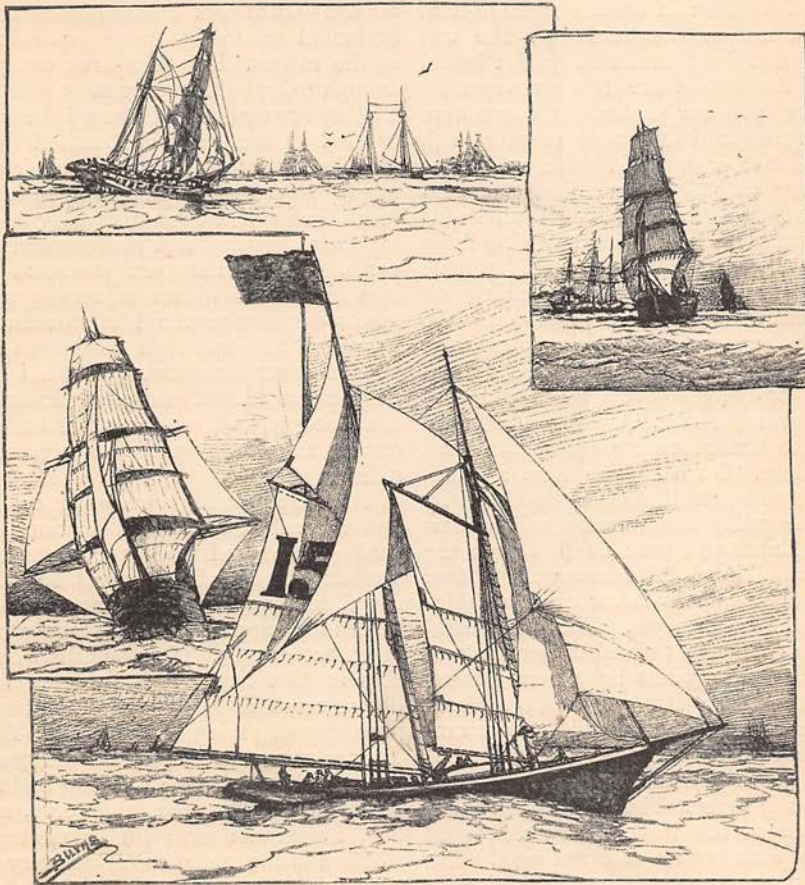


A CRUISE IN A PILOT-BOAT.

AT THE LIGHT-SHIP.
UNDER STUDDING SAILS.

PILOT-BOAT UNDER FULL SAIL.

BOUND OUT.

FEW of those who have heard of, or have seen, the trim pilot-boats of New York Bay are aware what a thorough preparatory education and experience is required of a New York pilot. Nor is it generally known how systematic is the organization which regulates the movements of these pilots, and what hazards they must encounter in plying their vocation on the boisterous Atlantic.

Having accepted a cordial invitation to take a cruise in the *Caprice*, Mr. Burns and myself were notified to keep ourselves in readiness to sail at a moment's warning. The schooner was then at sea, but was expected back at any hour to pick up her pilots and provisions. More than a week passed, however, before we were notified to be at the pier on the following morning. The *Caprice* had been

detained by severe weather, which gave us the promise of a boisterous trip. When we reached the office of the Pilot Commissioners,—a low-studded, elbow-shaped room, on the corner of Burling Slip,—everything portended a storm. A massive antique mahogany desk, at one side, served partially to conceal the busy secretary of the department, whose position is by no means a sinecure. All the multifarious accounts, together with most of the shore business of the pilots, pass under his eye. Between two windows stood a large and elaborate chronometer clock, including with it a barometer and thermometer, and around the room were ranged a number of closets or lockers. One by one the pilots straggled in, took a look at the glass, and discussed the prospects of the weather, which

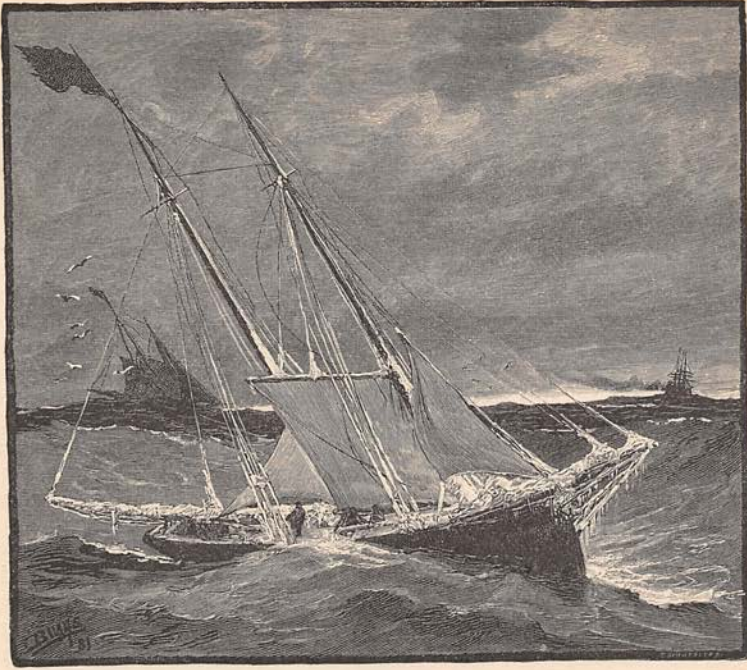
was pronounced to be unusually foreboding, with the mercury ranging below twenty-nine degrees and a sky of the most sinister aspect.

By half-past nine, the pilots who belonged to the *Caprice* having arrived, we started for the pier where she was lying. I confess the prospect of a cruise in such a graceful little craft filled me with enthusiasm. She was ninety-six feet long and twenty feet beam, and drew eleven feet aft. Not over-sparred, like too many of our yachts, her masts were beautiful sticks and admirably proportioned, without a knot or a crack. The cabin was coziness itself; nothing can exceed the comfort of a snug little cabin when all hands but the watch are below, the swinging lamp is lit, and the long steady howl of the gale and the boom of the seas breaking on deck blend in a sublime organ-peal—the tumult of the storm often rising above the jests and yarns of the men gathered around the table or lying in their bunks with feet dangling over the side. A stove was firmly fixed in the center, on a brightly burnished plate of brass. On each side were a state-room and two berths that could be closed by slides. The galley and quarters of the crew were amidships, and were divided from the cabin by a bulkhead. The crew included four able seamen, a swarthy lascar cook, a cabin-boy, and the boat-keeper. The latter commands the schooner, and takes her back to port after all the pilots have been put on board other vessels. But before that, the boat is under the direction of the pilot whose turn it is to board the next ship.

We put to sea with six pilots, the full complement being seven. These formed a joint-stock company, but while all were licensed pilots, they were not all of equal rank. This matter of rank underlies the whole principle involved in piloting according to the laws of the State of New York, and a *résumé* of the regulations is therefore pertinent, while the schooner is making sail. The number of pilot-boats licensed to run out of the port of New York is fixed by law; it is now twenty-eight, and they register from forty to seventy tons. Each boat is obliged to carry its number in enormous black figures on the mainsail. These boats are owned by about one hundred and seventy pilots, but, strange to say, they are never said to be manned except when left in charge of the boat-keeper. Including pilots and crews, this fleet of schooners gives employment to nearly four hundred men. In this survey we do not, of course, include the New Jersey pilots who sail out of New York Bay, but are subject to the laws of the other State. This number is by no means excessive when we consider that the

foreign entries and departures of vessels in the port of New York are at present over ten thousand a year, while the coastwise entries and departures are nearly four times that number. Coasting vessels, though they often find it expedient to employ a pilot, are at liberty to decline to take one. But vessels coming from, or bound to, foreign ports have no option in the matter. If a pilot-boat can get near enough to hail them, they must either accept a pilot or pay the full charges he would be entitled to receive if he boarded that ship. This law is by no means so unfair as some might regard it. The pilots must devote much time and expense to qualify themselves for their business, and are exposed to great perils. Unless they are protected by the laws from the whims of sea-captains, the profits of pilotage would be so reduced that it would be impossible to induce capable men to enter the service. While it may be alleged that in fine weather their services are often not needed, on the other hand, emergencies frequently arise when a good pilot is indispensable.

The responsibility devolving on a pilot, and the extent of his qualifications, may be partly appreciated when one learns that, immediately on boarding a vessel, he takes command, and is answerable for any accident until he has discharged his duty of taking the vessel in or out of port. If any mishap befall the ship at that time, he is liable to have his license revoked, and thus lose all further opportunity of plying his vocation. The New York pilot must, therefore, for the good of all concerned, pass through a long and rigorous course of training. He must serve, man and boy, before the mast till he masters every problem in the management of every form of rig. To this he must add a thorough knowledge of navigation. Then he must contrive to obtain the position of boat-keeper or pilot's mate. In that capacity, he must serve three full years on one pilot-boat before he can be admitted for his examination for a license. If through ill-fortune he lose his position, he must begin *de novo*, and serve the full time on another boat. Sometimes, a boat-keeper serves nine or ten years on various boats before his apprenticeship is complete. After all this, he must pass a most rigid examination on all points of seamanship and navigation before the Board of Pilot Commissioners, and exhibit a thorough knowledge of the tides, rips, sands, and all other phenomena for hundreds of miles out from the piers of the East and North rivers. But even after receiving his license, he is sometimes forced to wait years, until some pilot happens to die and leave a vacancy for him. The first year



ICED UP.

of pilotage, he is granted a license to pilot vessels drawing less than sixteen feet. If he give satisfaction, the following year he is permitted to take charge of ships drawing eighteen feet. If he pass a satisfactory examination the third year, he then receives a full license, entitling him to pilot vessels of any draught, and is then first-called a branch or full pilot.

This matter of draft often gives rise to amusing maneuvers between captain and pilot—the former sometimes endeavoring to evade a correct statement of the actual draft of the vessel at the time, and the latter in turn employing his wits to get at the truth without appearing to doubt the word of the captain. Vessels drawing under fourteen feet pay three dollars and seventy cents a foot; the rate increases by degrees, until ships drawing twenty-one feet and upward pay six dollars and fifty cents per foot.

On receiving his license, the pilot must give bonds for the proper discharge of his duty, and he is liable to heavy fines if he declines to fill a vacancy or to board a vessel making signals for a pilot. He is also required to be temperate in his habits and of reputable character. The proper execution of these regulations is to a large degree insured by the great competition among the boats, and the consequent vigilance of each to detect delinquencies in his rivals.

It is evident that to be a New York pilot is no sinecure, and that the position is one of great responsibility and trust.

In a few moments the *Caprice* was stealing past Castle Garden, and leaving behind her the towering roofs and spires of the lower part of New York. Nothing could be more disheartening than the pall of sullen clouds that hung over the bay. There was scarcely any wind, but the glass and the sky indicated that we were either in the center of a revolving storm or that one was rapidly approaching. But there were also signs of a shift of the wind into the north-west, and a few vessels bound south had concluded to venture out, and were gliding with the tide toward the Narrows.

No sooner had we put off into the stream than the pilots began to look about for a possible prize. Their keen enterprise was illustrated sooner than I expected. Scarcely had we shoved off from the pier when we saw a schooner putting to sea a mile away.

"Johnnie, head her for that schooner," said one of the pilots, to the man at the wheel.

"You can't catch her," said another.

"Yes, we can. She's only got her foresail and jib up."

"She'll have her mainsail up in a minute. They're hoisting it now."

"I don't care if they be. We'll catch her, anyway."

And catch her we did, by making all sail with man-of-war speed. Hauling under her stern, we hailed her, and sent a pilot on board to guide her past Sandy Hook. We then took some provisions from Staten Island, and glided through the Narrows. We picked up our pilot at the station-boat. This leads us to notice that one of the pilot fleet is always stationed off Sandy Hook, to serve as a rendezvous to pilots when they leave vessels, after having piloted them out of New York. The boat anchors between the light-ship and Sandy Hook for four days, when another boat takes her place. When the weather is very bad, the station-boat lies off and on. Sometimes she is forced to make a harbor herself, but it is wild weather indeed when she is obliged to do that. A penalty of one hundred dollars a day is enforced on every boat that delays to appear at the station when its turn has arrived.

The storm signal was flying at Sandy Hook, but it is not for pilots to observe its warning, and we ran out to sea and headed south. At night-fall we double-reefed the mainsail and hove to. We were now in the water where the *Caprice*, at Christmas-time two years ago, encountered the most frightful dangers. Every sea that came on board froze, until the ice on deck was twelve inches thick, and it was feared she might founder with the weight of the ice. Great blocks of ice grew on the furled jib, and could not be detached without tearing the sail. On New Year's Eve, William Wright, the boat-keeper, entered in the ship's log-book: "January 1st and a happy New Year!" Five days after that, another hand entered on the pages of the same log-book the following terse but tragic record: "Thursday, 6th. Blowing hard from N. E. At 4 A. M. hauled the jib down. Lost a man off the bowsprit. Hove the yawl out and lost two men and the yawl; then hove the other yawl out and lost her. Lay around tacking till daylight, and kept a lookout on the mast-head till 8 A. M. Then started for town at 1 P. M." One of these poor fellows was Wright, the boat-keeper. One month more, and he would have been licensed as a pilot!

Two years before this, the *Caprice* was hove on her beam-ends in a terrific squall, losing both masts and a man who was in the rigging. On still another occasion she was tripped by a huge wave and nearly filled. Momentarily expecting her to go down, the crew took to the boats and were picked up. The schooner survived the gale, however, was towed into port by a passing vessel, and

was repurchased at auction by her former owners. On another occasion she was run into by a steamer, cut down to the water's edge and sunk in shoal water, from which she was raised again. She seems to lead a charmed life, but her career well illustrates some of the hazards of piloting—which are so well appreciated by the underwriters that they charge ten per cent. premium for insuring pilot-boats.

Nothing of note occurred during the first night, and after running south for a few hours after daylight, we had just hove to again with the helm lashed, when the lookout at the mast-head cried:

"A pilot-boat on the weather bow, sir."

Immediately the order rang out, in quick, sharp tones:

"Shake out the reefs of the mainsail and keep her away!"

An exciting race followed between the two pilot-boats, several miles apart, to reach a large ship standing north. Now rising, now plunging over the gray seas, and staggering under a press of canvas, we neared the prize only to see it snatched from our grasp by the other boat. No sooner was that fact ascertained than we shortened sail, the lookout was sent aloft to his usual eyrie at the fore cross-trees, and the pilots, without so much as a word of regret, returned to studying the chart, reading a threadbare novel, fingering the well-thumbed cards, or snatching a little sleep in their bunks. This is about the ordinary routine in a pilot-schooner during good weather—intervals of seeming quiet broken by sudden alternations of the utmost excitement, together with a feverish, endless vigilance from mast-head and deck.

Nothing of note occurred on the third day; the recent prevailing winds had kept vessels out at sea. The third night it blew half a gale, and we hove to under close reefs about forty miles south-east of Barnegat light. About ten o'clock, the lights of a steamer heading northward were faintly descried in the mysterious gloom that overhung the sea.

"Give her a torch!" was the order that instantaneously followed the discovery. A tub containing turpentine was brought on deck; a ball of cotton was dipped into this and set on fire. It resembled the contrivance used to light cigars, except on a larger and ruder scale. The torch was so held as to illuminate the large numbers on the mainsail. Nothing more picturesque can be imagined than this contrast of light and shade—the dark figure in uncouth oil suit standing on the low, reeling deck, fiercely whirling the ball of fire over his head, and the ruddy sail and rigging clear-cut against the impenetrable blackness



ON THE LOOKOUT.

cided to beat in under the land, where we should find smooth water. It was a long and arduous pounding with the seas, but finally we found ourselves close under the sand dunes of Little Egg Harbor. Then we wore ship, and trimmed the sheets to run up the coast to Sandy Hook. Several other pilot-boats were in company, and an impromptu race immediately ensued. Not to speak too technically, it suffices to say we were under very short sail. The sky was a clear, crisp azure, flecked with swiftly scudding wind-clouds. The blasts swept off the land with exceeding violence and suddenness, laying the little vessel over on her side and burying her lee rail under a mass of boiling foam, the spray smoking under her bow the while, and blowing off to leeward in sheets. Thus hour after hour went by in this stimulating race. Hour after hour, also, we threaded our way through a fleet of coasting schooners, that were taking advantage of the northerly gale to run down the coast in ballast. Their swelling sails gleamed like flakes of flame over the intense amethystine blue of the sea, that was ridged with long crests of foam. We flew past the lofty light-house of Barnegat and its whitening reefs, past the cedar-tufted banks of Manasquan, the sloping cottages of Elberon, the spacious hotels of Long Branch, the pointed gables of Seabright, and the twin watch-towers of the Highlands, until the sentinel shaft of Sandy Hook loomed grandly in the north, and the splendor of the setting sun suffused land and sea and sky with indescribable beauty. Then we headed up into a cove behind the Hook, dropped anchor close by the beach, and went below to a smoking supper. Though the quartering moon shone gloriously that evening, we all snatched a much-needed slumber before venturing out once more to encounter the wild March winds on the gray wastes of the Atlantic.

of night, while the wind whistled through the cordage and the foam seemed to turn into blood as it washed on board.

The steamer, which proved to be a coastwise craft, gradually drew nearer and passed by, heedless of the signal. The excitement was over, and all hands but the watch turned in. At four we signaled a second steamer, and discovered the torch of another schooner in our vicinity.

On the following morning, a wild scene presented itself to view when I went on deck. The gale which had been blowing around us, and of which we had had a taste during the night, had suddenly shifted into the north-west, and was shrieking out of that quarter, with every prospect of increasing. The quick, short, emerald waves, smitten with the gold of the sun bursting over the low shores of New Jersey, were streaked with foam and were rising fast. As it was useless to look for in-bound vessels with this wind, and as its force might increase to a dangerous degree, we de-

At dawn we made sail, and stood due east along the shore of Long Island before half a gale of wind. At ten o'clock we discovered a pilot-boat ahead, and crowded on sail to overhaul her. While she was in sight our movements would be necessarily influenced by her own. Finding that we were overhauling her, she finally put her helm down and headed south.

We kept on to the east, deciding to go as far as Saint George's Bank after steamers. These vessels are the great prizes in the pilot lottery, because their draft averages more than that of sailing ships. To secure an in-bound steamer also insures piloting her out again. Ocean steamers are therefore very desirable game, and great risks are encountered in order to intercept them. The opposite ex-



STEADY!

treme are Norwegian barks, for they are small and generally come to this country in ballast. "To get a Norwegian bark" is therefore considered a good joke on the poor fellow whose luck it is to board one. Steamers which are exclusively freight boats, and are irregular in their sailing days and slow in their movements, are called "tramps," and are also not held in high esteem by the pilots. The cruises to the eastward are sometimes, although rarely, protracted to twenty or thirty days. But the average luck is good.

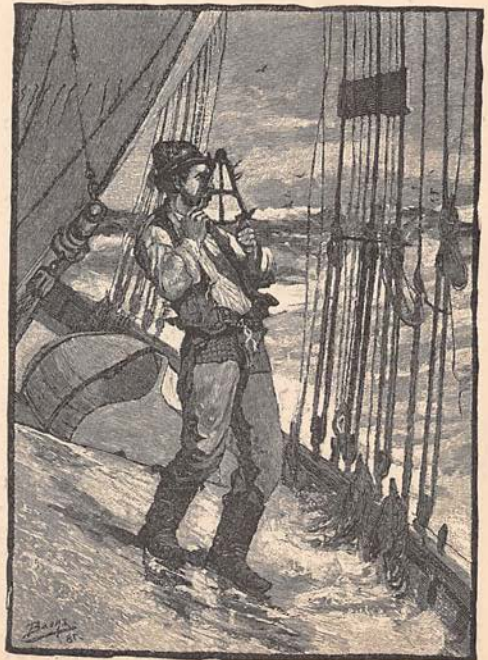
The following evening, when we were well eastward of Nantucket light-ship, a steamer was reported heading directly for us. Immediately the cards were flung aside, and in a moment every soul was on deck. The pilot whose turn it was to board the next vessel, after a hurried survey of the steamer, exclaimed:

"Boys, good-bye. Finish the game for yourselves!"

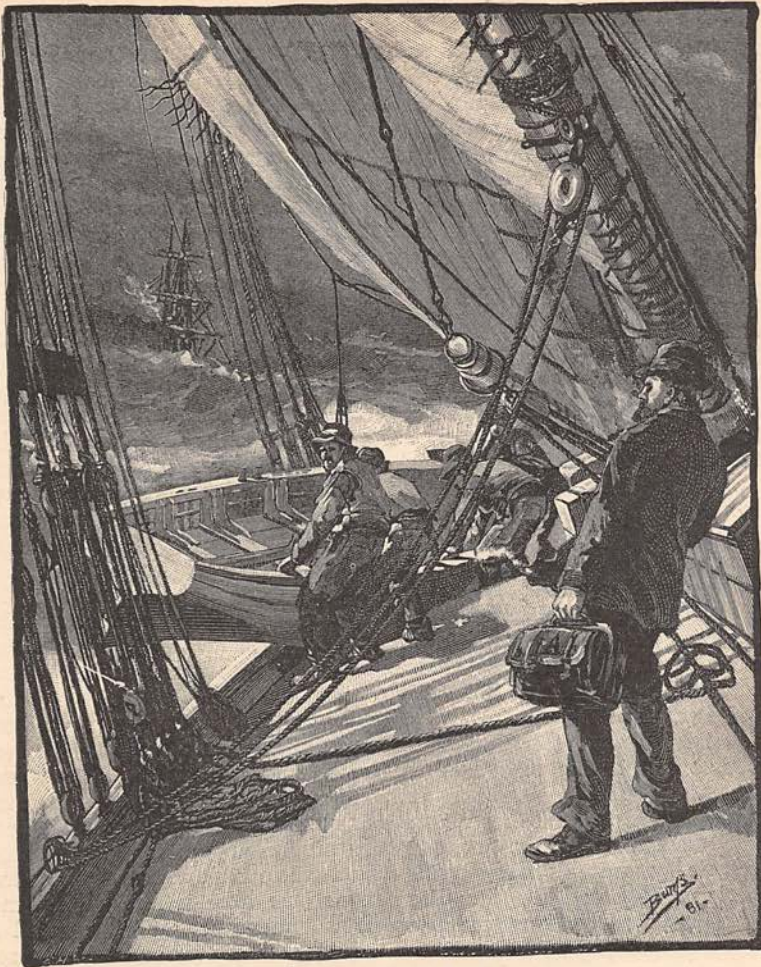
He then dashed below, and in all haste put on a "boiled" shirt and a Sunday-go-to-meeting suit, and packed his valise. It should be remembered that these steamers are rather more "swell" than sailing ships, and seem to demand a corresponding difference in apparel. In the meantime, the torch was blazing on deck in the liveliest manner. The needle-like points of light representing the steamer gradually approached, and at last the huge, vague form of the vessel herself could be defined. But she already had a pilot, and paid no attention to us. The game in the cabin was resumed at once, and the

"boiled" shirt was once more folded up and laid away carefully in the locker. The precariousness of steamer-catching is well illustrated by this matter of dressing to board them. One of our pilots told us that he had actually shaved and dressed six times in one trip, for a steamer, before he had succeeded in boarding one. There is a tradition of a pilot who dressed seventeen times before success crowned his perseverance.

Morning broke on a savage scene; enormous mounds of water, crested with foam, swelled up against the sky and tossed the little *Caprice* like an egg-shell. The gale increasing with great fury, we hove to under try-sails—sails scarcely larger than a table-cloth, showing a spread of canvas so moderate that, as they say at sea, we were under "a three-reefed mitten with the thumb brailed up." The squalls were tremendous, and were accompanied by blinding sheets of snow, which seemed to sweep from the horizon in a moment and envelop the sea in impenetrable gloom; the decks and rigging were robed in ermine. The gale increased to a hurricane. The little schooner for the most part rode easily, but sometimes a sea, that seemed to go bodily over her, would strike her, and might have sunk her but for the low bulwarks, only a foot high, that allowed the water to run off; sometimes, too, she was carried over so far that there was danger of her rolling com-



A GLIMPSE OF THE SUN.



LAUNCHING THE BOAT.

pletely over. Three times during the day we wore ship in order that we might not be driven out of the track of the steamers; whatever the weather, business was never forgotten. This maneuver was, under the circumstances, one of extreme peril, and required the greatest skill and circumspection.

The sun went down over one of the wildest scenes I have ever witnessed at sea. With some difficulty we managed to get supper, while the deafening roar of the howling winds and the thunder of the surges pounding on deck almost deadened the conversation that went on uninterruptedly below; yarns were told, and intricate problems with cards were discussed by men in oil jackets and sou'westers, while the cook served out rations of hot coffee. Any moment a terrific catastrophe was likely to overwhelm us, but it is not in the nature of the sailor, after he has taken every precaution, to borrow trouble about

possibilities. A vivid flash of lightning at long intervals indicated that the gale was approaching its height, and it was decided to put up stanchions, or posts, in the cabin. These were firmly fixed between the timbers of the deck and the cabin floor, to keep the ballast from shifting in case a sudden lurch should throw the schooner on her beam-ends. If the ballast had shifted, it would have been all over with us in a moment. So violent was the lurching and creaking of the little vessel, all that long, dreary night, that no one slept until toward dawn, when the weather moderated slightly.

But while the wind was less violent, it blew hard, at intervals, and the temperature was so low that the deck was covered with a layer of ice. At noon we succeeded in getting an observation, the pale sun flashing for a moment through the scud and causing the heaving deep to look like molten silver. We were in longitude $66^{\circ} 30'$ and in 48 fathoms

of water, and were heading south-west, under very short sail, when a fearful squall darkened the horizon and rushed toward us with appalling rapidity. At the same instant the lookout discovered two steamers and a pilot-boat to the eastward. The wildest excitement ensued. Reefs were shaken out, notwithstanding the squall, and the little schooner flew before the blast as if bewitched. The "boiled" shirt was put on again, winds and waves were defied, and everything was forgotten except the great fact that we must snatch the steamers from the clutches of the rival pilot-boat under our lee. When the dense pall of gloom finally passed off to leeward, the southernmost steamer was discovered to have been boarded by our rival. Every effort that skill could devise was then put forth to catch the other steamer. As we lessened the distance, the *Caprice* was hove to and awaited her approach. Slowing up, the great Cunarder gradually drew toward us, majestically mounting and plunging on the vast surges, while cataracts poured from her hawse-holes as the bow soared skyward. At this exciting moment an enormous whale, little, if any, shorter than our schooner, arose close alongside the *Caprice*, and, spouting as if to salute her, dived again into the depths.

The yawl, only sixteen feet long, was now launched over our lee side into the frothing waters, and with two seamen and the pilot started for the steamer, then a quarter of a mile distant. I confess it was a thrilling spectacle to see this mere cockleshell, with her precious freight of three lives, now lifted far above us on a mountainous billow, and now descending out of sight into the depths of a hollow vale, and hiding there until it seemed as if she would never appear again.

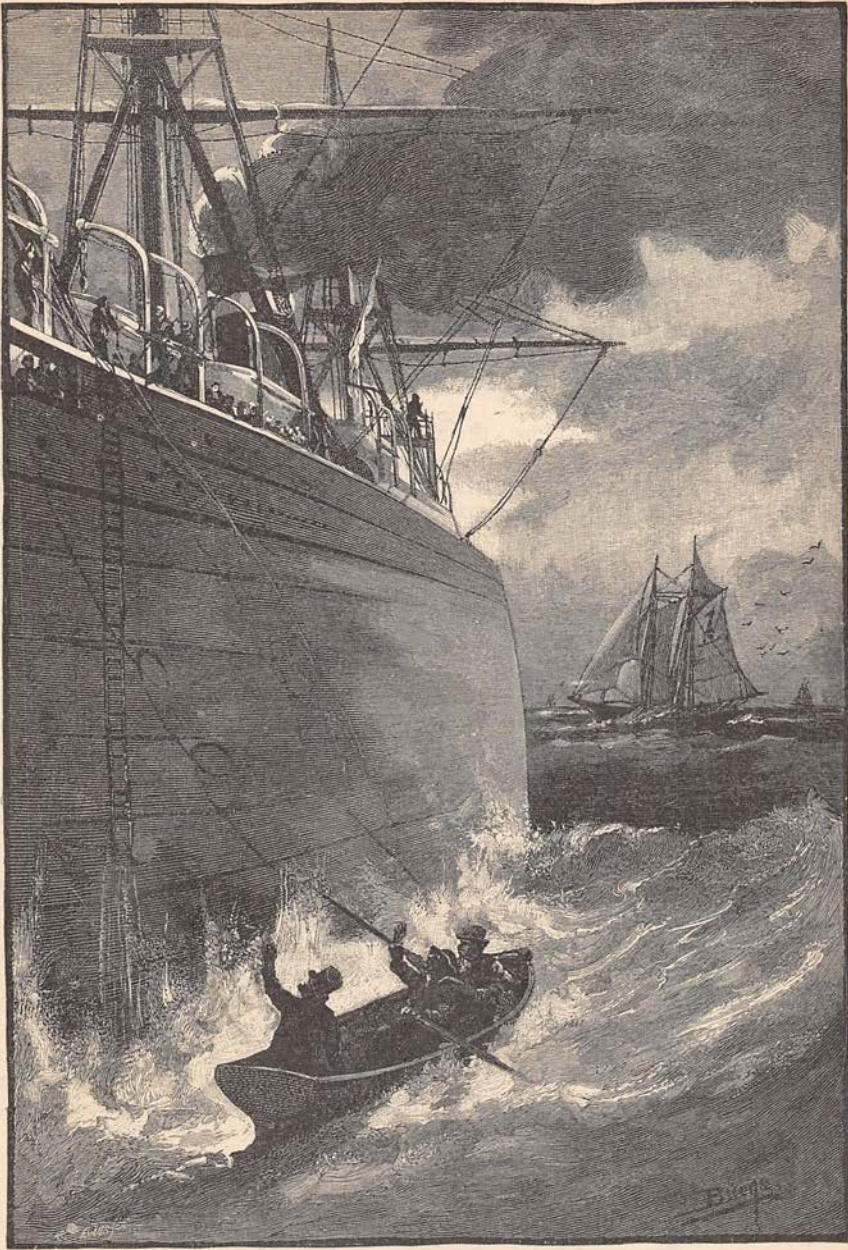
By slow degrees the yawl succeeded in reaching the lee side of the steamer. There again the greatest prudence was required to prevent her from being swamped by the action of the mighty hull, rolling deep in the turbulent sea. At last we saw the pilot, the merest speck, spring on the ladder and creep up the side of the steamer. Then came the yet more difficult task of picking up the yawl. The way it was done was by keeping her head to the wind, and allowing her to drift down toward the schooner. By wearing, we kept directly in the track of the yawl; she slipped across our stern, and pulling up under the lee side, was hauled on board.

As can be easily imagined, one of the pilot's most arduous duties is to board a vessel in heavy weather. Each pilot-schooner is provided with two yawls. They are lashed to the deck, bottom upward, and are lifted and

launched over the low side of the schooner by means of a light tackle reaching down from the mast-heads, and hooked into the stem and stern. The pilot-yawls differ from other boats in that they are short, broad, and deep, and are thus very buoyant. It is not an uncommon circumstance for men to be lost when boarding vessels. Both yawls of one of our New York pilot-boats were successively capsized last winter, when trying to board the *Arizona* in a gale of wind. Happily the men were picked up by the life-boats of the steamer, after great exertion.

It is with regret that I must add that the pilots are sometimes unfairly treated by the captains of the regular transatlantic lines. There is too often a disreputable reason why these steamers give the go-by to pilot-boats that are almost within hail, and pick up another that is beyond. Almost every passenger who has crossed on the regular lines has had experience of the various black-mailing schemes that are sprung on the passengers toward the close of the voyage. Now it is to make up a purse for the captain, who has simply done his duty for a good salary, and no more requires a testimonial than other men who fulfill their duty in their chosen pursuits; or, again, money is solicited for some absurd or imaginary scheme, generally in the name of charity. Only those who have crossed a number of times discover that this is black-mail pure and simple under disguise, and that it is generally engineered by blatant and officious passengers, who have axes of their own to grind. It is black-mail because it is generally brought forward in such a manner that even those who see through the business are forced to contribute, in order to avoid the charge of stinginess. But the worst form of this vile business which assails the luckless passenger on board these steamships is the system of gambling called betting on the number of the pilot-boat that shall board the steamer.

I remember a minister, inexperienced in matters of real life, who urged me to subscribe to the list of those who were betting on the number of our prospective pilot-boat. "My dear sir," I replied to him, "don't you see that this is nothing more nor less than gambling?" But he could not be convinced, and lost his money. Why he lost, and why others lose on such a wager, is explicable in a few words. The captain and some of his officers often join in the betting—of course through other persons—or they have friends among the betters whom they are willing to favor. The passengers, on the other hand, are generally so ignorant of nautical matters that the captain can do as he pleases with little risk



BOARDING A STEAMER.

of detection. For this reason, he can steer out of the way of a pilot-boat that is not the one on which he has staked his money, and go out of his course to take a pilot from the boat on which he has staked his money. It is true that, sometimes, he may not come across that one; but, in most cases, the game is in his hands, while the passenger, on the other hand, little knows that he is so heavily handicapped. We have heard that the master of

one of the largest steamers going out of New York had a serious altercation, growing out of a transaction of this sort, with one of his passengers, who was sharper than the majority of the class.

On the eighth day out, we were four hundred and fifty miles east of New York, on the southern edge of Saint George's Bank. At one time, we passed off soundings into blue water for a few hours, a fact proclaimed in sono-

rous tones by one of the pilots, when he sang out :

"No sound,
No ground,
No bottom to be found
With a long pitch-pine pole, daddy."

The day was gloriously beautiful, the sky cloudless, and the swell remaining after the gale was scarcely dimpled by the zephyr-like cat's-paws.

One of the crack boats of the New York pilot-fleet loomed above the western horizon, carrying every stitch of canvas. Her shapely sails gleaming in the morning sun, she gradually crept up in our wake, while another pilot-boat was also visible in the eastern board. Circumstances being thus against us, we hauled to the wind on the starboard tack, and headed south until we had run them both out of sight.

"Our policy is to scatter," dryly remarked one of our pilots, a tall, slender Scotchman, of large intelligence and an inexhaustible stock of dry humor.

A standing reward of two dollars for the discovery of a steamer was now offered to the crew, whose vigilance was thus greatly stimulated, although it would have been impossible to sharpen their sense of sight.

"Sail ho!" rang from the mast-head at noon. It proved to be a sailing-ship far to the southward. The wind was so light we could not hope to reach her except by sending out a yawl. But the uncertain nature of the season made this inexpedient. This hazardous method is, however, quite frequently followed by our pilots in calm weather. Its nature is well indicated by the following adventure, which befell one of the pilots of the *Caprice* some years ago :

It was on a summer day. A dead calm prevailed. They were forty miles south of Long Island. A bark lay eight miles away, motionless. The pilot-schooner was also unable to move. But it would not do to allow the prize to escape, as she might do if a breeze should strike her sails first. It was decided to row in the yawl to the bark. Eight miles, as every one knows, is quite a distance with oars, or, as it is called, with a "white-ash breeze." But the weather promised to continue fine, and the pilot and his two men started off without water, provisions, compass, or sail. Gradually they gained on the chase. But night was creeping on; the cat's-paws stealing along the horizon suggested, too, that they had better hasten their strokes or the bark would get away from them. By great good fortune, as it seemed to them, they finally came almost within hailing distance of her. Five minutes more and they would have boarded her!—when the coming wind

filled her flapping sails, and they had the mortification to see her slowly glide away. Their frantic shouts, if heard, were unheeded. They found themselves alone on the wide ocean, parched with thirst, and weary and hungry. Night was coming on apace. A low, wailing wind was moaning from the south, and as soon as the sun sank out of sight the sea began to rise, and storm-clouds obscured the hazy light of the stars. At that juncture their schooner, which had been following, came not far from them; but, supposing they had been picked up by the bark, did not perceive them, and again their shouts were unheard. Then, indeed, they gave themselves up for lost. The nearest land was forty miles away. As the wind was blowing it would sweep them toward it, while the increasing violence of the gusts foreboded a sea so wild that they must almost inevitably be swamped and drowned in making a landing. Yet their only course was to drive before the wind, and trust to luck to extricate them from their perilous situation. As night wore on, the storm increased; often the little boat shipped water and seemed on the verge of destruction. Every moment was bringing them nearer to the crisis of their fate. Toward dawn, when the night is darkest, they heard the thunder of surf on the reefs, and faintly discerned, in the gloom, the ghostly pallor of the upward-driven foam. Exhausted as they were, they yet kept their wits about them to seize any possibility of escape that might offer. In one spot there seemed to be a break in the ridge of foam. Skillfully guiding the boat toward it, in another instant they felt the yawl lifted up on the crest of an enormous breaker rushing with lightning speed toward the land. A deafening roar succeeded, a crash, a whirl, and a torrent of foam. In a twinkling the boat was capsized, and the men were borne far up on the beach. One struck a rock and was drowned. The others, as the wave receded, ran up the sand. When the next wave followed, they dug their hands into the beach and held on, lest they should be swept away by the under-tow. But for the fortunate break in the reef through which they had guided the boat, they would all have been lost.

TWO DAYS of perfect weather, each closed with a sunset of magical splendor, were followed by a change. The glass began to fall; cloud-streamers arched over the zenith from horizon to horizon. A sad wind moaned over the heaving deep, and a mist gradually closed us in. Then came fitful showers, and, between the flaws, the little schooner flapped her slatting sails with foreboding dreariness.



REEFING THE MAINSAIL.

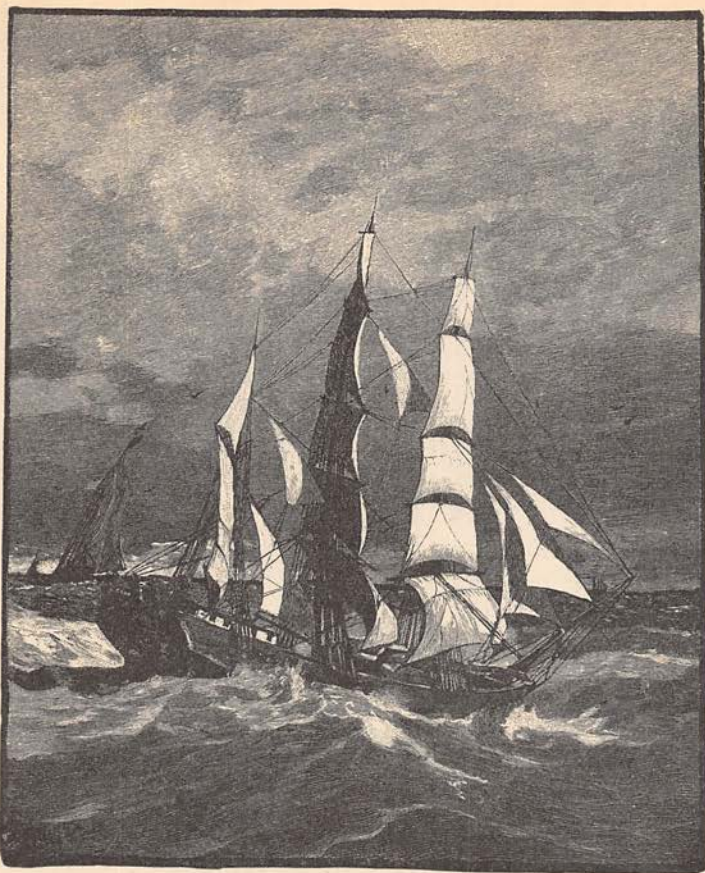
Another storm was stealing upon us. During the day—it was Sunday—we saw a number of steamers, bound eastward, which had left New York on the previous day. I should add that for two days we had been heading westward, and were now not far from the Nantucket light-ship. An inbound steamer was also seen from the mast-head, and we flung out all the kites and let our little schooner fly at her wildest rate. Here seemed a fair chance at last, for we were apparently south of the pilot-boats we had previously seen, while the whole horizon round revealed not a boat in sight. But, after another mad chase, our hopes were blasted in a moment when the steamer hung out her signal to inform us she was provided with a pilot.

That night there was a snow-ring around the moon, and the glass was still slowly falling. On the following day we had a very exciting chase after a White Star boat. But she, again, had been already boarded. At four p. m. the wind, which had been whiffing about in a dubious manner to all points of the compass,

settled into a strong, steady breeze from the east, and by night-fall it blew half a gale.

“Call all hands to reef!” rang through the ship, and soon the crew were ranged along the booms, shortening sail. A wild night was before us. For a while we hove to, in order to be in the track of steamers, reasoning that as the wind was likely to hold awhile it would prevent other boats from getting far east of New York, and thus we should have a fair chance of not being interrupted in our chances by interlopers. But, as the gale freshened, it seemed unlikely that we should board any vessel in the weather now threatening, and the helm was put up and we stood west again. We had now been out twelve days.

At sunset the sky was completely obscured by a dense canopy of cloud. Just as the sun rested on the ocean's verge, the clouds lifted enough to allow the sun to burst forth and illumine the horizon with a line of vivid fire, below which the ocean rolled intensely sullen and livid. But who can describe the awful magnificence which irradiated the entire heav-



HOVE TO FOR A PILOT.

ens with a volcanic glow! The sky was like the dome of a vast oven heated to the last degree. At the same moment a shower fell on the sea, and immediately two perfect rainbows spanned the firmament. Then, as if a curtain had been drawn across the scene, night closed in, and the wild winds howled over a little ship tossing alone on a dreary waste of waves.

It blew very hard that night. A dangerous cross-sea set in, and twice the *Caprice* was nearly thrown on her beam-ends with terrific lurches. We kept a bright light at the mast-head and a double lookout, for it was an uncanny time for a collision, and we were directly in the track of ships.

On the following day it moderated, but the wind, which had only "backed in," shifted from north to east after dark. This brought a corresponding change of weather. Rain and fog set in, and a very puffy breeze that settled into a gale before morning. We ran westward all night under short sail, taking casts of the lead at intervals. Soon after ten,

the atmosphere being thick, but not so much so as to prevent us from discerning objects the distance of a mile, we discovered a sailing-ship ahead, evidently running for New York, and probably in need of a pilot. Edging away toward her, we lit our torch, and had the satisfaction of seeing her send up a couple of rockets in response. At the same time she backed her reefed main-topsail and hove to. Running down on her lee side, we also hove to very near to her, and proceeded to launch the yawl. It was a wild scene as the little boat vanished into the darkness, perhaps never to be seen again. But her crew carried a lantern with them, and after they had left the pilot on board the ship, we were able to shape our movements by this little glimmer bobbing up and down like an *ignis fatuus* in the misty dark. As the night wore on, the fog grew so dense that we brought up our six-pound brass piece from the fore peak, and fired it at short intervals; this was done, not, as one might suppose, to keep vessels from coming into collision with the schooner,

but to inform them there was a pilot-boat in the vicinity. But this very fact required redoubled vigilance on our part, in order that we might not be run down. In the middle watch we were startled, just after firing the cannon, by the answering whistle of a steamer hoarsely coming down the wind, and close at hand. The excitement of the moment was intense. Again we fired the cannon. The whistle drew nearer, and all at once the colored lights of a steamer loomed out of the dripping mist, and her huge bow emerged from the gloom, so near that it actually seemed to overhang our deck. Passing close alongside, she slowed up the palpitation of her mighty engine a moment to make sure of our position, and then vaguely glided out of sight.

On the following morning, the sun was invisible. The war of the elements was raging with increasing fury. The wind had shifted to south-east. The fog was less dense, and

we could see some distance. We were running under a bit of foresail, and hardly needed that. It seemed, at times, as if the following seas would founder the schooner as they towered over the low taffrail. Not a sail was in sight, not even a solitary gull; it is a curious fact that, excepting the petrels, sea-birds keep near to the land in bad weather. By means of the patent log towing astern and from casts of the lead, we knew we could not be far from Sandy Hook light-ship.

About ten, the light-ship hove in sight. We rushed by it at the rate of thirteen knots. An enormous sea was rolling over the bar, but the depth of water was enough for vessels like the *Caprice*, and by skillful steering she passed over handsomely. The fierceness of the wind was now terrific, and, dowsing the foresail, we ran up the Lower Bay and flew through the Narrows under bare poles. Thus ended a most delightful and entertaining cruise.

THE EARLY WRITINGS OF ROBERT BROWNING.

It is not my design in the following pages to attempt any exact review or any minute analysis of the writings of one of the most copious and versatile of modern poets. The range of Mr. Browning's genius is so wide, the temper of his muse so Shakspearean and universal, that he will probably exhaust the critical powers of a great many students of literature before he finally takes his right place among the chief authors of modern Europe. The constellation which is still ascending our poetical heavens is too much confused as yet by those mists of personal prejudice and meteors of temporary success which always lurk about the horizon of the Present to enable us to map the stars in it with certainty. Many attempts, of course, have been made, and some with a great measure of success. Two such studies, among others, demand recognition for their extent and authority—the volume on Mr. Browning's poetry by Mr. John Nettleship, since known as an animal-painter, and the elaborate criticism printed in this magazine by Mr. E. C. Stedman. I shall not attempt to compete with these or any similar reviews; my purpose is to touch lightly on those early volumes of Mr. Browning which are comparatively less known to his admirers, and to enrich such biographical notes as I have been able to put together with a variety of personal anecdotes and historical facts which now for the first time see the light, and which I have jotted

down, from time to time, from Mr. Browning's lips, and with his entire consent and kindly coöperation. No one is more alive than Mr. Browning, or, may I add, than I, to the indelicacy of the efforts now only too widely made to pry into the private affairs of a man of genius, to peep over his shoulder as he writes to his intimate friends, and to follow him like a detective through the incidents of a life which should not be less sacred from curiosity than the life of his butler or his baker. The poet has expressed his mind with extreme plainness:

“A peep through my window, if folks prefer;
But, please you, no foot over threshold of mine.”

But literary history, the most charming of all occupations of the human mind, as Warburton said, is a very different thing from personal history, and there are certain facts about the development of a poet's intellect and the direction that it took, the welcomes that it received and the reverses that it endured, about which curiosity is perfectly legitimate. For those who desire such a peep through Mr. Browning's window as this, the shutters are at last by his own courtesy taken down.

Mr. Robert Browning was born at Camberwell, a southern suburb of London, on the 7th of May, 1812. His father, who bore the same name as himself, and who died in 1866