I am advocating I do not deal with workers like the Scotchmen, many of whom leave their little farms during the herring season and follow the fish around the coast. I am dealing only with the deep-sea fishermen, the masters, mates, and crews of the steamboats with which in these days the North Sea fishing industry is maintained.

The alien element in the mercantile marine has been repeatedly dealt with, and its dangers and disadvantages exposed. That alien element scarcely exists amongst North Sea men. Here and there is a foreigner; but most of the skippers, mates, and crews are the most British of the British, and are recruited from the flower of the fishing population on the north-east coast. They are primitive in their tastes and ways, and their insular prejudice is complete. They have a childlike faith in their country and its superiority, and have all the North countryman's love of birthplace and national institu-

tions. In time of stress and battle their loyalty and devotion would be unquestionable, and it would fare ill with any foe who came across their path. They have not been spoiled and degraded by the halfpenny picture newspaper, and few acknowledgments are made of their deeds of valour on the stormy waters. No person who has worked amongst them and shared their lives and dangers can hesitate to pay tribute to their courage and simplicity, or fail to recognise how valuable they would be as an acknowledged unit of the Royal Navy.

Quite recently M. Charles Bos, the distinguished French naval expert, declared that on the day when Germany is ready, "in one night her fleets will command that portion of the North Sea which has been marked out by her general staff; and the remainder will be sown with floating mines, of which there exist enormous stocks at Kiel and Wilhelmshaven, rendering the area thus sown impracticable to the English fleet." If such a thing really happened that the German outbreak will take this form, then it is impossible to exaggerate the value of such a North Sea Auxiliary as that which I have suggested.

A remarkable trial for espionage took place at Leipzig on 21st and 22nd December 1910. Two British officers, Lieutenant Brandon, R.N., and Captain Trench, R.M.L.I., were found guilty of attempting to convey to the British Admiralty information the keeping secret of which is considered essential to the national security of Germany. The trial was conducted by fourteen judges of the Supreme Court of the German Empire. The Court found that the attempt to communicate to the British Admiralty information which was both secret



GERMAN PILOTS IN THE ELBE.



and essential to German security was proved; that there had been an effort to obtain a general study of the German coast defences; that delivery of the information had not been proved; that there were mitigating circumstances, and that, on the other hand, there had been grave peril. The officers were sentenced to four years' detention in a military fortress; and the Court ordered all the papers, maps, and instruments found in their possession to be confiscated.

The trial showed how deeply concerned the German authorities are with respect to their naval and military defences on the only coast-line they possess—the land bordering on the North Sea. The locality which was most particularly in question was the Island of Borkum. It is an interesting locality and has exercised a fascination over adventurous yachtsmen; but long before these explorers ventured to the eastern shores of the North Sea the network of islands which fringe the Dutch and German coasts were intimately known to North Sea smacksmen, who, in the sailing days when the wind was too feeble or fickle for trawling, went ashore.

A regrettable failure by the Admiralty has to be recorded in connection with North Sea men. It was the intention of the Admiralty to establish a reserve of 300 fishermen at Grimsby to man a small squadron of mine-sweeping steam-trawlers for special war service. A number of Grimsby trawlers were subsidised for use in time of emergency, their purpose being to sweep for mines. These trawlers, of which there are half a dozen, were to have been accompanied during the training period by two cruisers. Efforts were made to enrol the fishermen for the special trawler section of the Royal

Naval Reserve, and 22nd May 1911 was the date fixed for inaugurating the training service. At the beginning of the month only eleven men had been enrolled for service, a twelfth having been rejected because of defective eyesight. These eleven volunteers comprised four engineers, three deck-hands, two trimmers, and two second-hands—not enough to form one complete crew.

The details of service were published ; but there was no general willingness on the part of the fishermen to enrol themselves. For such dangerous work as sweeping the seas for submarine mines they considered that the pay offered was altogether inadequate, especially in view of the fact that they would lose a good deal of their regular work and would have to provide their own food. The skippers resolutely refused to associate themselves with the scheme, and not one signed on, as the Admiralty fixed the age limit between twenty-five and thirty-five years. The skippers called attention to the fact that the best masters in the port were over thirty-five, and they asked for an extension of the age limit ; but without success. There was a strong feeling in Grimsby that before the scheme could succeed the interest of the skippers must be secured, and that, if that were done, recruits could be obtained from the various crews ; but no effort was made to gain the co-operation of the skippers, no adequate inducement was held out to the men themselves to join, and the result was that the half-dozen subsidised trawlers were left unmanned by the very crews on whom in time of danger they would have to depend for success. The vessels, however, managed to put in an appearance during the Coronation Naval Review.

This was almost the first serious attempt to incorpo-

rate the men of the North Sea in the Navy, apart from the efforts which have been made for some years to enrol fishermen as members of the Royal Naval Reserve. The action of the Admiralty clearly shows that they have failed to understand the real character of the North Sea fisherman. The authorities in Whitehall cannot be expected to grasp the complexities of the smacksman's character; but it should have been apparent to them that the terms offered for admittedly dangerous work were not likely to induce volunteers to come forward even from ordinary seafaring classes, much less from the ranks of men who are wonderfully skilled in North Sea lore and North Sea waters, and some of whom are able to make incomes beside which the proposed Admiralty remuneration was almost insignificant. If the Admiralty desire to incorporate the men of the North Sea as an established branch of the Navy, particularly for such severe and risky work as mine-sweeping, then they must recognise the necessity of adequate payment and fair and reasonable conditions of service—neither of which elements was present in the terms proposed in connection with the establishment of a reserve of fishermen at Grimsby.

Briefly, my scheme resolves itself into this—that a powerful cruiser of the most modern type should be constantly employed in fisheries protection work on the North Sea; acting just as much as a parent ship to the trawlers as a torpedo depôt ship acts to destroyers; that she should serve as a training ship and a floating school to those men and boys who had specially enlisted or engaged themselves for service only in the North Sea waters, so that there should be at all times available a

body of men who possess special and exclusive knowledge of that area of water which has become the most important and deeply significant of the waters around our coast.

King George is a practical sailor, and he has already shown his devoted interest in the service that he loves so well; and it would surely give the sovereign satisfaction to know that the best use was being made of this army of brave men and boys which is always afloat on a wild, bleak stretch of ocean, constantly performing acts of courage which put to shame the vulgarly advertised and often enough braggart acts of men and boys ashore.

THE END

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